

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, Sept. 4, 2019

5:00 PM

Booras Rm., Keene Public Library

Members Present:

William Hay, Chair

Mohammed Saleh, Vice
Chair

Dottie Morris (arrived at
5:08 PM)

Councilor Janis Manwaring

Pam Knight

Tammy Parrott (left at 5:48 PM)

Staff Present:

Andrew Bohannon, Parks, Recreation, and
Facilities Director

Members Not Present:

Nancy Salwen

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos

1) Call Meeting to Order & Roll Call

Chair Hay called the meeting to order at 5:03. Roll call was conducted.

2) Approval of August 7, 2019 Minutes

Mr. Saleh stated that in the August 7 minutes, he is referred to as Mr. "Selah" throughout and it should be changed to "Saleh."

Ms. Knight made a motion to approve the August 7, 2019 meeting minutes with the correction noted. Mr. Saleh seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Approval of the Rules of Procedure

Mr. Bohannon stated that they need to approve the rules of procedure. Discussion ensued. Councilor Manwaring stated that they did this at the previous meeting, which is recording in the meeting minutes. Discussion continued, and Mr. Bohannon stated that all that is needed is for Chair Hay to come sign the document. Chair Hay agreed.

Dottie Morris arrived at 5:08 PM.

4) Finance Report

Mr. Bohannon reported that there are no changes. He continued that he can get the \$500 from the City so there is something new to report out at the next meeting. He will also need to add another column in, regarding the Keene International Festival. At tomorrow's meeting the City Council will vote on accepting two donations for the festival, totaling \$4,500.

Councilor Manwaring made a motion to accept the Finance Report. Ms. Morris seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

5) Committee Discussion

a. International Festival / MLK Breakfast

Mr. Bohannon stated that the Keene International Festival organizers will put on a great show. He continued that they are very passionate and diligent, and have been doing a great job with advertising and putting this program together. There will be about 800 people attending. He gave information about what the event includes, such as food trucks, programming, dancing, and demonstrations. It will be at the Recreation Center, both indoors and outdoors.

Ms. Knight asked what happens if it rains. Mr. Bohannon replied that in that case it will all go inside. Chair Hay stated that he will keep track of the weather. He continued that the HRC reached out to a lot of community members for tables, which will be around the war memorial.

Visitors arrived and introductions were conducted.

Mr. Bohannon spoke more about the core group of people handling the logistics of the Keene International Festival. He stated that since there will be more community partners tabling than anticipated, which is a good thing, the HRC can share a table with the ACLU. The table can have the HRC's mission statement, meeting minutes, and other information about what they do. He asked who would be available to be at the table to share information with the public. The event is from 11 AM to 2 PM. Councilor Manwaring, Chair Hay, and Mr. Saleh replied that they can do it.

Mr. Saleh stated that he would like to prepare a suggestion box, which is something the committee discussed at the last meeting. Other members thanked him, and discussion continued about staffing the table. Members agreed to find a way to take turns at the table so they each have an opportunity to walk around, and no one person needs to be at the table the whole time. Mr. Bohannon spoke more about the food vendors, with Sandra Wallace spear-heading the effort. Mr. Saleh asked if she is the person to speak to if anyone else wants to participate. Mr. Bohannon replied yes, but they are pretty maxed already, with about eight food vendors from around the region.

Mr. Saleh asked if it is okay to broadcast this event and if there are any restrictions on doing so. Mr. Bohannon replied that they can share away. He continued that it is being promoted on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and so on and so forth, and getting

a lot of traction. Brief discussion continued about the weather. Mr. Bohannon stated that they have paid for tents, so rain or shine, they will try to be outside, unless there is a severe downpour.

b. Public Forum

Mr. Bohannon stated that Ms. Knight reached out to him with the idea of combining the public forum and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast. He continued that they could have a breakfast, and a speaker followed by a dialogue of about 30 to 45 minutes. He thinks it would be a really good idea.

Ms. Morris stated that she was not at the last meeting. She continued that some folks in Jaffrey have a well-attended, yearly event, and want to bring someone in to do something on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. She asked if the HRC would be interested in having that person, too. The folks in Jaffrey were upset to hear that the breakfast did not happen last year.

Ms. Knight asked who they are bringing in. Ms. Morris replied Climbing Poetree, two African American women from Brooklyn, who do spoken word poetry. She continued that they are doing an evening workshop in Jaffrey. Maybe they could do a performance in Keene for the breakfast. Mr. Bohannon asked if they would share costs with Jaffrey. Ms. Morris replied yes. Discussion continued. Ms. Morris gave more information about Climbing Poetree and said she will email a link to the group.

