

Wakefield Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes 1/19/2021

Call to order: 7:02pm

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

Also Present:

Mehreen Butt, Town Council Liaison

Colleen Guida, School Committee Liaison

Yana Herzog, Youth Council Liaison

Eileen Rooney, member of the public

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

- Eileen Rooney: Thanks so much for allowing me to participate in planning the MLK & CSK Day event

Approval of minutes from December 15, 2020 meeting

Motion to approve the minutes from our December 15, 2020 meeting: unanimously approved

New language in policies and procedures around new member orientation

- Maria wrote new language in the Policies and Procedures for the HRC that says "Upon appointment, a commissioner shall take part in a new member orientation, previously approved by the commission."
- We'll add that this should be completed within 60 days of appointment.
- The language with the 60 day timeline unanimously approved.

Anti-racism action updates

MLK and CSK Event debrief

- Hearing from people on the street was great, to hear from people outside our usual sphere. This was all Faith's brainchild, she came up with this idea and she and Vanessa filmed and edited the whole thing
- The daily FB posts were good, it helped people get engaged, it was educational
- The student leaders Faith and ReignYah and the other contributors were so impressive
- Highlighting the students' art and poetry was so nice.
- Because of the pandemic we had to rethink how we did a lot of it, which resulted in some nice new things (like the interviews on the street, the panel discussion with awardees)
- Shout out to Teresa for getting all the awards printed, signed, and delivered on the day of the award panel recording
- For other recorded events we can do a brief disclaimer reminding folks that this was all self-recorded and there will be hiccoughs. And Kim says she can also
- More music would be great next time. Wendy told us that the community choir could have put something together if we had given them lead time. And because of the pandemic a lot of production companies are being more lenient with permissions for music, so if we plan ahead we can reach out to request permission to use music.
- Approve to reimburse Benny for the gift cards: \$105. Unanimously approved.
- Draw names for FB raffle:
 - Brain Fox
 - Patti Rooney- Pesaturo
 - Brian Fox
 - Benny will message them through FB and let them know they can pick up their prizes at town hall at the greeter's desk
- Benny will do a post-write up and submit to the Item. Include some art work if possible as well as recognition of the service award and art award winners. And something about the service project. And mention something about upcoming events and invite people to volunteer to get involved.

Black student union

- The BSU is currently working towards Black history month. They are still processing what we are planning. They are planning on working with the Wakefield anti-racist group. But still in the brainstorming phase. I will find a opportunity for us to collaborate with the HRC for our black history month project. Thank you!!
- The Fudrucker's fundraiser that was cancelled in December because of the snow storm has been rescheduled to February 11. Maria will find the flyer for that and post it on our FB page

Youth Council

- They're currently waiting for the School Committee's response to the Youth Council's recommendation about the Warrior mascot.
- It sounds like it will be on the next School Committee agenda, or it may be going to subcommittee. Stay tuned

MVPHC partnership

- The Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition (?) has funding available and Catherine Dhingra from Wake-Up reached out to us to see if we want to collaborate on an event about the intersection of structural oppression and substance use.

Communications subcommittee update

- Started a list of calendar events that are relevant to the WHRC (cultural, historical, etc events).
 - Could we use a google calendar or something like that? If we have a shared calendar how would we actually add things to that calendar? Collaborating on a shared doc online is considered a violation of open meeting law, so would we have to bring each addition to the HRC meetings first before adding them to the calendar? This would be a question for Tom Mullen.
 - There could be different kinds of events, such as events we are originating, events that we would like to cross-promote for other groups, days that don't have an event associated with it but that we would like to make a post about
 - The community calendar that the library administers is pretty good. We should be cautious of reinventing the wheel. We could invite someone from the library to an HRC meeting to talk more about this
 - The idea of the calendar wasn't so much intended to replicate the community calendar, but as a helpful tool in knowing and planning ahead about things that we plan to post about (for example, every year we try to post on International Human Rights Day, but it's easy to forget, etc)
 - We should be careful about crossing the line between celebrating and appropriation. Maybe the HRC could host an event or conversation about celebrating diversity vs. appropriation/tokenizing. A conversation like that would be really in our wheelhouse, more so than giving one sentence snippets of a ton of different holidays/events/commemorations. Benny will reach out to the library to see about the possibility of doing a joint event on this topic (with an introductory email from Sherri).
- Would like to develop a protocol in how we engage with others, develop and promote events. For example, some guidelines would be helpful around how far in advance do we start promoting, and via what means? There are a lot of questions about this:
 - What other collaboration and sharing tools can commissioners use when working with partners?
 - What communication tools are available that we could start to use

