

Wakefield Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes 9/15/2020

Call to order: 7:03pm

Present:

Sherri Oken

Faith Defendre

Maria Muti

Benny Wheat

Jennifer Boettcher

Yana Herzog, Youth Council Liaison

Amy Rando

Mehreen Butt, Town Council Liaison

Absent:

Superintendent Doug Lyons, ex officio

Town Administrator Steve Maio, ex officio

Public participation

No public participation

Approval of minutes from August 18, 2020 meeting

Motion to approve the minutes from our Aug. 18 2020 meeting: unanimously approved

New member orientation- what should be edited/added/deleted from the proposed orientation coverage?

- The hope is to keep it to half an hour
- There are still some pieces of information that are missing. Sherri contacted Steve Maio, Rich Greif and Pina Masciarelli by email but they have not yet responded.
- It is a hybrid of onboarding (factual) and orientation (cultural), which is why it says both
- Why was the HRC originally founded and by Whom? It was largely Bill Chetwynd's brainchild. And Chief Smith wanted to have one here when he came to Wakefield.
- Would be good for the orientation to be more future-facing and less history-focused
- There is both a slide presentation and the policies and procedures document that new members would receive. There are much more details to each talking point you see on the slides, and that detail can be found in the policies and procedures.
- Would Jen and Sherri like to do the onboarding orientation with new members? They would be comfortable doing it, and we could also trade off
- Maria is working on the electronic storage issue so we can have a shared place to keep documents. More updates to come in future meetings
- An idea: we should have an archivist, someone who is responsible for keeping records of our events compiled in one place (like photos of our events, past vendors, etc)

- Include that everyone has to get sworn in and do the ethics training. This is included in the talking points, though it's not specifically on the slide
- For the "interactions with our town" slide also include partnerships and connections we have with groups outside of town, like the MA HRC group
- Include a picture of the civic center with the pride flag!
- If anyone has other photos that we should include, please send them along to Sherri and Jen
- David Watts was on the HRC and did a lot of photography for us. Maria can reach out to him for photos.
- Maria is doing an HRC research project so as she comes across other partnerships we have had, she'll send those along to Jen and Sherri
- The slides can be pretty consistent over time, and the script can evolve over time
- We don't have a standard welcome email that we send to newly appointed members. People often find out they've been appointed when they get an email from the town or the school committee. This would be a good thing for us to have to welcome new people and get the ball rolling on scheduling the orientation

Anti-racism action updates

Posters

- Sherri photographed the posters Yana drew. They should be ready to share with the group next week.
- Sherri will add Yana's signature (or a faux signature) and "a message from the WHRC"
- The Library is excited about putting them up

Black student union

- Faith and the other co-pres of the BSU were planning an event, but the principal let them know that they couldn't plan an event under the BSU. Partly because of COVID, but partly because it's a school group.
- They can still plan an event, but just not under the auspices of the BSU. They have a zoom meeting coming up to plan.
- They are hoping to have an in-person event, but they have to have a plan in place to make sure that more people don't show up than can safely be accommodated. The football field could fit 200 people, for example, so what happens if more than 200 people show up?
- Could they use both football fields?
- There are other kinds of events to, like simultaneous things where everyone does something on their own lawns at the same time

Youth council

- Yana and another member of the council gave a presentation about the pros and cons of the Warrior logo. They talked about the history of how it came to be, the history of Native American's in Wakefield, and arguments for and against the logo

- In the next meeting they'll take a vote to see where the youth council stands on this issue
- Several people have been reaching out to the HRC who are interested in being involved in this issue. Maria is getting those emails through the HRC email address, so she can send an email connecting people. So far she has only heard from people who want to change the mascot, not from anyone who doesn't want to change it.
- One person from the public in particular mentioned that this should be a grassroots movement, not lead from the top-down. This is how the HRC is going to interact with this issue. We want to support the movement to change the mascot but we are not going to lead.
- There is a lot of education that needs to be done in town on this issue, it will be a process

Library collaboration:

