

## **Wakefield Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes 4/20/2021**

Call to order: 7:05pm

Present members of HRC:

Sherri Oken

Maria Muti

Benny Wheat

Jennifer Boettcher

Jeremy Little

Teresa Aravena-Gonzalez

Elizabeth Assenza

Nicole Jacob

Amy Rando

Chief Skory, ex officio

Absent:

Superintendent Doug Lyons, ex officio

Town Administrator Steve Maio, ex officio

Kimberley Ring

Yana Herzog, Youth Council Liaison

Faith Defendre

Also Present:

Mehreen Butt, Town Council Liaison

Colleen Guida, School Committee Liaison

Julie Smith Galvin (town councilor)

Charlene Sanderson (from the public)

Daniela (from the public)

Matt Attaya (from the public)

Gina Gambardella (from the public)

Nicole McClain (from the North Shore Juneteenth Association)

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

- Julie Smith-Galvin: thanks the HRC for the work we do. Seeing things like the white lives matter rally in town recently shows how important our efforts are.
- Daniela: thanks the HRC. Was very discouraged to see the white lives matter rally, but encouraged to see the HRC and the Town put out the anti-hate proclamation. Think this work is really important.
- Matt Attaya: reads portion of a letter. He has found the Common to be a space increasingly taken over by voices and actions of hate, including white supremacists. He calls upon the WHRC to hold an event at the head of the Lake to spread love, inclusion and positive messages.

- It would be great to be able to have an event. Can we do this? The governor's rule right now says outdoor gatherings
- Chief Steve Skory: the white lives matter rally was planned nationally, but unlike in some other communities they did not get the attention and response they were looking for, and there were no skirmishes or other violence.
- It's good that it was peaceful and not violent, but it's very upsetting that no one stopped them. It doesn't matter that they were here for only an hour, it's still offensive and feels very unsafe and unwelcoming to people of color in town
- On social media the talk was that this white lives matter group started in Malden that day and were pushed out. So it's upsetting that they arrived in Wakefield and were allowed to stay.
- There's also other kinds of unfriendly behavior that goes on in town, for example cars of men jeering and yelling out car windows at women.
- It's important to remember and recognize that words can be violence also.
- People often say the white lives matter rally "is not who we are as a community." But is that true? It is who we are as a community, we are a place where a white lives rally group can come with no push-back. It's what the HRC is here for to help move the awareness and narrative forward in our town, to help us as a community get towards where we want to be.
- It seems like there is one section of Wakefield's population that does want to move forward and one that does not. It's going to take everyone coming together to move forward.
- Chief Skory: WPD reached out to federal law enforcement partners to get additional info. As far as they know none of the white lives rally participants were from Wakefield, many of their license plates were from out of state.
- Could the WPD come out publicly with a statement about the blue lives matter flag being co-opted by white supremacists?
  - The police have had a hard time this year, the members of the WPD feel supported when they see those flags.
  - But if you know that the flag is harming people, especially if it is harming people in the police's name, what do you do about that?

Roll call vote to hold an inclusivity rally / Wakefield for love rally / hate has no home here rally:

- 8 yes
- 1 no
- People interested in organizing: Benny, Elizabeth, Teresa, Matt (from the public), Gina (from the public), Daniela (from the public), Charlene (from the public), Jen (from the public), (and maybe Nicole, but she has several big commitments coming up)

#### Approval of minutes

- Approval of minutes from March 16, 2021, general meeting
  - Motion to approve the minutes: unanimously approved
- Approval of minutes from the International Women's Day subcommittee- March 24, 2021

- Motion to approve the minutes: unanimously approved
- Approval of minutes from the Communications subcommittee- April 7, 2021
  - Motion to approve the minutes: unanimously approved

### Subcommittee updates

#### 1. International Women's Day

- We got a lot of interest from the community through the videos. It was a really fun project. The videos will remain available on our website. It was a lot of work for Kim editing all the videos.
- It was so great that it was such a local focus. People are drawn in by that. That's good to keep in mind for future events.

