

Wakefield Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes 6/16/2020

Call to order: 6:34

Present from the HRC:

Maria Muti

Benny Wheat

Jennifer Boettcher

Sherri Oken

Mehreen Butt

Present from the public:

Sue Herz

Monika Horava

Public Participation:

Sue Herz introduced herself, didn't have any particular comment, but joined the meeting to see what we're up to.

Minutes from 6/8/2020 and 5/19/2020

- Roll call vote to approve minutes from 5/19/2020, as amended. Unanimously approved
- Roll call vote to approve the minutes from 6/8/2020. Unanimously approved

Follow up on Community Anti-Racism Actions

- One thing that came up during our 6/8/2020 meeting was compiling a list of Black-owned businesses in the area. We have one, and the question is where would be the best way to publicize this.
 - Can certainly post it to the facebook page.
 - It would be great to partner with the library to have a resource list
 - It would be great to partner with the Chamber of Commerce on this. Both the Wakefield Chamber and the North Shore Camber
- It would be good to follow up with the students who organized the rally earlier this month as well as the Metco program what they have been experiencing in the schools and if/how we can be supportive in that
- Wakefield 201: this is another idea that came up in the meeting on 6/8/2020
 - This idea generated a lot of excitement as a way for people to become more meaningfully connected to the community, specifically from a frame of making neighbors of color more welcome and included
- Antiracism community messaging: there was an idea about putting messaging all over town with unified messaging.

- If we are asking businesses to put these messages in their places, this might require deeper outreach about antiracism
 - We could talk to the Chamber about this as well
- How do we prioritize all the ideas that came out at the 6/8 meeting?
 - We could make sure to look them over between now and next meeting and rank them
 - Similar conversations to this one are probably happening in a lot of spaces (the library, the schools, the town council, the houses of worship, etc), the HRC could play a strong role in coordinating
- We should share some stuff about Juneteenth on our FB page
 - One thing to look at is the MFA which has a whole day of programming on Juneteenth

Pride month transition of activities:

- The schedule was that the Pride subcommittee was going to post content on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays
- Because of recent events we took a break for last week
- Should we continue with Pride programming?
 - Yes!
 - We will need to get their schedule from them
 - Since we're a week behind, should we pick up where we left off and push it out to the first week of August? Or skip over some of the content?
 - Mehreen offers to forego the talk she was going to do on marriage equality
 - Whenever we pick up again, we can just insert a quick mention like "picking up on our pride programming after a brief break" or something
 - The plan was to raffle the book from each Monday's reading. What was the methodology for that?
 - We should give ourselves permission to be more flexibility on when we post what. We don't have to stick to a rigid schedule for specific content. This shouldn't be an added stress.
- Is there a way we can do more to distribute the lawn flags we have?
 - We could have a central pick-up location
 - We could post on our FB and offer to deliver them for people
 - We could connect with the UU church and see if they'd be into distributing them during their Tuesday stand-outs
 - Could put a blurb in the paper encouraging people to contact us if they'd like a flag
 - Could put a bucket of flags at public places, like at Town Hall or at the Public Safety building. Amy checked and that would be ok
 - Could bring them to give out at Town Meeting on 6/20
 - Could contact the people running the farmers market to see if they would be willing to put out pride flags for people to take at this Saturday's market

- We could focus on putting most of them at the police station, giving them out at the farmers market and town meeting, and if we have ones leftover see if we can distribute them at the UU event on Tuesday.

