



Wakefield Human Rights Commission
July 21, 2021 Meeting

Present: Teresa Aravena-Gonzalez, Elizabeth Assenza, Lindsay Averbook, Jeremy Light, Maria Muti, Daniela Nedbalek, Sherri Oken, Emmanuella Partyka, Eileen Rooney, Benny Wheat

Absent: Nicole Jacob, Amy Rando, Police representative, and ex-officio members Stephen Maio, Doug Lyons, Steve Skory

Others Present: Anne Danehy, Town Council Representative; Yana Herzog, Youth Council Representative; Stephen Ingalls, School Committee Representative

7:02 p.m. call to order

I. Welcome

- A. There was no public participation.
- B. Check in question – If you were a part of nature, what would you be?
- C. New Commissioner
 - 1. Emma Partyka was appointed at the last Town meeting as our new student appointee.
 - 2. She briefly discussed why she wanted to join the HRC and what she hopes to accomplish.

Action Item: Emma Partyka will contact Sherri Oken about receiving an orientation.

II. Mental Health Resources

- A. Why we have been asked by Lindsay Averbook to review this information...
 - 1. Mental health is a prevalent problem in our community.
 - 2. The information she can provide is not currently easily accessible to the public.
- B. Discussion
 - 1. Concern: What we address and information we distribute needs to correspond with our mission.
 - 2. Our mission includes creating education about gender, identity, different cultures.
 - 3. It was recommended that we get in touch with public health dept. officials and other mental health organizations to share this information with them since they are the first stop where people with these concerns would go.
 - 4. Suggestion: Partner with different organizations whose primary work and mission is to address health issues to identify the intersection between substance abuse, mental health and human rights.
 - 5. We are not involved in healthcare but if a human rights issue such as gender identity intersects, it could be considered appropriate for us to share information.
 - 6. There is a tie in between mental health and underserved, marginalized and misrepresented populations who may face barriers to healthcare.
 - 7. We primarily create programming and are not mental health professionals but could curate the information and make it available.
 - 8. As appropriate, we could incorporate and disseminate mental health information through our regular programming .

Action item: Lindsay Averbook will determine which documents are relevant: speaks to our mission and supports our programming. She will contact and serve as our liaison to the Health Dept., the Wake Up Coalition and other organizations with this expertise to ensure we are providing what is accurate and appropriate.

III. Approval of the minutes

- A. June 15, 2021 WHRC Meeting: All present at that meeting voted yes to approve the minutes.
- B. Pride Subcommittee meeting minutes May 28, 2021: All present at that meeting voted yes to approve the minutes.

IV. Pride Month Recap

- A. Flag raising event
We had so many ideas/so little time but were able to plan and participate in an in-person flag raising event.
- B. Other initiatives
 - 1. Posted profiles of prominent LGBTQ people on Facebook
 - 2. Partnered with Library to develop a list of age appropriate LGBTQ books, in place of live readings
 - 3. Presented a June 26th virtual event
- C. Future Pride Month Commemorations
 - 1. We need to plan earlier and create a time line for planning the event.
 - 2. Paint crosswalks in rainbow colors – contact Town Manager who would bring it to the Town Council to be voted upon.
 - 3. Hang progress flags as banners on Main Street (check if 2022 WHS graduate banners will be hung)
 - 4. Live readings
 - 5. Live Pride event

Action Item: The NorthShore Pride event was postponed until Sept. 18th. Eileen Rooney will observe and learn.

- D. Flags
 - 1. We are concerned that the flag is not as visible hanging only at the Americal Civic Center.
 - 2. Suggestion: Purchase Juneteenth lawn flags
 - 3. Since we are offering a Town sanctioned event, we have been allowed to hang the flag at the Civic Center. The policy intends that only the most appropriate flags, tied to approved events, are displayed.

Action Item: Benny Wheat to find out if the Town flag policy can be changed so that we can raise flags at other than the Americal Center and even hang banners. She will check with Tom Mullen about legal position on the flag policy.

