

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Monday, March 4, 2024 at 5:00 PM
Room 22 Upstairs, Recreation Center

Members:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Dr. Dottie Morris
Dr. Mohammad Saleh
Marti Fiske
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Councilor Catherine Workman
Gina Burke

Staff:

Alyssa Bender, Youth Services Manager

Alternates:

Tedd Benson
Ritu Budakoti
Jennifer Nascimento

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of January 8, 2024 Minutes
3. Finance Report
4. Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition Updates
5. Racial Justice Community Safety Report
6. Acceptance of Committee Event Reports
 - a. Black History Month
 - b. Juneteenth
 - c. Keene International Festival
 - d. Indigenous Peoples' Day
 - e. Pride Event
 - f. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
7. New Business
 - a. Calendar invitations
8. Adjourn – Next Meeting April 1st, 2024 at 5:00 PM

Tabled: Community Survey

“In our efforts to create a more equal and just society, we move forward with the firm intention to value the voices, opinions, and experiences of all people. We choose to proceed with the awareness and humility that the statements and decisions we make will have a different impact for those with different life experiences.”

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Monday, January 8, 2023

5:00 PM

Room 22,
Recreation Center

Members Present:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Chair
Councilor Catherine Workman
Dr. Mohammad Saleh
Marti Fiske
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Gina Burke, Alternate
Tedd Benson, Alternate

Staff Present:

Alyssa Bender, Youth Services Manager

Members Not Present:

Ritu Budakoti, Alternate
Jennifer Nescimento, Alternate
Dr. Dottie Morris

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9
10 **1) Welcome and Call to Order**

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12 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos read the HRC's statement: *"In our efforts to create a more equal and*
13 *just society, we move forward with the firm intention to value the voices, opinions, and*
14 *experiences of all people. We choose to proceed with the awareness and humility that the*
15 *statements and decisions we make will have a different impact for those with different life*
16 *experiences."* She called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

17
18 **2) Approval of December 4, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

19
20 Ms. Fiske made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of December 4, 2023. Rabbi Aronson
21 seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

22
23 **3) Finance Report**

24
25 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the Finance Report is in the agenda packet. She continued
26 that Ms. Bender noted that there seems to be a discrepancy of about \$1,500 between the old
27 system and the new system. The current number exceeds the \$2,500 budget the HRC needs for
28 each event to have \$500 seed money, so they still have discretionary funds.

29 Discussion ensued about the Finance Report. Ms. Bender reported that the Finance Report in the
30 agenda packet is not correct, but she has copies of the corrected one.

31

32 **4) Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition Updates**

33

34 Councilor Workman stated that the Coalition has not yet finalized its strategic plan, but that
35 should be done in January. She continued that the next meeting is the Monday after Martin
36 Luther King, Jr. Day.

37

38 Councilor Workman stated that the Coalition is looking for the following new members:

39

- 40 - Someone from the eastern part of the Monadnock region, near Hillsborough County
- 41 - At least one representative from one of the three school districts (SAU 1, SAU 29, and
42 SAU 93)
- 43 - At least one small employer (someone with less than 100 full time employees)
- 44 - Representation from the Town of Peterborough
- 45 - Representation from Cheshire County

46

47 Councilor Workman continued that the Coalition also has a goal of having at least 25% of its at-
48 large members be BIPOC. She asked that the HRC spread the word and let her know if they
49 know people who fit into any of those categories or multiple categories. The subcommittees can
50 be as large and as encompassing as possible, so anyone with interest in DEI work is welcome.
51 She would be glad to meet with anyone one-on-one to talk about it more and see where they
52 would fit in. Discussion ensued.

53

54 **5) Racial Justice and Community Safety Report**

55

56 Ms. Bender stated that the full report has been submitted to the City's internal DEI group. She
57 continued that she knows there has been talk of submitting it to the new Mayor, now that he has
58 officially been sworn in. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the HRC can be notified if it is
59 submitted to the new Mayor. Ms. Bender replied yes.

60

61 Dr. Saleh stated that Ms. Bender had said the DEI group has a member from each City
62 department. He asked how many people that is. Ms. Fiske and Ms. Bender replied about 10 to
63 12 people. Ms. Fiske continued that some large departments, such as Public Works, have
64 representatives from subgroups (e.g. Fleet, Highway, Water).

65

66 Dr. Saleh stated that his recollection was that departments are not able to actually take any
67 action. He asked if that understanding is correct. Discussion ensued. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos
68 stated that she does not think that is true. She continued that the DEI Committee was created
69 with the intention of moving things forward, and they are empowered to take actions. Ms. Fiske
70 agreed and stated that individual department can take actions, as the department heads see fit.
71 She continued that regarding City-wide actions, the DEI Committee can only make

72 recommendations, which need to be approved by the City Manager. The DEI Committee is
73 working on a survey for staff, to see how people are feeling about any sort of harassment related
74 to being any sort of minority. She gave more information about this and other potential actions
75 the DEI Committee is discussing.

76
77 Ms. Fiske stated that regarding the HRC's statement that they say at the beginning of their
78 meetings, the HRC's recommendation did not get past the former Mayor, but perhaps the new
79 Mayor would consider it. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that Ms. Bender says the HRC can
80 be notified if/when it is put in front of the Mayor. Ms. Bender asked if the HRC's
81 recommendation was for that statement to be read at the start of any City Council meeting. Ms.
82 Fiske replied yes. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos added, read before any public meeting.

