



**Wakefield Human Rights Commission General Meeting  
March 21, 2023 by Zoom**

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

*Commissioners Absent:* Ashley Carter

*Public Commentators:* Jennifer Fanning (Wakefield), KJ Johnson (Malden), Meghan McDonough (Melrose), Joy Pearson (Malden), Paul Rybicki (Wakefield)

*Other public present:* Joseph Bertrand, Nancy Bertrand, Sasha, Bob, Bronwyn Della-Volpe, L. Ireland, Jane Robie

Call to Order 7:03 p.m.

We will skip the check in question to allow time for community members to speak.

**I. Public Comment**

- A. Paul Rybicki emphasized that he supports the Voke but is concerned about the site, the difficult access and potential ecological disruption.
- B. Joy Pearson emphasized her respect for the environment and different human beings, and expressed her concern about accessibility and safety for those who are disabled, and the potential negative ecological effects.
- C. Jennifer Fanning noted that she has submitted an open meeting law complaint to the building committee pointing out that until recently, there has been little or no notification of meetings nor distribution of detailed agendas and minutes.
- D. KJ Johnson (Malden) said that she is against “blowing up” the forest and habitat, and that she has submitted documentation on the potential harm to endangered species.
- E. Meghan McDonough presented a series of slides illustrating access and environmental concerns, and the need for further historic review especially as it applies to indigenous people. She asked that we add our voice as a body encouraging further environmental and historical review.

**II. WHRC discussion of the above**

**A. Questions**

1. When is the next Historical Committee meeting? April 24<sup>th</sup>
2. What is the timeline for MEPA review? Possibly within the next week although the period for public comment is likely closed.
3. Does the Disability Commission have a formal role in how the project proceeds besides stating their opinion?

**B. Discussion**

1. We are concerned about access; especially for those who are disabled; for public safety; preservation of the human environment and ecology; and respect for indigenous peoples.
2. The United Nations has proclaimed access to a “clean, sustainable environment” as a basic human right.
3. We recognize that if the project was truly transparent, there would not be so much comment now.

**C. Action**

1. The HRC will write a letter expressing its concern relative to indigenous people.
2. We will form a subcommittee to compose a letter to be distributed to appropriate bodies and individuals. Ex. NEMT Building Committee, MA School Building Authority, School Committee, Town Council, other town commissions.
3. We could urge an external review by MEPA.

4. Meghan McDonough will provide a list of people and organizations we can contact.
5. Do we need to have any written communication reviewed and approved by the HRC before it can be distributed?

**TO DO: The subcommittee, consisting of Daniela Nedbalek & Benny Wheat with additional support from Jeremy Little, will reach out to Sherri Dalton about the process for approving the letter and will compose the letter.**

### III. Activities and Events

#### A. International Women's Day

1. We had an outstanding panel and a great team of volunteers from the Youth Council, the public and some HRC commissioners.
2. We featured a female empowerment playlist of music and gave each panelist a CD of the music as a thank you.
3. Most people stayed for the reception after the program.
4. Post press (front page of Item, Patch, Facebook, etc.) thanked all, provided the link to the program recording and the link to the "embrace equity" slide show of participants.
5. We kept count of how many attended and strongly suggest that we do this at all our events as additional information for budgetary requests.

**TO DO Sherri to send out the playlist to the commissioners<sup>1</sup>.**

#### B. MLK Day of Service

Unfortunately, it was cancelled twice due to inclement weather.

**TO DO Eileen will post a reschedule notice on our Facebook page and send it through our distribution list.**

#### C. AAPI/APAH Commemoration

1. Sherri will again chair the subcommittee but we do not have a subcommittee yet.
2. We need Commission volunteers in addition to the community volunteers from the past two years.
3. We have reached out to HRCs in neighboring communities about collaboration.
4. If we have a series of events, we could hold some in collaborating communities.

**TO DO Eileen to introduce Sherri to our new Commissioners who may join the subcommittee.**

**TO DO Sherri will schedule an initial meeting with our community volunteers.**

#### D. Pride and Juneteenth

1. Flag Raisings
  - a. An additional flagpole will be erected in front of the Americal Civic Center.
  - b. Pride flag raised on 1<sup>st</sup> replaced by Juneteenth flag on 15<sup>th</sup> until 23<sup>rd</sup> then bring Pride flag back up through the end of the month
2. An invoice was submitted to pay the North Shore Juneteenth organization for the Juneteenth commemoration.
3. State Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian will speak at the Pride flag raising.

**TO DO Form a sub-committee for June Pride month.**

#### E. Planning Our Events/ Shortage of experienced personel

1. With Board turnover, it's important to leave a written how-to record of events you have coordinated.
2. This spring, many will be moving off the Commission.
3. Two new approved Commissioners have yet to be sworn in, but we have received some new applications.
4. We vote in May for Chair, Co-chair, Secretary/Treasurer

**TO DO: Eileen to speak with each of those eligible for an additional term about their intentions for the coming term.**

### IV. Approval of Minutes

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<sup>1</sup> See end of these minutes for playlist and links to recording of the program, slide show of photos.

We agreed to postpone approval of February's general meeting minutes to allow more for review.

V. Matters Not Anticipated (but on everyone's minds)

A. Discussion of the question of burnout

1. Is our level of programming and activity sustainable?
2. How frequently can we continue to offer programming?
3. Are we asking too much of volunteers and this Commission?
4. Can we outsource any of our work?
5. How can we collaborate more with other organizations and towns?
6. Is there a possibility of there being a Town staff person (ex. D & I) who could take over some responsibilities?

B. We need to secure the continuity of the Commission's basic functions (ex. social media, public email distribution, orientation for new commissioners, knowledgeable people to head subcommittees for our signature events, maintenance of contact lists, etc.)

**TO DO Eileen will invite the Town Manager and a representative of the Town Council to a future meeting to share these concerns.**

*Motion to Adjourn: 9:00 p.m.*

Female Empowerment Playlist (created for International Women's Day)

I Am Woman - Helen Reddy.

I'm A Woman - Peggy Lee.

Ain't Nuthin' but a She Thing - Salt and Pepa

Nine to Five - Dolly Parton

A Natural Woman - Aretha Franklin

Sisters Are Doing It for themselves- the Eurythmics.

I'm Every Woman - Chaka Khan

Armor - Sara Bareilles

Fight Song - Rachel Platten

I will survive- Gloria Gaynor

Respect - Aretha Franklin

Program recording link: <https://youtu.be/MFZnYpMOetE>

WCAT Wakefield YouTube Channel (posted for 30 days).

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFZnYpMOetE&ab\\_channel=WCATWakefield](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFZnYpMOetE&ab_channel=WCATWakefield)

<https://www.facebook.com/WCATWakefield/>

Photos also have been sent to the Library for the Town's photo archive

[IWD 2023 Embrace Equity slide show.pptx](#)

[IWD 2023 Embrace Equity slide show.mp4](#)