#### 2. Communications

- Putting together a master checklist of how to promote our events
- Everyone please forward along info to Sherri and Kim about how you have promoted events in the past, or contact people for planning and executing events. Please get this info in to them in the next 2 weeks.
- Calendar: this was in no way suggesting that we appropriate any celebrations, but as something we could post for the interest of the public. Please send feedback to Sherri.
- History:
  - it would be great to have our history on our website. Jen created a narrative of how we were formed and what we've done over the years. It would also be great to make that more visual, like on a timeline.
  - It would also be helpful to have a list of people who have served on the HRC. This might be more for our own internal use. Though we could also be put on our website if that seems like it would be of interest to the public.
  - Our history is cumulative, we can continue to add info on our events and our commissioners as time goes on.

### Upcoming months of recognition

#### 1. Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month

- Trying to go beyond book readings. We're planning a variety of events.
- Going to put a big map up in the vestibule of Town Hall where people can put pushpins to indicate where they/their family are from, or where they've visited.
- We're hoping to have other events such as a dance performance, cooking class, craft activity, music, etc.
- Motion to approve an expenditure up to \$75 for printing the over-sized flag, with the reimbursement to be finalized once our budget is renewed. Unanimously approved.
- Maria met with the faculty advisors of the Diversity Leaders program. Their classes are wrapping up so they might have some availability to volunteer with AAPI Heritage Month

#### 2. Pride Month

- The cost of the Progress flag to fly at the Galvin is \$25.
- Motion to spend \$25 on the Progress flag: unanimously approved
- Who would be interested in serving on a Pride subcommittee: Elizabeth, Daniela (from the public), and other members of the public.
- Maria met with the faculty advisors of the Diversity Leaders program. Their classes are wrapping up so they might have some availability to volunteer with Pride Month
- Maria will talk off line with Elizabeth about how to do the meeting requests, etc.

#### Anti-racism action updates

##### 1. Black student union

- No updates

##### 2. Youth council

- No updates

##### 3. Juneteenth

- Nicole McClain from the The North Shore Juneteenth Association has been in charge of raising the Juneteenth flag in Lynn for the past four years. They want to expand on that and have been reaching out to other towns in the north shore area for the flag to be raised around the time of Juneteenth, June 19th.
- June 19th represents African American freedom. It is the day in 1865 when the emancipation proclamation was finally heard of in Galveston Texas two years after it had been signed.
- Last year, Juneteenth was made a state holiday in MA.
- The North Shore Juneteenth Coalition also has a 5k coming up.
- Motion to raise the Juneteenth flag and include that with our flag proposal to the town of Wakefield: unanimously approved
- We have a proposal already written and ready to go to the Town to raise the Juneteenth flag starting on Thursday 6/17.
- If we want to do our flag raising as an event in collaboration with North Shore Juneteenth Association they would also provide a singer to sing the national anthem, someone to speak about Juneteenth, and a poet. As well as info about where to purchase the flag. Nicole McClain will send us that info to the WHRC email address
- Jeremy will reach out to the person he knows on the Stoneham HRC and connect them to Nicole McClain also, because Stoneham also has a Juneteenth observance planned.
- We should contact WCAT to record this observance and flag raising ceremony. Maria will be in contact with Nicole McClain about that.

##### 4. Active bystander training

- Quabbin Mediation has availability in late May / early June to do more active bystander trainings.

- Maria reached out to the Boys and Girls Club, they had interest but not enough to have a youth-only session. Youth 12 and older can attend any of their active bystander trainings, so we can encourage youth to attend, even if it's not youth-only
- WAAV will co-sponsoring, they committed to \$400. So if HRC pays another \$400, we could have 2 sessions
- We could offer this and promote it as part of our Pride activities in June, or if in May we could promote it as part of our AAPI Heritage Month commemorations.
- When we did this before we had one session on a weeknight and one on a Saturday. The one on the weeknight filled up faster. Should we plan 2 weeknights? What would be more accessible to youth, weeknights or weekends?
- It might be better in terms of marketing to have the two sessions happen closer together.
- Maria will reach out to Quabbin Mediation to see about their availability for dates, that might make the decision for us in terms of dates.
- Motion for WHRC to pay \$400 out of our revolving account to co-sponsor the two active bystander trainings. Unanimously approved.

