



WHRC General Meeting
Tuesday, April 19, 2022 by Zoom

Call to order 7:01 p.m.

Present: Teresa Aravena-Gonzalez, Elizabeth Assenza, Nicole Jacob, Maria Muti, Daniela Nebalak, Sherri Oken, Eileen Rooney, Benny Wheat

Absent Commissioners: Lindsay Averbook, Jeremy Little, Emma Partyka

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

Guest: Mehreen Butt

Congratulations to Nicole Jacob who ran the Boston Marathon.

Check in question: What is our favorite dessert?

- I. Some Highlights of Our Guest Presentation - Councilor Mehreen Butt spoke about Ramadan
 - Our Library has a good selection of books.
 - The month of Ramadan is determined by the Lunar calendar (crescent moon), so each year, it's ten days earlier.
 - It's a 30 day observance during which you must start your fast before sunrise and break the fast at sunset each day. This changes daily and depends on where you are.
 - Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam.
 - Observance: Fast from food and all liquids; abstain from all bad habits including smoking, swearing, fighting, gossip; pray 5 times a day, give to charity, slow down and be meditative and spiritual
 - It's a time of community and celebration which ends with Eid Mubarak, a full day of eating and celebrating.
- II. Approval of the Minutes
 - A. A motion was made to approve the March 15, 2022 WHRC General Meeting minutes, seconded and all who were present at the meeting voted in favor.
 - B. A motion was made to approve April 4 and April 15, 2022 Pride Committee Minutes, seconded and all who were present at the meetings voted in favor.
- III. AAPI
 - A. No meeting yet
 1. A Committee has not met since some Commissioners were awaiting appointment or re-appointment.
 2. We hope to have more volunteers from the HRC and the community.
 - B. Logistics
 1. The Commissioners discussed the possibility that events could be live.
 2. Weather may be a factor so plan an indoor space.

Action Item: Sherri will schedule a committee meeting and check the Americal calendar for openings in May

- IV. Pride Month
 - A. Multi-part Commemoration

1. June 1 Flag raising with student participation (poetry, song), posters with different flags from LBGQT community
2. June 19th event with music
 - a. We have a noon – 3 p.m. permit at the gazebo by the Lake.
 - b. Entertainment by Cici Eberle is being paid through a grant.
 - c. If it rains, we will use the UU Church.
3. TBA: Moderated panel of community members and allies
- B. Other considerations
 1. There is the possibility interfaith service, organized by the UU Church.
 2. We need to purchase flags and buttons or stickers.
 - a. To check cost, Sherri Dalton should have the receipts from last year.
 - b. Quick online check: \$14 for 50 “progress”, handheld flags
 - c. A motion was made to budget a maximum of \$100 to purchase handheld Progress flags and stickers to hand out at our Pride events. Seconded and all voted in favor.
 - d. Yana created some artwork for us to use.

Action Item: Committee will order flags and stickers.

- V. Juneteenth
 - A. We are on the Northshore Juneteenth Association calendar to raise the flag on June 15th
 1. We will have the ceremony at 6 p.m.
 2. Discussion: Should we hire poet and/or a singer from the Juneteenth Association: Last year, we spent \$250 on the ceremony.
 3. A motion was made to pay \$250 for the NorthShore Juneteenth Association to provide the Juneteenth commemoration. Seconded, all voted in favor.
 - B. The Black Student Union is planning a picnic. Do we want to collaborate?

Action Item: Nicole will confirm services from North Shore Juneteenth for the ceremony.