83
84 Councilor Workman stated that she met with Mayor Jay Kahn (when he was Mayor Elect), and
85 he expressed that he very much wants to make DEI initiative work a priority for the City in the
86 next couple years. She continued that that was great to hear. Others agreed.

87

88 **6) Acceptance of Committee Event Reports**

89 **A) Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

90

91 Rabbi Aronson reported that many people are excited about the upcoming program for Martin
92 Luther King, Jr. Day. He gave information about the breakfast and lunch events to be held at the
93 Community Kitchen with civic leaders and the faith community, which he is making sure will
94 also include the people the Community Kitchen and Hundred Nights serve.

95

96 Rabbi Aronson shared information about promotion for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day events,
97 and other details about the events, including that two American Sign Language interpreters will
98 be present. He gave information about the morning's and afternoon's schedule and speakers.

99

100 Rabbi Aronson spoke about the books by Father Greg Boyle that Toadstool Books is ordering to
101 be sold at the events. He continued that the HRC needs a way to sell the books, and spoke about
102 pricing and payment methods. Discussion ensued about whether there are possible methods the
103 HRC could use for accepting credit card/electronic payments for Father Boyle's books, in
104 keeping with the City's policies and protocols. The group eventually decided to just accept cash
105 or check payments.

106

107 Rabbi Aronson spoke about press coverage, and adding "books sold by cash or check only" to
108 flyers. HRC members gave information about how they and others have been spreading the
109 word about the MLK Day events via social media and the newspaper. Discussion continued
110 about how "books sold by cash or check only" could be added on social media. Ms. Bender
111 stated that today or tomorrow she can re-send the press release and ask if that can be added.
112 Discussion continued about radio coverage. Ms. Bender stated that she will reach out to her
113 radio contacts.

114

115 Rabbi Aronson asked if anyone has heard from youth and students, regarding their involvement
116 with/attendance at the events. Discussion ensued. Ms. Fiske asked how they are getting the
117 word out to civic leaders, and discussion continued. Ms. Bender shared that she has heard a lot
118 in the community about how people are extremely excited about this (event). She continued that
119 it has been brought up frequently in the criminal justice circle she is in.

120

121 Rabbi Aronson asked for a volunteer to provide dinner for Father Boyle and the people with him.
122 Mr. Benson replied that he will.

123

124 Rabbi Aronson stated that he is waiting to hear from the Greater Monadnock Youth Choir about
125 singing at the event.

126

127 **B) Black History Month**

128

129 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that Dr. Morris is spearheading this but is not present today.
130 She asked if anyone else had information to share about it. (No)

131

132 **C) Juneteenth**

133

134 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos reported that the next Juneteenth working group meeting is tomorrow.
135 She continued that they will then have a better sense of the Juneteenth budget and whether they
136 have a first pass list of talents or if they need to go back to the drawing board. Mr. Benson asked
137 who is on the working group and Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos listed the members. She continued
138 that they seem to be successful this year in making it a community-coordinated event.

139

140 **D) Keene International Festival**

141

142 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the KIF is a ways away, so she thinks the working group is
143 taking a break on this.

144

145 **E) Indigenous Peoples' Day**

146

147 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that it is also the same with Indigenous People's Day; it is a
148 ways away.

149

150 **F) Pride Event**

151

152 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the chair of the Pride working group has left the HRC, so
153 they will need another HRC member to take this on. She continued that they will put a note
154 about this on next month's agenda, so people can take the month to think about whether they can
155 volunteer for this. At next month's meeting, she will ask for a volunteer. Rabbi Aronson
156 suggested they ask a member of Keene Pride if they want to join the HRC. Discussion ensued
157 about HRC membership and the process of joining. Ms. Bender stated that anyone who wants to

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158 join can submit an interest form, to go through the process. Councilor Workman stated that she
159 knows someone who was interested in joining and was told there were currently no vacancies on
160 the HRC. Discussion continued about HRC membership terms.

161

162 **7) New Business**

163

164 Ms. Bender stated that she has an update on last month's conversation about HRC membership
165 terms. She continued that everyone is fine for now, and if someone's term is about to expire and
166 they want to continue on the HRC, they can let her know and write a letter to the Mayor. The
167 Mayor reappointed everyone whose terms were expiring in December 2023, who expressed
168 interest in continuing. Somehow, Hunter Kirschner was mistakenly reappointed, but he is not
169 coming back. They are working on fixing that.

170

171 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if there are term limits. Ms. Bender replied yes, she believes it
172 is two terms, but after that, you can become an alternate member. Discussion ensued. Ms.
173 Bender stated that she thinks that if a new person wants to join the HRC, however, they would
174 "bump" a person who has already served two terms. The HRC's webpage has an "active
175 members" section that specifies when each person's term expires. Discussion continued.

176

177 **8) Adjourn – Next Meeting February 5, 2024 at 5:00 PM**

178

179 There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 6:05 PM.

180

181 Respectfully submitted by,

182 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

183

184 Reviewed and edited by,

185 Alyssa Bender-Jesse, Youth Services Manager

