



**Wakefield Human Rights Commission General Meeting
March 15, 2022 Zoom**

Commissioners Present: Teresa Aravena-Gonzalez, Elizabeth Assenza (Council of Clergy), Lindsay Averbook, Nicole Jacob, Maria Muti, Daniela Nedbalek, Sherri Oken. Emma Partyka, Benny Wheat
Also Present: Stephen Ingalls, School Committee Liaison
Commissioners Absent: Jeremy Little; Eileen Rooney

I. Housekeeping

- Call to order 7:03 p.m.
- This meeting is being recorded.
- Closed captions are available. Please speak just one at a time.
- Role was taken.
- Check in Question: What is your favorite Girls Scout cookie?

II. Approval of Minutes

- A. A motion was made to approve the Feb. 2022 WHRC general meeting minutes, seconded and all who attended the meeting voted to approve.
- B. A motion was made to approve the International Women's Day subcommittee meeting minutes (1/21, 2/1, 2/10, 2/22), seconded, and all who attended the meetings voted to approve.

III. Event Recaps

A. MLK/CSK

- 1. In the future, we will try to collaborate with neighboring towns on planning an event.
- 2. Dance was an excellent added feature.

ACTION ITEM Benny will check that the link to video recording is posted on the WHRC web page.

B. International Women's Day

- 1. We featured a very honest, very real panel who told personal stories.
- 2. Recording is posted on the WCAT and WHRC Facebook pages, as well as on the WHRC town web page.
- 3. We encourage anyone who has not seen this presentation to tune in. It will be an hour well-spent.
- 4. We have the email of people who participated.
- 5. The Library was very responsive to our requests to post information and implemented a seamless registration process.

IV. Future Events and Commemorations

A. Mental Health Awareness Month in May

- 1. Lindsay and Yana Herzog of the Youth Council have had conversations about promoting positive mental health as it affects all different community members.
- 2. They are working with representatives of the Youth Council to offer suggestions on improving mental health, coping mechanisms, suicide prevention, etc.
- 3. They have been gathering content and would like to make information available to the community and provide resources for mental health which they consider a human rights issue.
- 4. Concerns:
 - a. How valuable will it be for us to be the source of information? Relative to our mission, people may not come to the WHRC for this information.

- b. Is how this is proceeding consistent with the role and mission of the WHRC? We are an official Town body and must function as part of the Town.
- 5. Consensus
 - a. We can integrate mental health issues into our commemorations of various groups and cultures.
 - b. Material should be reviewed and approved by the WHRC Board if under our umbrella.
- B. In person meetings events
 - 1. The consensus is that we should begin to plan for in person events.
 - 2. Outdoor events are more possible in May and June.
 - 3. 2021 Pride Event was outdoors and very effective.

ACTION ITEM Benny will check if we can have hybrid general meetings and live subcommittee meetings.

- C. Subcommittee Formation
 - 1. AAPI Heritage Month in May
 - a. Subcommittee members: Sherri Oken, Emma Partyka
 - b. We will reach out to members of the Wakefield community who assisted last year.
 - c. We hope that at least one more Commissioner will assist with this work.
 - 2. Pride Month in June
 - a. Subcommittee Members: Benny Wheat, Daniela Nedbalek, Lindsay Averbook
 - b. Elizabeth Assenza is working on an Interfaith Pride Service and would like to collaborate and coordinate with the WHRC.
 - c. Benny Wheat has booked the Common by the gazebo for a Pride Month concert on Sunday, June 19th, featuring a trans musician. We have an approved permit from noon – 3 p.m.
 - 3. Permit applications for use of Town property are through an online portal and are easy to complete. We do not need to pay fees since we're a town body. We also are covered by the Town's liability insurance.
 - 4. No permit is needed for the Juneteeth flag raising.

We may be able to use two different flagpoles, one for Pride flag and one for the Juneteeth flag.

ACTION ITEMS

Nicole to contact the Juneteeth Committee about our event since they book up early.¹

Benny will go before the Town Council to gain approval on using two flagpoles.

V. Land Acknowledgement

- A. Status
 - 1. Our statement has been shared with a founder of Italians for Indigenous Peoples Day who forwarded it to two members of the Massachusetts Ponkapoag Tribal council on our behalf.
 - 2. We are awaiting their input.
- B. Discussion
 - 1. We will share our statement, which has been crafted with an eye to our human rights perspective, with other Town bodies as either a model or a document to adopt.
 - 2. We also could share with groups that are not Town bodies.
 - 3. We will encourage other groups to take action beyond just using the statement.

ACTION ITEM Daniela will assist in contacting other Town bodies relative to the land acknowledgement.

VI. Monthly Thank You Notes

- A. Discussion on who we will acknowledge first

Suggestions: WCAT, WHRC General Meeting guest speakers (Glavia Smith, Jerry, Sue, Jim),

¹ 3/16 Nicole confirmed: June 15th is open on the North Shore Juneteenth Association flag raising calendar.

businesses that donated money to us, people who helped with the land acknowledgement, Youth Council, Medical Reserve/Red Cross involved in assisting with Covid response, community members who assisted with events

- B. The first will be sent to people who made presentations for the Commission's monthly, general meetings.

ACTION ITEM Benny and Jeremy to craft and send the letter.

VII. School Committee Report

- A. A Covid position to provide mental health assistance, using government funding, has been added
- B. Good work is being done on the diversity curriculum, particularly about indigenous people.
- C. Work is being done to implement more culturally responsive teaching (not to be confused with critical race theory).
- D. They have added Indigenous Peoples Day to the calendar.

VIII. Finance

- A. Status: We have used all the money in our budget (plus \$80) but have over \$1000 in our revolving account.
- B. We cannot fund raise but we can accept donations, write grants and accept grant funding.
- C. Unsolicited donations must be approved by the Town Council.
- D. Questions:
 - 1. Can a sitting Commissioner or an organization of which they are a part while a sitting Commissioner make a donation to the WHRC?
Concern: If a sitting Commissioner is in some way connected to the donor, it may not be appropriate and considered a solicited donation or be seen as undue influence.
 - 2. Can donations be earmarked for specific purposes?

ACTION ITEMS Sherri will confirm in which budget our Hate Has No Home sign income is deposited: the general budget or the revolving account. She also will contact Tom Mullen, Town Counsel, about our donation questions.

IX. Matters not anticipated

Active Bystander Training Concerns

- Will students be available to participate during the spring?
- Will the sessions be live?

ACTION ITEM Benny will check with Quabbin Mediation about when they are going to start offering live sessions.

Motion to adjourn at 9:04 p.m., seconded, and all voted in favor

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sherri Oken, Secretary/Treasurer