



**Wakefield Human Rights Commission General Meeting
December 21, 2021 by Zoom**

Please note action items in RED

Commissioners Present: Teresa Aravena-Gonzalez, Elizabeth Assenza, Lindsay Averbrook, Nicole Jacob, Jeremy Little, Maria Muti, Daniela Nedbalek, Sherri Oken, Eileen Rooney, Benny Wheat

Commissioners Absent: Emma Partyka

Liaisons Present: Yana Herzog, Youth Council Representative; Stephen Ingalls, School Committee Representative

Public Present: Gerald Levinson, Sue Herz

Call to order 7:04 p.m.

I. "House Keeping"

This meeting is being recorded.

Roll Call was taken.

Attendee check in question: One is your favorite holiday tradition that you celebrate with your family?

II. Guest Speakers: Nicole Jacob introduced our speakers, two children of holocaust survivors.

A. Gerry Levinson's Presentation

Each person can make a difference.

He told a family story of survivors, his Austrian family's experiences.

Think of Jewish families as dandelion seeds scattered by the Nazi wind.

B. Sue Herz's Presentation

1. She was born 5 years after the last European was murdered for the "crime" of being Jewish, and grew up in a community of survivors.

2. The holocaust happened through a series of small steps (ex. construction of concentration camps)

The original camp held a variety of disenfranchised social groups and was not a death camp; it was a re-education camp, the first step.

3. The holocaust happened through the deconstruction of truth.

Her Uncle in medical school received the opportunity to study in the US. Fortunately for him, this was before the job of medical schools shifted to meshing the government belief system (superior form of human beings – specifically white Aryans) with the practice of medicine. Medical professionals' job shifted to getting rid of the Jews to rid Aryans of their "sickness."

C. Suggestions for the WHRC

1. Educate on the concept of different calendars for different religions and cultures.

2. Encourage community commemorations of other than Christmas.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. A motion was made to approve the Nov. 16, 2021 minutes of the general commission meeting. All who were present voted in favor.

B. A motion was made to approve the minutes of the Indigenous Peoples Day subcommittee meetings on Sept 22, 29 and October 6, 2021. All who were present voted in favor

C. A motion was made to approve the minutes of the MLK/CSK subcommittee meeting of Nov. 9, 2021. All who were present voted in favor.

IV. MLK/CSK Day Commemoration

A. January 17, 2022 at the Galvin from 10 – 11:30 a.m.

B. Submissions

1. The Committee has only received two service award nominations to date.
2. We discussed how to increase submissions.

Committee follow up: Extend deadline. Send call for nominations and requests for artwork to principals and to the town boards, the Boys and Girls Club, Kidcasso on Albion Street, "Sunday" schools, Follow Your Art in Melrose

C. Other Discussion

1. An excellent exhibit of some of Stephen Lewis's 9,000 posters was displayed at the Beebe Library with a Wakefield Cultural Council Grant and the support by Ironworkers Local 7 and Sheetmetal Workers Local 17.
2. Lewis was a long-time labor activist.
3. A suggestion was made to mount an exhibit of the posters either as part of MLK Day or Black History Month.
4. Stephen Lewis can be contacted at lewisposter@gmail.com

V. Youth Council

The December meeting will be rescheduled in the New Year.

VI. Active Bystander Training

A. There is support for rescheduling an after school event for students.

1. Dan Lieber has been in contact with Doug Lyons about conducting a youth train the train TAB program.
2. Training must be virtual per Quabbin who holds the copyright on the programs.

B. Potential Participation

1. Would students be interested in attending a Zoom TAB for students?
2. Participating in the training would count as community service hours.
3. Timing is important –recommended that we schedule in between sports scheduling, usually in late February

Nicole: Contact Keira Showers, teacher who is our liaison with the Wakefield Academy.

VII. The Language of Diversity

A. The goals and purpose of the 2022 positive messaging campaign was discussed.

B. The committee is seeking input from groups who have lived experiences and potential contacts from members of the Commission.

1. Suggestions: Nagly; LGBTQ+ youth group at HS; Justice Resource Institute; Empower, Disability In
2. Recommendation: Always put the word person first, especially if in doubt on how to refer to a marginalized individual. (ex. person in a wheelchair)
3. Town youth will be a great source of changes in language since they are more tuned.

C. Discussion

Is it worth it to use damaging language in a post to teach how not to use damaging language?

Consensus: Do no harm.

All – Send suggestions of resource groups and contacts to Sherri and Daniela. Also feel free to suggest themes for a particular month.

VIII. Mental Health Resources and Programming

These is a need to distribute material to the community.

Lindsay: Provide a one page fact sheet. Suggest language around mental health for Language of Diversity posting. Provide quick links to resources that can be posted on the web site.

Yana: Help develop and distribute material to the youth in the community.

Suggestion: Google Surgeon General Mental Health Advisory for resources

IX. Other Matters

A. Future Events and Meetings

1. Going forward , in consideration of Covid, must we develop plans A and B, live and virtual, for everything we plan? Which do we plan first?
2. We could arrange for Plan C, Hybrid, using WCAT to live stream.

B. Land Acknowledgement

1. Can it be stated at the MLK/CSK Commemoration?
2. Link to actions, not just words ex. provide ways for people to learn more.

Benny and Eileen: Continue to work on our Land Acknowledgement wording.

C. Liaison Reporting

1. Stephen Ingalls was asked if he would like an ongoing agenda item slot.
2. He prefers to report as needed.

A motion was made to adjourn at 9:02 p.m. and all voted in favor.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sherri L. Oken, Secretary-Treasurer