

Wakefield Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes 5/18/2021

Call to order: 7:03pm

Present members of HRC:

Sherri Oken

Maria Muti

Benny Wheat

Jeremy Little

Teresa Aravena-Gonzalez

Elizabeth Assenza

Nicole Jacob

Eileen Rooney

Lindsay Averbrook

Daniela Nedbalek

Absent:

Superintendent Doug Lyons, ex officio

Town Administrator Steve Maio, ex officio

Chief Skory, ex officio

Faith Defendre

Also Present:

Mehreen Butt, Town Council Liaison

Yana Herzog, Youth Council Liaison

Stephen Ingalls, School Committee Liaison

Jackie Natale (from the public)

Molly Higgins (from the public)

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

Approval of minutes from April 20, 2021, general meeting

Motion to approve the minutes: unanimously approved

Subcommittee updates

1. Communications

- The Communications Subcommittee has been working on a few projects:
- One is to create a compilation of commemorative days/months/holidays/etc that the HRC can keep in mind.
- Another project is to compile a list of people and groups we have collaborated with on HRC events as well as a description of how to plan and promote events
- A third project is a history of the commission.
- Two of the members of the subcommittee are now no longer on the HRC, so right now Sherris is the only person on this subcommittee right now. Is anyone

interested in joining this committee? Especially anyone who is social media savvy.

- Daniela and Maria are interested in getting involved. Re social media, what would be helpful? Is it about promoting our events? is it about connecting with other groups in town? Is it about responding to FB messages?
- FB can be limiting because it's not very demographically inclusive. In order to reach more youth and other segments of the community it might be good to expand to Instagram or maybe even TikTok

2. Pride Month

- Maria ordered the Progress flag and it will be raised at the Civic Center
- There will be a flag raising ceremony at the Civic Center at 6pm on June 1st. Maria has invited the chair of the School Committee and Town Council to give some remarks. Maria will also contact other elected officials to attend
- We also have the whole month of June to plan other events, we can do as large or as small as we have the capacity to do.
- Elizabeth right now is the chair of the Pride subcommittee, but June is a chaotic month for her professionally so it's not a great plan for her. She wants to remain on the subcommittee but can't chair it.
- Daniela, Eileen, and Lindsay are interested in being on the subcommittee, and there are some members of the public who would like to volunteer as well. Eileen can chair the subcommittee.
- Most of these members of the Pride subcommittee have not been involved in planning HRC events before. Definitely feel free to call upon other members of the HRC for guidance, ideas, etc.

Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month

- We enlisted the participation of members of the public and we've had three amazing volunteers involved in planning and executing the events
- We are bringing a variety of events representing a variety of cultures, which we're posting on our FB page every few days.
- This is the first time the HRC has celebrated AAPI Heritage Month. It's been a learning curve. And we'll have lots of ideas and materials to use for next week.

Anti-racism action updates

1. Black student union:

- Nicole's daughter Ania Jacob is the new VP for the BSU and gave us an update
- Tomorrow 5/19 the BSU will be giving back to the community by planting some plants at the JJ Round park, and donating some items to the Food Pantry.

2. Youth council

3. Juneteenth:

- In order for the North Shore Juneteenth Association to come and bring the ceremony to Wakefield it costs \$250. We have the money for this in our revolving account.

- At this ceremony at 6pm on June 14th there will be representatives from the North Shore Juneteenth Association, a vocalist, and more.
- It would be great for the HRC to take on an educational role to help spread information in the town about what Juneteenth is. Sherri volunteers to write something if someone can provide her with some information. Nicole will send her some info.
- There is a flyer from the North Shore Juneteenth Association all ready to go as soon as we put our specific info into it.
- Maria will reach out to elected officials to attend

4. *Dawnland* documentary screening

- After the proceedings around the Warrior mascot one clear piece of information is that there's a need for more opportunities for people to learn about histories and information regarding Native peoples. One option could be a film screening of the documentary *Dawnland* which is about the practice of taking Native children out of their families and putting them in white adoptive/foster families.
- Maria reached out to the Library to see if they wanted to partner and they wanted to know more about what we are envisioning. What the Library has been doing so far is having people watch the movie independently, and then bring people together for a virtual gathering to discuss, along with the movie's producer and an actor who can join for film screenings.
- Not sure if this is something that would happen in October or sooner, might depend on the Library's availability.
- Maybe we could also check with WCAT about offering this as a Movies by the Lake? Or we could do a drive-in style event like they did in Stoneham when they screened the John Lewis movie.
- If the Library doesn't have capacity, the UU Social Action Committee could partner with us, and their building will be open again in the fall for a live screening
- The license for a community stream of the film is \$125. And there is presumably a cost involved in bringing the film's producer and actor for the conversation. Mehreen suggests writing up a proposal and she can present to the Town Council who would likely be able to find some money for that. Jeremy and Maria will work on this