- VI. Budget
 - A. Our \$1,000 budget for 2022-2023 has already been approved.
 - B. How our accounts are maintained
 1. All income is deposited in our revolving account whether payment received or a donation.
 2. We went over our \$1000 budget by \$278. We are not allowed to end the fiscal year at a deficit. The Finance staff will make an adjustment, shifting that expenditure to our revolving budget.
 3. We can request that a bill is paid from our revolving account to avoid future deficits.
 4. Less than \$1200 remains in our revolving account after adjustment for the deficit to our budget.
 - C. Going Forward
 1. We have difficulty determining how much was spent in the past and identifying the vendors.
 2. Monthly reports from the Town show all activity for that month but the finance staff indicated that they cannot set up separate accounts for specific purchases.
 3. To have better control over our accounts (for reference and management), each committee is asked to keep records of their expenditures and submit them to the HRC Treasurer as well as to the Town for reimbursement
 4. The Treasurer also should have records of the income received, whether donations, grants, or sales of items like signage.

Action Item: Sherri will create a projected budget for the coming year based on past experience and a basic form that subcommittees can use to track expenditures.

VII. Mental Health Awareness

A. Committee Activity

1. Yana and Lindsay have been working on ways the WHRC can increase awareness of mental health and available support.
2. They hope to collaborate with the Youth Council on outreach.

B. Suggestion: Have a “remembrance” for those we lost through Covid.

C. The Town and Health Dept. is offering an informational session on mental health resources that will include training on Narcon, etc. on Wed., April 27th, 6:30-7:30 at the Library.

1. We can cross promote the event through our social media.
2. Encourage people to sign up for Town news links.

D. May is Mental Health Awareness month.

What can we do to break the stigma of mental health issues? There might be people willing to share their stories.

Action Item: Benny to post the town informational session on our Facebook page.

VIII. Flag Policy

A. Benny asked the Town Council for an amendment to the flag policy.

1. They seem to be supportive of helping us have a more visible flag raising.
2. Feedback to our request has created some controversy.
3. We found out that it might result in taking down the POW-MIA flag.

B. Outreach with the Veteran’s Advisory Board

They support the Pride and Juneteeth flags being displayed more prominently but do not think it should not be flying along with the American flag.

C. Options

1. Perhaps the Town could erect another flagpole.
2. Fly the flag on the gazebo by the Lake.
3. Fly banners on the lamp posts. This is probably not financially feasible and would compete with banners of graduating seniors.
4. Beebe Library has a flagpole without a flag.

Action Item: Benny to contact the Beebe about their flagpole, check the possibility of flying a flag on the gazebo and stay in contact Town Council about amending the flag policy.

IX. Language of Diversity

A. The purpose: To raise awareness and encourage civil discourse, not to impose or make judgments.

B. The method: We proposed creating infographics with samples of language people use to describe themselves and would prefer to be referred to by others, and alternatives to culturally based idioms and slang considered disrespectful.

C. Feedback

1. Our infographic for Black history month was not well received (and never posted).
2. We reached out for feedback/guidance and were told by most we contacted that the contents should be a live discussion not an infographic.
3. Some were angered or felt discomfort when reviewing the infographic.

D. Going Forward

1. The HRC consensus is that panels would be more appropriate than infographics to amplify voices of people, increase engagement and participation.

Action Item: Daniela to write a letter to the Black Student Union with Sherri's assistance.

- X. School Committee
 - A. Announcement: Partnership of BSU and Gay/Straight Alliance are working in collaboration on a unity festival.
 - B. Town Council Human Rights Proclamation
 1. Originally, it was co-written by the Town Council, WHRC and School Committee.
 2. Most recent iteration was drafted by the Town Council.
 3. School Committee tried to reaffirm it at their last meeting. Every person at the beginning of their term would be provided with this as a foundation.
 4. Is there a better way to formulate a statement that expresses the same sentiments rather than a series of "whereas" and add-ons?
 5. How can we stay on the right side of the open meeting law and re-develop it in a timely manner?

Action Item: Suggest to other Town bodies that we should create an evergreen document and use boilerplate to respond to specific incidents rather than list them in the general proclamation.

Finally ...

We expressed our appreciation to Maria Muti who is completing five years of service to the WHRC. She will be missed. She encouraged us to keep up this important work and promised to continue to support our efforts.

Motion to adjourn 9:48 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sherri Oken