- The Library got a grant for the Commit to Your Community program. In order to get the grant they had to design the program in detail, so it is too late for us to be involved on the ground floor.
- It is a 3 part program: 1) Get Involved, 2) Act with Compassion and 3) Advocate for Change. The Advocate for Change segment will be about climate change.
- The WHRC was specifically named as a collaborator in the "Act with Compassion" segment of the yearlong programming.
- Speakers have already been booked and books have been chosen. There are some panel discussions and not all panelists have been chosen.
- So helping to fill out the panels could be a way for us to be involved
- The Library does want to work with us, but the Commit to Your Community program is so far along that it won't be an opportunity for much collaboration

Active bystander training with Quabbin Mediation

- Maria spoke with someone from this program. They have been doing this training with high schoolers who then would train middle schoolers. The training is to equip people to intervene when someone is being targeted (ie in bullying, hate speech, etc). After several years doing this in schools they expanded to also do community trainings outside the schools.
- It's now available virtually. It's 2 hours over zoom and can accommodate 20 people per session. They've done 7 since mid-july
- If people are interested after the basic training, there's the possibility of doing a train the trainers session.
- The initial session is \$400 for a training for 20 people. If there are more than 20 people interested they could book more than one session. We could pay for it out of the donation we recently got and offer free attendance
- If we wanted to plan one for Wakefield we would vote on it and then pick a date, advertise it, manage the sign-ups

- A group of WAAV members actually attended an active bystander training with this same organization a few years ago.
- There are lots of situations that could call for bystander intervention (bullying, sexual harassment, racist incidents). What is our hope/goal for bringing this training? Are we thinking about it particularly as part of an anti-racism agenda? Or more generally?
- If we want this training to focus on intervening in racist incidents, it would be important for the trainers to be intentional about addressing the nuances
- Mehreen and Amy can ask in the WAAV meeting tomorrow about what the focus of the bystander training was when they did it.
- Maria can follow up with Quabbin Mediation and ask them how they specifically handle the complex dynamics of intervening in a racist incident

Chair's comments

Appointment process update

- The applications are closed. There were 10 applications for 4 positions, which is great!
- The town council has a joint meeting with the school committee on 9/29 where they are going to revisit the appointment process. Chair Santos and Chair Purcell are working on it together.
- They have not conducted interviews yet. We don't know if there are going to be interviews

MLK Day Event:

- There are no in-person events allowed through the end of the year. Maria will ask about whether in-person events will be allowed in January. It seems likely that it will have to be a virtual event.
- We can start the planning process for that at our next meeting.

Matters not anticipated

- Do we want to do something to acknowledge Indigenous People's Day? It's in less than a month, and it will happen before our next meeting
- Our pride event where we did educational videos and book readings on our facebook page was really great. There's such a baseline learning curve for most folks on indigenous issues. That could be a way to go. We could do a children's book reading. There are also great poetry by Native poets
- There are probably book lists out there. One example: <https://www.rebekahgienapp.com/indigenous-peoples-day/>. And the librarians at the Beebe might have suggestions
- We can post book readings to our facebook page and also send it to Jenn McDonald to put it on the webpage
- We could submit a virtual event to the community calendar on the Library website

- Could put a poster at the Library to get the word out so people tune in. Is there a way to make sure that parents know? Could post to the schools' PTO's facebook pages or ask the PTO presidents to send a note to the families

Motion to have an virtual informative event for Indigenous People's Day: passed unanimously

Adjourn

Roll call vote on motion to adjourn: unanimously approved

Meeting adjourned 8:50

Action Items:

- Maria - reach out to the town about putting the posters in the kiosks
- Maria - send an email connecting the various people who are interested in the mascot issue to one another and to the youth council
- Amy or Jen - send the interview process document to Maria
- Maria - Contact Quabbin Mediation about the antiracism content of the active bystander training
- Benny - contact the children's librarians at the Beebe about books for Indigenous People's Day
- Benny and Mehreen - coordinate about the Indigenous People's Day book reading
- Sherri and Jen - continue to work on the orientation
- Sherri - continue to work on photoshopping the
- Jen - once we have the info for the Indigenous People's Day readings, Jen will contact the PTO presidents
- Benny - make a general blurb to advertise the Indigenous People's Day readings
- Jen - put Indigenous People's Day reading on the community calendar