Chair Hay stated that they have to consider the timeline – they would need two months to get approval, which puts this into November. Mr. Bohannon replied that they would need more details about this from Ms. Morris, and the group could vote on it at the October meeting. He continued that Heberton Hall could be a great venue. Discussion continued about that and the possible costs.

Mr. Bohannon stated that they need a member of the committee to lead the charge for logistics. Chair Hay replied that he would. Discussion continued. Mr. Bohannon asked Ms. Morris to send the Climbing Poetree link so he can circulate it to the group, reminding everyone that they cannot have an email dialogue about it, per the Rules of Procedure.

6) New Business

a. Future Meeting Location – Library

Mr. Bohannon stated that the location for future meetings is the Booras Room at the library. Discussion ensued, and Ms. Parrott stated that she will reserve this room on the library's calendar. Ms. Knight asked her to make sure it is marked as a public meeting.

Mr. Bohannon stated that as they start to search for speakers, if it is still in process and it is on the agenda, they could use the TV in the Booras Room to watch the videos. He spoke about the Parks & Recreation & Facilities Department's social media presence, and how he hopes information shared from these meetings will get more people to join. Maybe they would expand beyond this room.

Mr. Bohannon stated that the current meeting time/date does not work for everyone, especially new member Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, who cannot make it on Wednesdays but very much wants to participate. He continued that Chair Hay should probably see what the commitment level is for this particular date and time, or if there is a better time or date for people. Discussion ensued. The group agreed upon the first Monday of each month at 5:00 PM, starting next month, October 7. Ms. Parrott stated that she will change the room reservation accordingly. Ms. Knight noted that Nancy Salwen is absent today so they do not know if that time/date works for her.

b. Screening & Discussion "To Kill a Mockingbird"

Mr. Bohannon reported that on September 17, at the Night Owl Café at Keene State College, there will be a showing of To Kill a Mockingbird. He continued that it will be followed by a facilitated conversation about the law, justice, and civics. All ages are invited, and it includes a pasta buffet. It is sponsored by the American Democracy Project, KSC's Political Science Department, and others. The HRC had talked at a previous meeting about wanting to promote local events, and this is a good example. It is open to the public and anyone can RSVP to Kim Gagnon.

Councilor Manwaring stated that last month someone suggested The Public, which is a great movie about homeless people in Cincinnati. She continued that homelessness is such an issue in Keene, too. Ms. Parrott replied that the library has a copy of the movie, and she believes they have public performance rights for it. Maybe they could stream it here. Mr. Bohannon replied that he will put that idea on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Bohannon stated that the next meeting's agenda will include the Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast logistics, a possible movie screening, and wrap-up of the International Festival. He asked if there were other topics to add. Councilor Manwaring asked if she can make a Human Rights Commission sign for use at the festival. Others replied yes. Ms. Parrott stated that they should keep their eyes open for more programming, so they can tell people they are doing that. Mr. Bohannon stated that they can promote the Martin Luther King, Jr. event, even if they do not have details yet.

Tammy Parrott left at 5:48 PM.

Chair Hay recognized visitors Kya Roumimper and Jedidiah Crook, from Keene State College. Mr. Crook stated that they wanted to ask if this committee would support the idea of the City having a Resolution to have Indigenous People's Day take place in Keene. He distributed copies of a handout to the committee, stating that it talks about what it means to celebrate Indigenous People's Day instead of Christopher Columbus. He gave more information, and discussion ensued. Mr. Crook asked how to proceed with having the City consider this. Mr. Bohannon replied that he and Ms. Roumimper and whoever they represent at KSC should send a letter to the Mayor and the City Council. He continued that the City Council would send the communication to one of its subcommittees, and at a meeting of said subcommittee, Mr. Crook and Ms. Roumimper

and/or whoever authored the letter would make a presentation on why they think Indigenous People's Day should happen in Keene.

Discussion continued. Several committee members spoke in favor of the idea and discussed how to support it. Mr. Bohannon stated that the committee could support the effort through a memorandum to the City Council, if that is what the committee wants. He continued that he will add this to next month's HRC agenda.

Mr. Saleh stated that the committee had previously discussed the topic of hate crimes and thought that it would be a good idea to have the Keene Police Chief come to a meeting and talk about it. Mr. Bohannon replied that he apologizes for not getting that on the agenda this time. He continued that he wanted to make sure that when they invite the KPD here, there is enough room on the agenda so they have enough time to talk and ask questions and get a good scope. He asked if it will work to have this on next month's agenda. Committee members replied yes.

7) Adjourn - Next meeting October 2, 2019

Mr. Bohannon stated that the next meeting is October 7, at 5:00 PM.

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker