



Wakefield Human Rights Commission General Meeting
2/16/22 by Zoom

Commissioners Present: Elizabeth Assenza, Nicole Jacob, Jeremy Little, Maria Muti, Daniela Nedbalek, Sherri Oken, Eileen Rooney, Benny Wheat

Commissioners Absent: Teresa Aravena-Gonzalez, Lindsey Averbook

Liaisons Present: Yana Herzog (Youth Council) for part of the meeting

Public Participation: Sue Herz

Guest Speaker: Jim Bennett

Call to order 7:04 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE ACTION ITEMS IN RED

- I. "Housekeeping"
 - The meeting is being recorded.
 - Roll call was taken.
 - Check in question: What is your favorite way to stay warm?
- II. Public Participation - Sue Herz
 - A. Holocaust Forum
 1. It will be presented on Zoom, Thursday, April 28th, which is International Holocaust Memorial Day, and feature 5-6 speakers, all adult children of Holocaust survivors.
 2. It is currently sponsored by the Melrose HRC and Melrose Clergy Association
 3. Would WHRC be willing to sponsor?
 4. A motion was made to co-sponsor the Holocaust Memorial Event, seconded and all voted in favor.
 - B. Conversations About Whiteness
 1. The next 5 week (Thursdays, 7-9 p.m.) course begins March 3rd
 2. Please spread the word.
 - C. Promoting these events
 1. The WHRC doesn't have an email list
 2. No town group can send out email individually – technological issue?
 3. This could be revisited especially after our experience with the pandemic.
- III. Guest Speaker – Jim Bennett
 - A. General information
 1. His specialty is indigenous history.
 2. He encourages us to seek out the council of indigenous people.
 3. In having a land acknowledgement statement, are we getting into a performative thing or something substantive and very important?
 4. He noted that the Wakefield town seal does acknowledge Quannapowitt with the image of a native man.
 - B. A brief history of the town's relationship with the indigenous population
 1. The place we call Wakefield has 12,000 years of history.
 2. So many different peoples lived here before the Europeans arrived.
 3. He presented Wakefield's first family's family tree.
 4. Earliest known map of Wakefield was created in 1634.

5. 1928 Territorial Subdivisions and Boundaries map reveals who originally held the deeds.
6. 1637/9 Squaw Sachem, "Massachusetts's Queen", signed away her people's deed to their land which includes Wakefield.
7. In 1644, the signing of the Submission of Tribal Leader Agreement gave away sovereignty and submitted to European rule.
 - a. James Quannapowitt, a grandson of the first family, was brought to Wakefield to sign the deed.
 - b. Suggestion: acknowledge him with a sign by Lake Quannapowitt.
 - c. He had been living in the "praying town" of Natick as a result of the forced removal of indigenous people.
8. Colonization pitted the peoples against each other.
9. We would like to know who lived here.

The Massachusetts at Ponkapoag were here when the Puritans arrived.

10. How can we highlight this history?

C. WHRC Land Acknowledgment statement

1. We reviewed and discussed it.
Change term "stand with" to not imply physical ability.
2. Proposal: Read it at the beginning of every WHRC public meeting, adding changing additional information to raise awareness, acknowledge current events/activism, provide context and history, etc.
3. Suggestion: Try to influence other Town bodies to do the same.
4. Discussion: Should the town have one statement or each group create their own or should all use our core statement followed by their priority?

ACTION ITEM: Benny Wheat and Eileen Rooney will seek input/approval from the Massachusetts/Ponkapoag people before finalizing and releasing the statement.

IV. Approval of the Minutes

- A motion was made to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2022 general WHRC meeting, seconded and all present at that meeting voted in favor.
- A motion was made to approve the minutes of Jan. 11 & 26, and Feb. 9th MLK/CSK subcommittee planning meetings as presented, seconded and all present at those meetings voted in favor.
- Tabled approval of International Women's Day January 21, February 1 and 10, 2022 meeting minutes until March since they were not in our meeting packet.

V. MLK/CSK Event

A. Video Status

It has been completed and will go live on Monday, 2/21/22

B. Availability

It will air on WCAT and then be available on demand on WCAT's YouTube channel.

ACTION ITEM Nicole Jacob will send link to final version for posting on our Facebook page

VI. International Women's Day

A. Basics

1. March 8th, beginning at 7 p.m., as a Zoom webinar.
2. The committee has assembled a panel of local women whose families came to the U.S. from around the world.
3. Audience will not be seen or heard but can submit questions for the moderator in "chat".

B. In process

1. WCAT is setting up the Zoom.
2. Registration will be handled by the Library and should go live later this week.
3. Promotions will begin this week.

ACTION ITEM: The Committee will develop questions that will be provided to the panelist in advance.

VII. Mental Health Awareness

Tabled since Lindsay and Yana are not present, They will be meeting on Friday.

VIII. Budget

We did not receive a January financial report.

ACTION ITEM: Sherri Oken to find out what we need to spend before the end of the fiscal year and what can roll over into the next fiscal year.

IX. Acknowledgement of Community Members

Will we send Personal thank you notes, or make a public acknowledgement, or both?

ACTION ITEM Jeremy Little to develop a plan for us to consider at the next meeting relative to acknowledging people in the community.

X. WCAT

- We cannot make a donation as a body
- You are encouraged to make individual donations if you can.

XI. Communications

ACTION ITEM Eileen Rooney to speak with Jen McDonald about the possibility of developing a WHRC email list. (also see II. C. above)

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:31 p.m., seconded and all voted in favor.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sherri Oken, Secretary/Treasurer