A conversation about gender and sexuality

- After the pride subcommittee meeting on 4/7 where subcommittee members referenced and talked about Benny's gender identity and sexuality, Benny received *many* apologies. It made her think that this could be a good learning moment. Benny's opinion is that it is not inappropriate and it should not be taboo for someone's gender identity or sexual orientation to come up in conversations. These are normal parts of everyone's life, and shouldn't be cause for discomfort. Though of course it's important to also bear in mind the fact that systemic oppression targets anyone who is not cisgendered and straight, and there can be complicated layers to that (for example, if someone is trans, it might not always be safe for that information to be public. It should always be that person's choice whether or not to share about their gender identity).
- It's also important to always be aware of the assumptions we are making. You do not know someone's gender identity unless they tell you. You do not know a person's pronouns unless they tell you. You do not know a person's sexuality unless they tell you. You can't assume based on what someone looks like, sounds like, acts like, etc. Always keep room in your mind and your heart for the infiniteness of identities.
- What if the HRC adopted a practice of introducing our pronouns in meetings, and changing our Zoom IDs to include pronouns
- It's not necessarily about making sure people are always comfortable, uncomfortable conversations will happen and maybe our role in the HRC is to help those conversations to happen, holding space for those conversations

Vacant positions:

- There is a vacant student position, a vacant clergy position, 3 school committee appointed positions vacant, and one town council appointed position vacant
- Benny took over from Pina as the point person in contact with Principal McLeod at the high school about our student appointee. There are two students
- How can we get the word out more broadly? Right now the vacancies are advertised in the paper, on our FB page, and to our mailing list
- We did some great brainstorming in our meeting on 6/8/20 of ways to get the word out to more people in town. We could use any and all of those strategies to cross-post once the positions are posted by the Town Council and School Committee
- Are we allowed to proactively announce that there will be positions opening up? Something like "there are open positions coming up, stay tuned". It might be good to wait until the school committee and town council meet coming up
- The Town Council will likely vote to publish the openings for the town positions. They can also talk to Jen McDonald to post it on the town FB page to amplify it that way

- Sending an email to our mailing list is a little complicated, something having to do with sending out emails from a town email account is not straightforward
- Our process is that the Town Council and School Committee advertise the positions, the town/school committee collects all the applications and forward them to the HRC. We call the applicants and interview them and then give our recommendation to the town council/school committee who then make the final appointments.

Matters not anticipated:

- Meeting time: could we start a little later, 7pm instead of 6:30? No objections.
 - Roll call vote on moving our meeting time to 7:00pm: approved unanimously
 - We should communicate that to the Town Council and School Committee to update the info in the listings, and talk to Jen McDonald to get it changed on the town's website
- IWD banner with action items: we had originally planned to put it in town hall, but then everything shut down. Now that town hall is reopening, should we put it up, or is it too far gone?
 - Even though the event was 3 months ago, we should still be having conversations about sexism beyond the month of March. We can contact town hall about it

Roll call vote on motion to adjourn: approved

Meeting adjourned 8:23

Action Items:

- Sherri: will contact the Wakefield Chamber of Commerce and North Shore Chamber of Commerce, and do other research, in order to compile a list of Black-owned businesses in our area
- Benny: check in with Principal McLeod and Doug Lyons about where they are in the process of appointing the student seat.
- Mehreen: bring up the Wakefield 201 idea in the Town Council meeting
- Sherri: reach out to the library to see if they're planning any anti-racism programming and if they would like to coordinate with us
- Sherri: reach out to the Chamber of Commerce to see if they're planning any anti-racism programming and if they would like to coordinate with us
- Maria: will reach out to Doug Lyons about anti-racism curriculum or events that the school might be planning and if they would like to coordinate with us
- Maria: reach out to the clergy association about antiracism programming they're planning and if they want to coordinate with us
- Maria will reach out to the clergy association about our vacancy

- Jen: reach out to the school committee about anti-racism programming or policies they're talking about and whether they want to coordinate with us
- Maria will connect Amy with Chi-Chi to get the flags to put at the public safety building
- Benny will post something to the Item about flag distribution
- Maria will get the schedule from Isabel for the pride events and double check about how they were doing the story book raffles
- Maria will check in with the school committee and town council about posting the openings and changing the meeting time
- Jen: contact town hall about the IWD action plan banner
- Jen: research some posts to elevate for Juneteenth