

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 6, 2026

5:00 PM

**Room 22,
Recreation Center**

Members Present:

Gregory Kleiner, Chair
Debra Bowie, Vice Chair
Ritu Budakoti
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Marti Fiske
Gina Burke
David Morill
Jennifer Porschitz, Alternate
Dr. Mohammad Saleh, Alternate
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Alternate
Julie Odat, Alternate
Thomas M. White, Alternate

Staff Present:

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Parks and Recreation
Director

Members Not Present:

Councilor Bettina Chadbourne
Dr. Dottie Morris

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Vice Chair Bowie called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM and a roll call was taken.

2. Approval of June 1st, 2026 Minutes

A motion was made by Marti Fiske to approve the June 1, 2026 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Tom White and was unanimously approved.

3. Finance Report

Parks and Recreation Director, Carrah Fisk-Hennessey stated that she has a note from Alyssa Bender-Jesse, Youth Services Manager/Staff Liaison, that the finance report reflects Juneteenth's expenses and revenue.

4. Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition Updates

The Library Director Marti Fiske stated that she received an email last week regarding the MDEIB current events; there was a book group that convened yesterday. A picnic was organized with the interface group. MDEIB is a partner with the Community Conversation, which is scheduled from 10 AM to 12 PM – the plan is for 100 people to attend with two facilitators.

There will be breakout groups – the discussion will center around community building. YMCA will be providing daycare in the Kay Fox Room.

There are about six organizations set up as primary partners. Ms. Fiske will be contacting more community organizations, encouraging them to send at least one staff person and board member to each of the conversations as well as general members of the public.

There will be another event scheduled before the end of November, based on what is learned from this event. The follow-up event will be to focus on that subject that is brought forth in the discussion. Ms. Fiske stated the purpose of this event is to bring the community together giving people the ability to talk to each other in small groups and be able to focus on things that they want to see improved and make connections with each other. The follow up session would be a positive event that could try to heal that problem. The plan is also to reach out to SAU 29 regarding this event.

Dr. Muhammad Saleh joined the session at 5:10 PM.

5. Acceptance of Committee Event Reports

a. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Rabbi Daniel Aronson stated there was not a lot of progress for MLK Day. They reached out to Keith Marks at the Colonial to see if they had anything already planned the City could piggyback on – they don't have anything planned but will keep the City in the loop if something is planned.

It was noted that the Martin Luther King Day Jr. event needs a new Chair. It was suggested if there is no Chair appointed perhaps the HRC could divide the responsibilities. Dr. Dottie Morris is still available from a distance for any help she could provide. There was a suggestion about also collaborating with the Chamber of Connection, national initiative to build community.

b. Black History Month

There is a need for a Chair to organize Black History Month. It was indicated that Black History Trail is often looking for other locations to expand their programming beyond the seacoast.

c. Juneteenth

This was a well-attended event and the film shown was well received.

d. Pride Event

Mr. David Morill stated this event kicked off on June 12 and ended on June 27 with an opening event and a closing event. He stated this was bigger event compared to last year which he stated was encouraging. There are already people offering to volunteer at next year's event. There will be debrief of this year's event on July 21.

e. Keene International Festival

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated the International Festival is scheduled the day before the DeMar Marathon at Fuller Park. She stated the organizing committee is running into issues trying to find performers for the event, which she stated, tends to be the focal point of the event along with the food. When the prior Chair left, it has been more challenging trying to reach out to different organizations to coordinate musical and dance performances. There is a check in meeting for the Festival Committee next week to see where they are in terms of planning and making sure that it is going to be a full event.

Reaching out to the music department at Keene State College was a suggestion that was offered. A member of the Committee stated they have connections in the Manchester area through the NAACP and volunteered to reach out to them. Apple Hill Chamber Music was also a suggestion.

f. Native American Heritage

Marti Fiske stated she was 33 books shy of her goal of 500 books to circulate to the community. She stated she would be contacting the principal at the High School later this week to see if this is something they would consider including as part of their curriculum or as an extra credit assignment. She stated her plan is to start distributing the books in the beginning of September so people can read them in September and October. The finale's date is now set for the first Saturday in November at 1 o'clock.

Joyce Haywood would be doing a short presentation of any additional stories that either didn't make it into the book or were from her perspective as a generation beyond her mother, who was the author, followed by a TED Talk style presentation/interview by Marti Fiske. There will also be a question and answer period from the public. Joyce Haywood would also have a number of family heirlooms available for show and tell.

Ms. Fiske stated if there is money left in the budget she would use it to purchase the additional 33 books.

Advertising for this event would start in August with books distribution starting at the beginning of September

6. New Business

None

7. Adjourn – Next Meeting September 14th , 2026 at 5:00 PM

There being no further business, Vice Chair Bowie adjourned the meeting at 5:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Alyssa Bender-Jesse, Youth Services Manager
Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Parks and Recreation Director