#### 5. HHNHH signs

- We have maybe 3 or 4 of these left. Several people reached out after the white lives matter rally to see if they could get some from us.
- We can order them in batches of 100 for \$500, and that would come out to \$5 each. We sell them at-cost for \$5 to the public. We can order them from our revolving account, sell them at cost to the public and then deposit that money back into the revolving account.
- Providing them at cost right here in town is a benefit to people, since if you try to buy them on your own online, it's often like \$20 plus shipping
- It seems important for the WHRC to do this, it is in line with our mission
- Sherri volunteers to staff a sales table from time to time to sell them.
- Can we get a venmo or other kind of electronic payment option, since we will still not have a lot of live events this year? This is probably a no, but Maria will check with the town accountant.
- Can we sell them at the farmer's market? Not sure if they'll have tables for community orgs this year or not.
- Motion to buy 100 signs for the amount of \$500 for the purpose of selling to community members: unanimously approved
- Maria will buy the signs.

#### Wayland HRC presentation

- Wayland HRC and Wayland Public Library did a presentation that was really great. They did the "lived experiences survey" which was an anonymous survey for community members to share experiences they'd had when they had been discriminated against for any number of reasons (sexual orientation, race, country of origin, etc). They used this info to communicate to the community that these events are happening in town and to understand more about where these events are happening (in schools? Between neighbors? In town offices? In houses of worship? etc).

- They're then using the information from these surveys to affect change.
- The recording of the event where they discussed the survey results has not been made available yet, but when it is everyone is encouraged to check it out to think about whether we would like to do something similar.

#### Networking with other HRC's

- Maria reached out to people in Reading, North Reading, Stoneham, Lynnfield, and Melrose about networking more as local HRCs. There was a lot of enthusiasm.
- This would not supercede the state-wide coalition of HRCs.
- Maria and Jeremy are working on bringing something together.

#### Chair's comments

##### 1. WHRC applicant recommendation follow-up

- At the request of Steve Maio and the Town Council Chair, Maria is working with them on producing a document that describes the roles and responsibilities of the HRC (this is a process they're going through with all the commissions and committees, using the HRC's materials as a starting point since we have such thorough policies and practices documents)
- There were some changes proposed to the make-up of the Commission: there would now be 11 voting members, 9 of which are all appointed by the Town Council, and the other two are the clergy member and the youth member, and that the police position would be converted to a non-voting liaison position.
- This would open up one more Town Council-appointed seat. There was another applicant in the pool who recently applied, Maria will recommend to the Town Council that she be appointed to our final open seat.
- Motion: in the event that the police position is converted to a liaison position, and we need an additional voting member we recommend her to be the final appointed member. Unanimously approved.
- Colleen's term on the School Committee ending in a few weeks. She will advocate with the School Committee for a prompt appointment of a new School Committee Liaison
- On Monday the Town Council is planning to appoint the new members of the HRC.
- Maria will also be giving an annual report to the Town Council on the HRC's activities

##### 2. Central electronic storage for HRC documents

- Microsoft Share Point is the platform for us to share documents electronically. We will be able to use it soon.
- We cannot do live edits on this platform because that would be a violation of open meeting law. This would be for archival purposes.

#### Matters not anticipated

- A huge thanks to Jen and Kim for their contributions and service to the WHRC!!! And in the event that the Town Council does not appoint a police liaison or that the police liaison

does not continue to be Amy, we also give recognition to Amy's commitment to the WHRC. She's been a member since our inception and has done so much over the years to contribute to the commission.

- Next month will be officer elections for Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. If you have any questions about what that involves, reach out to Maria. At the May meeting we will nominate people and vote on filling those positions.

#### Action Items:

- Benny, Elizabeth, Teresa will convene a meeting along with members of the public to organize an inclusivity event
- Everyone forward along to Sherri and Kim info about how you have promoted events in the past, or contact people for planning and executing events. Please get this info in to them in the next 2 weeks
- Everyone send feedback to Sherri about the calendar of commemorations.
- Maria will talk off line with Elizabeth about how to do the meeting requests, etc. in order to get going on Pride month
- Maria will be in contact with Nicole McClain about collaborating with the North Shore Juneteenth Association on collaborating with them on our observance and flag raising.
- Maria will reach out to Quabbin Mediation to see about their availability for dates for the active bystander training
- Maria will check with the town accountant about the possibility of getting an electronic payment account such as Venmo
- Maria will buy the HHNHH signs

#### Adjourn

Roll call vote on motion to adjourn: unanimously approved

Meeting adjourned 9:21pm