5. Book program

- Jackie Natale and Molly Higgins join the meeting from the public to share about this project. They are doing a project to diversify the school libraries and classroom libraries. By diversity they mean a variety of things such as race, ability, really anything.
- They got some funding, with help from the PTO at the Woodville, to acquire a bunch of books. The librarian there had a great wish list for both fiction and nonfiction books, which the donation went to purchase.
- They're also in communication with the Dolbeare, the Greenwood, the middle school and the high school. And they're working on getting in touch with someone at the Walton also.

- At the Greenwood they're working on a request to the PTO for support and there's a survey going out to the family to see what kind of books they want.
 - Molly has been working to bring this work also to the Odyssey Day School
 - There are also other people and groups working on this in town, so they're working to collaborate with those folks and to not reinvent the wheel.
 - So far the families have been providing the donations, but there might be an opportunity for businesses to get involved.
 - It's really important to ask the families to be involved from the get-go. This is especially important to engage families who are not included, engaging non-white families and other marginalized families. If those families aren't being included in the process, if it's a bunch of white women making the decisions about what books to buy, that's a problem.
 - It could be cool to also work with the teenagers at the school in addition to working with the parents to hear about what books they would want
 - The next step is to bring together various people who have been involved and have a meeting. Who else should be involved in that conversation?
 - There are some people from the community who have been involved in various HRC events, such as AAPI Heritage Month. Maybe the HRC can put those volunteers in touch with Jackie.
 - It could help to have some of these books built into the curriculum. The district is working on the curriculum.
 - This could be an ongoing initiative every year, with a capital fund set up in perpetuity.
 - There's a lot of energy on this coming from a lot of directions, the parents, the students, the school committee, the librarians, the school administration, etc.
 - The Youth Council is very interested in being involved in this project
 - Eileen will be the the HRC's point person for keeping in touch with this project and keeping the HRC in the loop.
 - Maria's kids go to the Walton and can help put Jackie in touch with the Walton PTO.
6. Active bystander training
- We had two time slots available. The Wednesday one didn't get many people signed up, so they canceled that. But the Thursday one is still on. We will split the cost of this one training with WAAV, paying \$200 each
 - Thursday evening, 6:30 to 9pm, sign up if you're interested! You can find the link on our website and on the FB page.
7. HHNHH signs
- 100 Hate Has No Home Here signs were delivered to Maria's house today. The wire brackets are coming soon.
 - We can be selling those at the Farmer's Market and other places
 - We're selling them at cost for \$5

- Spread the word! If you know people who want one, they can go to the Farmers Market on June 19th, or they can FB message the HRC and we can arrange a drop-off or pick-up.
- Sherri can put something in the Item about this and get in touch with the Library about putting it on their digital screen
- Maria is checking with the town accountant and Town Counsel about whether there's any way to be able to accept electronic payment such as PayPal or Venmo or anything.

Social media training report

- There was a training for all town commissions/committees/etc, which Teresa attended on the HRC's behalf. This was to ensure that any town entities that have a FB page have some consistency.
- They talked only about FB, not other social media platforms.
- They will be archiving the posts, it will be a public record
- The Town wants us to be aware of best practices. For example not blocking people. Not engaging with negative comments or people who are baiting us. If there is an incident of someone negatively engaging with us through the FB comments, definitely contact the Town about what to do about that.
- They want us to be active, making 2-5 posts per week
- They want Jennifer MacDonald to have access to the page, in case everyone who is an administrator leaves and there is no longer anyone actively managing the page
- We're not allowed to hide or delete posts
- The town is working with a group that is advising them on how to handle social media
- They talked a lot about how FB works and how to make your posts visible. One headline is that the more actively you are posting the more you show up on people's timelines
- They shared a lot of details that Teresa can share with whoever is an administrator on our page.
- The Youth Council has an Instagram page. If we don't have an IG account ourselves, we could maybe partner with them to cross-post things.