- Beyond the boards and committees on the town website, with whom does the WHRC communicate and collaborate, or with whom should we? Do we have a list of who the leaders are of these groups?
 - The MLK & CSK Day committee as part of making a list of potential volunteer opportunities with contact info. That document could be ongoing and updated
 - The library also has a list of community orgs, similar to the comment about the library above, we could collaborate with the library on this instead of making a whole new separate list
 - Wakefield.org has a lot of community groups on it
- It could be helpful to have an opportunity for different committees, commissions, non-profits, community groups, houses of worship, etc to come together and talk with one another. Maybe a delegate from each group or something like that to talk about what they're doing, challenges, etc. Mehreen will bring that idea up in the Town
- Yana's posters are up around town.
 - They are up in the kiosks
 - Sherri has been taking them around to different businesses in town. And will be bringing new ones around in April
 - The School committee has approved them to be distributed in the schools. Colleen will check in with the secretaries at the different schools to see how many of the posters they want.
 - The clergy council is working on distributing them to the different houses of worship.
 - And the electronic version is also going up on people's websites etc.

Networking with other HRCs

- A couple of different towns have been reaching out to us who are interested in starting HRCs (Lynnfield, North Reading), and there are other neighboring towns who have HRCs that are looking to learn from one another (Stoneham for example). We could also reach out to other orgs who might not be exactly HRCs but operate in our area, like the Social Justice Network in Winchester (formerly the Winchester Multicultural Network) or the Reading Human Relations Advisory Committee.
- There is also the MA HRC coalition, though their meetings are on a Friday morning which is not always easy to attend
- Maria will reach out to these groups about getting something going

Fall speaker series with UU

- In the past we have partnered with the UU church to do a speaker series. Is that something we would pursue this year?
- The Social Action Committee had said it wasn't possible last year because of COVID.
- Maybe it would be possible to do something virtually? It would be sad to have 2 years go by with no event.

Chair's comments

Central electronic storage for HRC documents

- The town has a centralized electronic storage space for us to save our past documents.
- This wouldn't be the appropriate place for documents that we're currently editing, but it would be for storing things like materials from past events
- Would we be able to archive old versions of things and add newer versions as we develop them (such as our new addition to the Policies and Procedures)?
- Would we each be granted access when we join the Commission and then have access taken away when we leave so we're sure that it's just for current members?
- Maria will explore it more between now and next meeting and get back to us with more details

Book readings for the upcoming year

- For Black History Month Nicole will reach out to the Library about a book reading.
- Sherri volunteers if we need a reader

Matters not anticipated

- Active bystanders training:
 - we have several people registered for the first session and only a few for the second. Spread the word!
 - Jen will submit it to the community calendar
 - Sherri will do a write up to send to the Item
- International Women's History month is March. We should start planning that. Who is interested in being on a subcommittee for that?
 - Nicole
 - Kim
 - Teresa
 - Maria
 - Jen can't be on the subcommittee in full but she has a lot of the materials from last year and could pass along that material and have a transitional call
- Subcommittee minutes:
 - We learned that subcommittee minutes need to be approved by vote in the full HRC meetings (though only subcommittee members can vote on the minutes)
 - We'll be voting on the communication subcommittee and MLK & CSK subcommittee minutes in next month's meetings
 - Jen will include this in the policies and procedures, and put it in the orientation

Action Items:

- Maria will find the flyer for the BSU fundraiser and post it on our FB page
- Benny will message the winners of our FB raffle through FB and let them know they can pick up their prizes at town hall at the greeter's desk
- Benny will do a post-write up for the MLK & CSK day event and submit to the Item.

- Benny will reach out to the library to see about the possibility of doing a joint event on the topic of appropriation/tokenizing vs. celebrating diversity (with an introductory email from Sherri).
- Mehreen will bring that idea up in the Town of having an opportunity for someone from each commission or group to come together to share
- Colleen will check in with the secretaries at the different schools to see how many of the posters they want and get back to Sherri with that info
- Maria will reach out to other HRCs and HRC-adjacent groups about getting something going for networking and learning from one another
- Maria will explore the electronic storage space more between now and next meeting and get back to us with more details
- Nicole will reach out to the Library about a book reading for Black history month
- Jen will submit the active bystander training to the community calendar
- Sherri will do a write up to send to the Item about the active bystander training
- Jen will include the procedure for approving subcommittee minutes in the policies and procedures, and put it in the orientation

Adjourn

Roll call vote on motion to adjourn: unanimously approved

Meeting adjourned 8:43pm