



**Wakefield Human Rights Commission Meeting
Tuesday, November 15, 2022 by Zoom**

Commissioners Present: Ashley Carter, Teresa Aravena-Gonzalez, Elizabeth Assenza, Nicole Jacob, Jeremy Little, Daniela Nedbalek, Sherri Oken, Eileen Rooney, Benny Wheat

Commissioners Absent: Lindsay Averbook

Liaisons Present: Mehreen Butt (for first few minutes only)

Public Present: Jenn Champagne, Jessica Sutich

- I. Welcome
 - A. Call to Order
 - B. Reading of our Land Acknowledgement
 - C. Roll call
- II. Public Participation
 - A. Jenn Champagne
 1. She is a new member of the Melrose HRC
 2. She met some of our members at a joint indigenous people event and is interested in collaborating on future events and sharing information on how we deal with issues.
 3. Melrose HRC meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. in person at the City Hall in the Cassidy Room.
 - B. Jessica Sutich

Jessica is a new Wakefield resident interested in becoming more involved in HRC activities.
 - C. Mehreen Butt congratulated us on the work we do and the events we presented this fall.
- III. Check in question: Who or what do you give back to this time of year?

ACTION ITEM: Email names of organizations you give back to, to Eileen Rooney to be shared.
- IV. Approval of Minutes
 - A. September General Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to accept the Sept. 19th meeting minutes, seconded and all who were present at that meeting voted in favor.
 - B. Indigenous Peoples Day Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes
 1. A motion was made to accept the Sept. 24th minutes, seconded and all who were present at that meeting voted in favor.
 2. Additional minutes for IPD will be approved at the next meeting.
- V. Budget Review
 - A. The Treasurer prepared a draft budget to review.
 - A. Our request for funds for an ASL interpreter and other increased costs has encouraged us to do more formal planning.
 - B. Each year, we start with \$1000 from the Town which we spend until the funds are depleted.
 - C. In 2022, \$2415.07 was spent of seven commemorations that included numerous events.
 - D. To engage people, it cost money.
 - B. Request for a budget increase
 1. The Treasurer suggests that we ask the Town Council, to increase our basic budget to \$3000.
 - a. Use the data we have collected on the full cost of past events including donations.
 - b. This would allow us to operate without going into the red and give us support for growth.
 - c. Unused money goes back into Town general funds.
 - d. Discussion
 - i. Should we be setting an amount to be spent for each event?
 - ii. Perhaps we should consider noting an average spend rather than an absolute amount.

- iii. Some events do not cost anything or cost very little especially if a one-day commemoration or the commemoration is online or the commemoration draws from community talent and uses community facilities.
- iv. Events are not the same every year so it is difficult to plan.
- v. 2020 through part of 2022 were not typical years because of Covid restrictions.
- vi. It's important that the event(s) is appropriate for the commemoration not necessarily the dollars spent.
- vii. Do we spend equitably in recognizing different populations?
- viii. Do we spend proportionately on events, reflective of the importance of the commemoration?
- ix. Is \$3000 enough to cover seven events a year?
- x. We need to provide information on the actual cost of events, including donations, to indicate the full cost of putting on the event since donations may not be available in the future.
- e. Need for Volunteers
 - i. We need to get more volunteers involved in events to augment the small size of the Commission.

ACTION ITEM We will recruit more people from the community using our growing email list to reduce the workload on Commissioners.

- ii. National Honors Society requires student volunteer hours which could be a source of assistance.

ACTION ITEM Ashley Carter will provide the contact person NHS for Sherri Oken to contact.

- C. A motion was made for the Chair and the Treasure to draft a request for our fiscal year 2023 budget to be increased to \$3500 and with that request, include a cost analysis for presenting our events. Seconded. All voted in favor.
- D. MA Cultural Council Grant
 - 1. Sherri Oken has not heard back on the application she submitted other than it has been received.
 - 2. Last year, we got the award letter in January.

ACTION ITEM: Eileen Rooney and Daniela Nedbalek will draft a request for an increase in our 2023 budget and include a supporting cost analysis.

- VI. Upcoming Activities - MLK/CSK – January 17, 2023
 - A. Subcommittee Committee
 - 1. Jeremy Little is interested in being on the subcommittee but not to chair.
 - 2. Eileen Rooney is willing to chair.
 - 3. Teresa Aravena-Gonzalez will assist.
 - 4. We need volunteers to liaison with the schools and to work on graphics
 - a. Rev. Elizabeth volunteered to put together the flyer for MLK commemoration.
 - b. Jenn McDonald from the Town may be able to assist with producing graphics.
 - B. Partnering with other HRCs
 - 1. Is there a possibility of partnering with Reading?
 - 2. Can we host an event in Wakefield and invite Melrose and Reading to come?
 - 3. Each have their own events but perhaps we can we take turns hosting events together.
 - 4. Melrose has a day of service and a potluck dinner planned for this year.
 - 5. The first Wakefield MLK day was presented by the HRC.

ACTION ITEM: Eileen Rooney will reach out to Sudeshna from the Reading WHRC about collaborating on an event.

ACTION ITEM: Send material to Daniela Nedbalek for our social media.

- VII. Announcement
 - Geetika Upmanyu will be sworn in to fill Donna Murphy's unexpired term.
- VIII. Matters not anticipated
 - A. International Women's Day in March
 - 1. A suggestion was made to present a panel on "What is feminism today?"

2. It would present viewpoints of a panel of diverse women from different generations plus an academic in women's studies who can provide historical background.
3. Suggestion: Expand discussion to include womanism¹ (intersectional term coined by author Alice Walker).
4. Jenn Champagne thinks Melrose might be interested in collaborating.
5. Sherri Oken will chair and encourages other Commissioners to get involved.

ACTION ITEM: Sherri Oken to confirm date and theme²

B. School activities

1. Nicole Jacob talked about activities that have recently occurred through the schools.
2. The schools are interested in collaborating with the HRC in the future.

Next meeting: Tuesday, December 20th agenda to include
MLK update
Budget Update

Motion to adjourn 8:44 p.m., seconded and all voted in favor.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sherri Oken

¹ In addition to celebrating all women, womanists place special focus on issues specific to black women, men, and families.

² March 8, 2023 "Embrace Equity"