

Wakefield Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes 2/16/2021

Call to order: 7:04pm

Present members of HRC:

Sherri Oken

Maria Muti

Benny Wheat

Jennifer Boettcher

Jeremy Little

Kimberley Ring

Teresa Aravena-Gonzalez

Faith Defendre

Elizabeth Assenza

Nicole Jacob

Absent:

Superintendent Doug Lyons, ex officio

Town Administrator Steve Maio, ex officio

Chief Skory, ex officio

Amy Rando

Yana Herzog, Youth Council Liaison

Also Present:

Mehreen Butt, Town Council Liaison

Colleen Guida, School Committee Liaison

Valerie Overton, member of the public, Quabbin Mediation

Stephen, member of the public

Public participation (Participants will be limited to 3 minutes each)

No public participation

Approval of minutes

- January 19, 2021, general meeting
 - Motion to approve the minutes from our January 19, 2021 meeting: unanimously approved
- MLK/CSK subcommittee meetings from Nov. 5 2020, Nov. 30 2020, Dec. 15 2020, Dec. 30 2020, Jan. 13, 2021
 - Motion to approve the MLK & CSK Day subcommittee meetings: unanimously approved by members of the subcommittee
- Communications subcommittee - Jan. 4, 2021, Jan 14 2021, Feb. 1, 2021

- Motion to approve the Communications subcommittee meetings: unanimously approved by members of the subcommittee
- International Women's Day subcommittee - Feb. 2, 2021
 - Motion to approve the International Women's Day subcommittee meetings: unanimously approved by members of the subcommittee

New language in policies and procedures around agenda/meetings/minutes process

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- Does this memo go into the policies and procedures?
- It could go in there as an addendum.
- Motion to accept the procedures around agenda/meetings/minutes process as written and incorporate them into the WHRC's Policies and Procedures: unanimously approved
- Maria will add the language to the P&P and send it out to the commission

Active Bystander Training feedback

- It was great, would love another training to go into more depth.
- They do have an additional level with more depth.
 - Valerie Overton shares that this would have more breakout room activities to delve more in-depth into building the personal toolkit and practicing those strategies.
 - One topic that would get covered in a second level training is how to think about saviorism and how this plays into active bystandership
- Both sessions filled up completely, which was great. There were people who wanted to attend who couldn't get in
- There could be an appetite for another round of first level trainings, maybe before we pursue a second level training
 - The trainings are \$400 each. We had this \$1,000 donation this year that allowed us to pay for these trainings without impacting our line item budget. But if we want to host more TAB trainings we could see about co-sponsoring with another org.
 - Mehreen could also see about whether the Town could come up with some money for it
 - We could also offer it for a fee instead of for free (\$20 for example). Or on a sliding scale so there's no financial barrier.
 - One of us could write up a press release and talk about how great it was and mention that the sessions were full. And let people know that another session is being scheduled. This could help keep the momentum up. Kim will write the press release. She'll contact the people who attended to ask questions about it first. Jen will reach out to her friends who attended to see if they would want to supply a quote about their experience.
- If we wanted to pursue another first-level active bystander training would we want to do it next year, or sooner?
 - Would be good to do it sooner than next year, seems like there's interest now.

- We will talk next meeting about the timing of a follow-up training, either level 1 or level 2
- They sent along reference guides, materials that go along with the training, to attendees. Is this something we should share on our page? No, this is probably something that is intended for the training attendees only and not for sharing more widely. Valerie Overton confirms that.

International Women's Day update

- There's been one meeting so far.
- Teresa contacted the Chamber of Commerce for a list of women-owned businesses and has started contacting those business owners.
- Still deciding what the event will really look like, whether it would be a one-day event, or a weekly event for the month, or another format
- Can we do a shared google doc? People can add info to a shared google doc, but cannot "deliberate" in editing the doc (deciding what to include, etc).

Anti-racism action updates

Black student union

Youth council

No updates from the Youth Council

Black History month readings

- Casey from the Library supplied an awesome list of books. They're working on the permissions
- Nicole and Maria will be reaching out to people to record the readings
- The intention was to start at the beginning of Feb and do two readings per week. We only have two weeks left of February, but will probably still do more than one reading per week
- Maria and Nicole will connect with Jen about posting something on FB to put it out there. A "coming soon" kind of post even if we don't have the specific books etc.

High school logo discussion

- The School Committee on Tuesday approved a plan for the process for deciding about the Warrior logo.
- The process will include a community forum on 2/25.
 - That has been communicated out through the school messenger and they're working on communicating it out through the town's database.
 - The community forum will be moderated by the Town Moderator.
 - It will be very structured with a time limit
- The School Committee will also bring together a panel discussion to educate themselves and the school's administrators.