Action Item: All subcommittee chairs should coordinate the development of timelines for promoting and planning our live and virtual signature events/commemorations

Ex. Reserve venue, permission from publisher to read a book

V. Antiracism updates

We have not rescheduled Training Active Bystanders (TAB).

VI. HHHH

- A. Sales and Promotions

1. We sold 13 signs at the Farmers Market.
2. How else can we promote the sale of these signs and reach a broader demographic?
3. Advertise on the Farmers Market web site.
4. We can sign up for more tables at the Farmers Market.

Action Item: Benny Wheat will sign us up for more tables at the Farmers Market.

5. What other “swag” and signage can be offered and displayed?
6. Spread the word through the schools (principals, PTOs) that the signs are available.

Action Item: Yana Herzog to spread the word through the Youth Council

7. Create an HRC flyer that provides information about what we do throughout the year and with a QR code for sign purchase.

Action Items: Maria Muti to create a flyer and Stephen Ingalls to create the QR code.

8. Post flyers on Library lobby bulletin board.
9. Post on the Town's digital boards.

Action Item: Sherri Oken to contact Jen MacDonald about advertising the signs on the Town's digital boards

VII. Promoting HRC Events

A preliminary guide for promoting our events through the press, the Town and other organizations was presented.

Action Items:

Share your contacts and resources with Sherri Oken and she will add them to the document.

She will add guidelines on timing of preparing and sending promotions, and create a dedicated WHRC Patch account for our postings that will be shared for all to use.

VIII. Social Media Responses

- A. What will be our process going forward on how to react to reactions/responses to our posts?

1. How do we work with other community groups in dealing with shared posts?
2. How do we combat negative comments and turn them into teaching moments?
3. How can we be allies by responding in ways that will improve understanding?

- B. Discussion

1. We have to be careful in how we engage, and should not engage in a back and forth.
2. You do not have to take the “bait” and react to all. The Town has advised that we don't have to accept abuse.
3. Bring problem post to the Town's attention and ask for guidance.

- C. Considerations

1. If you speak for the Commission, are you speaking in a way that is representative of the whole WHRC?
2. Is the purpose of the post to open a line of dialogue or inform of an event or commemoration?

- D. Proposed strategies

1. Create some boilerplate responses that direct towards a positive for bystanders who could be harmed rather than a negative directed at the person trying to cause harm.
2. Do not respond. Our post is our position, the start of the conversation, and we do not need to say more, and validate the "trolls".
3. Don't create controversies that could eclipse the informational nature of our posts and reflect negatively on the Commission.
4. The biggest problem is with postings on the Wakefield Community page which is not part of the official Town government.

5. Our Facebook page is for sharing information. We can turn off comments.
6. Consensus: Seek guidance from the Town's social media expert before taking further action.

Action Item: Benny Wheat will contact Jen MacDonald for her guidance on responding to social media post comments and the possibility of speaking with the Commission at a future meeting. She also will find out if we allowed to turn off comments to our posts on our Facebook page.

IX. Financial Reports

The Treasurer will continue to share monthly reports from the Town in our future meeting packets.

X. Physical Storage Space Table

XI. Working with Other HRC Table

XII. Matters not anticipated

A. Winthrop Shootings

1. We utilized an approved template developed a few years ago by the WHRC to help us respond to hate incidents.
2. Such templates provide us with a quick way to respond.

B. North Shore Juneteeth Organization

1. Should we join (\$186.50)?
2. Do we need to ask the Town if it is appropriate for us to join with another coalition?
3. Most agreed that their work is part of our mission and part of our work.
4. 6 approved joining; 1 abstained (Sherri Oken)

C. Library's Commit to your Community initiative

Library is compiling a thorough list of all Town organizations

Action: Sherri Oken will fill out the application so that the WHRC is listed.

D. Graphic on language Table

E. July 26th

Suggestion: Recognize July 26th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Action item: Maria Muti to write up for the Item, Observer, Patch, and our FaceBook page

F. School Committee

1. Curriculum adjustments will be on posted on You Tube.
2. The State has moved forward on banning images of indigenous people as mascots and on logos

All voted to adjourn at 9:10 p.m.