Networking with other HRC's

- Maria and Jeremy are working on getting a meeting together with some surrounding towns' HRCs. Stay tuned until next month for more updates.

Farmer's Market

- The first farmers market of the season will be on June 19th from 9am to 1pm. They've invited us to be at their non-profit table that day.
- Maria is tracking down where all our HRC stuff is (the table cloth, the pride flags buttons and stickers, the flyers, etc)
- For anyone who is interested, you can sign up for a 1-hour shift to staff the table. Someone will take care of this in the coming month, either Maria or Benny

Chair's comments

1. Finance report
 - We got an unsolicited anonymous donation from someone in the community for \$250. Maria has sent that along to the Town Accountant
 - We have \$1,300 in the revolving account. \$500 is going to Maria to reimburse for the HHNHH signs, \$75 for AAPI map, \$200 for TAB training, \$250 for Juneteenth, and \$35 for the Pride flag. So we're in good shape for our finances.
2. Central electronic storage for HRC documents
 - We now have one central place for written materials from past years. The platform is Share Point, which has been set up for us through the town.
3. Youth Council Liaison:
 - Yana is probably staying on as Youth Council Liaison. There may be other liaisons joining her.
4. Student Commissioner:
 - Enormous thanks to Faith for all the work she put in to the HRC this year, and good wishes to her as she graduates and moves on to the next chapter
 - The student appointment comes from the Superintendent's office in tandem with the HS principal Amy McLeod. Town Council is still making some edits to the document that lays out the process for making all the appointments.
5. Town Council Liaison:
 - Mehreen will be stepping aside as our Town Council liaison. The Chair of the Town Council assigns the liaisons, and the new Chair has not been decided yet, so that will come soon.
6. Police representative:
 - Not sure what the status is of this seat. Maria will check in about this and let us know.

Officer nominations and elections- Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer

- The same person cannot serve in the same position for two terms in a row.
- Chair: Benny is nominated and unanimously approved.
- Vice-Chair: Jeremy is nominated and unanimously approved.
- Secretary/Treasurer: Sherri and Teresa are nominated. Teresa does not accept. Sherri accepts and is unanimously approved.

Matters not anticipated

- The statehouse bill to ban indigenous mascots statewide is having a public hearing on Thursday. Anyone can sign up to give verbal testimony, and/or written testimony. The HRC can submit the same written testimony we submitted for the Wakefield public forum. Benny will submit this. Mehreen will forward Benny the info on how to submit the testimony. There's no official deadline, probably by the end of the month.
- There's also a hearing on the same day for a bill that will mandate accurate and healthy sex education in MA public schools. Elizabeth will be testifying in favor of that bill.
- Arts Council grant:

- We received a grant from the Arts Council in 2020 to bring a musical performance for Pride. We didn't have a Pride event in 2020. They gave us permission to hold the grant over until 2021.
- We don't know what we'll be doing for Pride yet.
- For AAPI month we got contributions from a number of local artists and performers, it would be great to compensate them.
- Motion to use half the grant to compensate the AAPI month performers: unanimously approved.
- Benny will reach out to the Arts Council to see if there's any possibility of another extension for the remainder of the grant. Mehreen mentioned that she got an extension until October for her grant.

Action Items:

- Daniela and Maria will join Sherri on the communications subcommittee
- Maria will contact elected officials to attend our Pride flag raising and our Juneteenth flag raising and commemoration
- Eileen will chair the Pride subcommittee, with Elizabeth, Daniela, and Lindsay also joining the committee
- Sherri will write up a press release/FB post for the Juneteenth flag raising and commemoration. Nicole will send her some info to include
- Jeremy and Maria will work on ideas for screening *Dawnland*
- Eileen will be the HRC's point person for staying connected with the book project that Jackie and Molly are working on
- Sherri will write up something for the Item about the Hate Has No Home Here signs, and also contact the Library about putting it on their digital screen
- Maria will track down where the HRC's physical stuff is (pride supplies, table cloth, etc)
- Either Maria or Benny will send out an email to schedule shifts for staffing the non-profit table at the farmers market
- Maria will check about the status of the HRC seat that is set aside for a member of the police department
- Benny will submit written testimony to the state about native mascots. Mehreen will send her the info on how to submit this.
- Benny will reach out to the Arts Council to see if there's any possibility of another extension for the remainder of the grant.

Adjourn

Roll call vote on motion to adjourn: unanimously approved

Meeting adjourned 9:12pm