- They've been advised that educating themselves and the administrators as opposed to educating the public. So the panel will be open to the public in more of a "webinar" format where the public can watch but not participate.
 - This is because the panelists who have been in open community settings have been in very unsafe situations as a result of that.
 - The makeup of the panel hasn't been decided yet. The subcommittee is in contact with Native tribal nation leaders. And they would also like to represent the perspective of the Bayrd family. And also other community perspectives.
- The data and communications would then all compiled together and presented to the School Committee
- The School Committee would make a final vote on 3/9 regarding retiring the "current" logo (as you see on the sports jerseys and sports fields, etc) and/or the "former" logo (as is seen on the sign on the front of the high school)
- There is a petition to put this topic up for a town wide referendum. This petition was signed by at least 10 people and then submitted to the Town Council to approve the non-binding ballot question for the town election on 4/27. Because this would be a non-binding vote, it would be an information collection tool.
- The next school committee meeting might include a vote on an amended process in case the school committee wants to change the timeline of their decision in order to push the vote to after the town election on 4/27.
- Right now this decision is a School Committee decision.
- In February 2020 the HRC talked about native mascots and logos in connection to the MA Indigenous Legislative Agenda (which is related to several legislative areas. The 5 bills are to: Honor Indigenous Peoples Day, Protect Native American Heritage, Remove Native American mascots/logos/nicknames, Change the State flag and seal, Educate Native Youth)
- We have also previously decided that because this is a School Committee decision and an issue that was being taken up so well by the Youth Council that the HRC would not be leading this issue.
- Now that this has become a full conversation in Wakefield, should the HRC speak as a body at the community forum or on the panel?
 - It should be on the record where we stand on this issue.
 - We could have a position statement.
 - Not sure it makes sense for us to serve on a panel because we're not experts on this topic specifically.
 - If the school committee specifically wants us on a panel, where our expertise lies is in deferring to the collective voices and messages of impacted groups.
 - We should refer to our mission about dignity and respect for all peoples
 - We should also take a specific stance in our statement.
- After the current vote, depending on how that vote goes, there may then be additional processes for next steps such as designing a new logo, if that is how the vote goes.
- The HRC should vote to endorse the four remaining bills on the MA Indigenous Legislative Agenda?

- Motion for the HRC to endorse the four remaining bills on the MA Indigenous Legislative Agenda: unanimously approved
- Motion that the HRC draft a formal position statement to be submitted in the community forum: unanimously approved
 - We could also submit this to more places if we want to, like on our website, our FB page, the Item, etc
 - Would it be better to put this out first at the community forum on the 25th, and then post elsewhere, or the other way around?
- What is the process for approving the written statement, since we won't meet again between now and the community forum? We did this in responding to the Christchurch mosque shooting, we approved the points to be covered and then two people wrote it off-line.
- Points to be covered in our statement:
 - The intent of the logo was not to harm, and the intent of those who want to keep the logo is not to harm. But we hear from enormous numbers of Indigenous groups that it is harmful
 - Name it as a civil rights issue
 - Deferring to those most impacted
 - Because of the nature of our body it's our responsibility to speak up
 - We support getting rid of all school logos with native imagery
- Do we need to take a position on the name "Warrior"?
 - The name is broader than just Native Americans
 - We will stick to the one issue of the logo and not the name at this time
- Once the HRC makes this statement, if any member of this commission is engaging with people on social media or elsewhere, stick to the points in the statement. If you want to deviate from that statement, do that as yourself as an individual and not as a member of the HRC.

Networking with other HRC's

- Jeremy will reach out to a person he knows at the Stoneham HRC

Chair's comments

Central electronic storage for HRC documents

- No updates right now, Maria is still working on it

Matters not anticipated

- If you need to submit reimbursements to Sherri Dalton, she has asked if everyone can do that by email since she's working remotely some of the time.

Action Items:

- Maria will add the language to the P&P and send it out to the commission

- Kim will write the press release about the active bystanders training. She'll contact the people who attended to ask questions about it first.
- Jen will reach out to her friends who attended the active bystanders training to see if they would want to supply a quote about their experience
- Maria and Nicole will connect with Jen about posting something on FB about the upcoming Black History Month book readings.
- Maria and Benny will write the HRC's position statement regarding the WPS logo
- Jeremy will reach out to the person he knows at the Stoneham HRC

Adjourn

Roll call vote on motion to adjourn: unanimously approved

Meeting adjourned 8:43pm