

Wakefield Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes 6/8/2020

Call to order: 7:33

Present from the HRC:

Maria Muti

Benny Wheat

Amy Rando

Jennifer Boettcher

Sherri Oken

Present from the public:

Craig Calabrese

Vanessa Calabrese Sloat

Dan

Alison Elmer

Cynthia Davis

Kelly Cormier

Will Karvouniaris

Jennifer Blackmon

Tarae Howell

Peggy

Jen

Manny

Tracy

Brad

Statement from Maria about recent HRC events on the Pride subcommittee

Racial Justice efforts in Wakefield

- Maria reached out to POC members of our community, especially Black people in our community to get feedback from them about what they would like to see more of in Wakefield re racial justice. Some comments and ideas:
 - Common feeling of being disconnected from the community
 - Meet and greet with the PD
 - Building more community in the school system, connecting with other families who have black and brown children to connect about the experiences they have going through the school system
 - Desire for more familiarity with neighbors. One anecdote from a man of color was that he is looked at as if he's an outsider when walking around his neighborhood, to the point that he sometimes worries that he should call the

police to state where he lives and where he is walking, what he is wearing, etc in case someone calls the police on him

- Maybe the HRC could be the facilitator of communication, helping to connect families of color
- Is Wakefield 101 a helpful space?
- Or doing a special 101 night geared towards POC?
- Concerns about this being a “separate but equal” space
- A resident of color shares that it has been hard to meet neighbors and feel connected. The HRC could help organize events and specifically and intentionally reaching out to folks of color who live in town. There are very few African American’s in town who may not be connected to groups or others in town, including a lack of connection to other people of color in town.
- There has been a class in town called “Conversations about Whiteness” focused on white people examining what it means to be white and learning about unconscious bias. The class is based partly on the White People Challenging Racism curriculum. It has been offered twice so far to groups in Wakefield. This is already going on, maybe the HRC could be involved in some way
- An important part is how we talk to our children. There are courses and other resources available about how to talk to your children about race and racism
- Maybe some of this work could be done through enrichment programs for children, and speakers for the adults
- Rather than the very white HRC deliberating on what would be the best way to support people of color people in our community, maybe form a subcommittee focusing on outreach and listening to folks of color in the community to receive guidance about what would be helpful, what is needed in our town
- The focus should not be only on what one group needs or another group needs, but on what everyone in the community needs.
- We could have a series of events called “uncomfortable conversations” and help facilitate that
- How do we use high-visibility spaces and get the conversation started there. Like the library and places like that.
- Since Wakefield 101 is for new residents, what about a Wakefield 201 which is open to all residents. Different officials could be there, including Mr. Maio, the superintendent of schools
 - How do we make sure that people who aren’t feeling included are invited and made to feel welcome
 - Would we limit the size? Is there a group too big to allow for connection?
 - Would be good to organize activities, ice breakers
 - Would be important to publicize widely in order to reach people
- Ways to publicize:
 - Newspapers
 - Facebook
 - Town emails

- Bulletin boards in businesses, gyms
 - Library's board
 - Putting a banner across main street
 - Farmer's Market tables, and tables at other events
 - It will be important to find creative avenues for communication
 - Municipal departments' newsletters
 - Mailings that go to everyone in town such as the utility bill mailings
 - Canvassing, putting flyers in people's doors
 - Through faith organizations in town
 - Other social media platforms: Instagram, Twitter
 - The digital sign downtown and the kiosks around downtown
 - Town's public relations person
 - It's important to make sure to get info out to people who don't have kids in the school system, aren't members of a faith community
 - Do realtors have packets they can give to new people? Maybe that could be a thing
 - Leave a goodie bag on the doorstep of new residents with information about local resources, businesses, etc.
- Wakefield is a tough community to break into. It's a tight knit community, even living here for several years and having kids in the schools it can still be hard to get connected
 - The "coffee with a cop" time could be used for this also
 - Could meet with the teachers or superintendent to share material regarding MLK day, so that the conversations happening in classrooms (and then being brought home) are richer and more meaningful
 - Reach out to the Metco board. They definitely have insight about how to proceed on a lot of these things
 - Work with the library to cosponsor events, discussion groups etc
 - The HRC has done programs in the past to talk about issues of race and racism, including the book discussion on *The Hate You Give*; a 2-person discussion/panel with someone from Black Lives Matter Boston and a white antiracism organizer;
 - Instead of getting people to go to an event or program, could also put the critical messaging in the spaces people go to every day: in the businesses, etc. It's like product placement, if you put it everywhere it starts to sink in. An example is the "hate has no home here" signs. Make micro-interactions educational teaching moments
 - More book discussion groups in partnership with the library
 - Could look into having a fixed display at the library with antiracism resources and information
 - Build liaisons from the HRC to the schools
 - Help the schools identify training resources for teachers
 - Co-host speakers between the HRC and the school district
 - WCAT: maybe a facilitated discussion, or sharing life experiences
 - Parent University could be a great place to connect speakers on race and racism to parents

- Is there a collective place where people can write down commitments to take action against racism? This could be physical or virtual. Focus on action
- Make a list of Black-owned businesses in Wakefield. Maybe connect with the Chamber of Commerce about this
- If anyone is interested in working on any of these ideas, please feel free to join us

Roll call vote on motion to adjourn: approved

Meeting adjourned 8:48