

City of Keene
New Hampshire

MARTIN LUTHER KING, Jr. /JONATHAN DANIELS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 6, 2019

5:00 PM

Room 12 Rec. Center

Members Present:

Bill Hay, Chair
Nancy Salwen (Late)
Mohammad Saleh, Vice-chair

Staff Present:

Andrew Bohannon, Parks & Rec. Director

Members Not Present:

Jan Manwaring
Dottie Morris

Others Present:

Pam Knight

1) Call to Order and Roll Call -

Chair Hay called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM. Roll call was conducted and introductions made. Mr. Bohannon reported Ms. Knight's name would be going before City Council tomorrow night and by March she should be a full member of the Committee.

2) Approval of Minutes – January 2, 2019

Mr. Bohannon advised the Committee of a change he made to the minutes during the final edit. On Page 3, second paragraph, sixth line down he changed "Holocaust Society" to "Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies".

Mr. Saleh motioned to approve the minutes of January 2, 2019 as submitted by Mr. Bohannon. Ms. Salwen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3) Finance Report –

Mr. Bohannon reported the annual donation, of \$750, was received from the St. James Thrift Shop. This amount is reflected in the current balance of \$4,574.70.

Ms. Salwen made a motion to accept the Finance Report as presented. Mr. Saleh seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

4) Election of Officers-

Ms. Salwen nominated Mohammed Saleh to serve as Vice-chair. Chair Hay seconded the motion which carried unanimously. Mr. Saleh accepted the position. Bill Hay agreed to continue as Committee Chair.

5) Commission Direction –

Mr. Bohannon provided copies of Resolution R-2019-04 for Committee discussion. Mr. Bohannon noted the Mayor is proposing that Human Rights be brought into the Committee name. Continuing Mr. Bohannon said the City Attorney has reviewed/ revised the document. The document will go before City Council tomorrow night if adopted by the Committee.

1. Committee Name Change-

Mr. Bohannon said the Martin Luther King, Jr. /Jonathan Daniels Human Rights Committee would be the longest title of any City committee. Committee members agreed. Discussion ensued with Ms. Salwen suggesting MLK/Jonathan Daniels is referring to historic figures more than the Committee's mission. She also mentioned diversity. Mr. Bohannon referred to the Resolution explaining gender identity is mentioned there and is another group to bring to this table. He also noted the back page explains the purpose of the Committee and how the name change could draw more attention to the Committee's purpose.

Now, therefore the Martin Luther King, Jr. /Jonathan Daniels Committee's focus and mission will be updated to reflect "Human Rights" in its name with the following charges:

- To celebrate and honor the significance of the lives of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jonathan Daniels;
- To promote the principles of social justice, non-violence, equality, and multiculturalism through education programs, community service and public events'
- To explore and make recommendations for the elimination of barriers in policies, procedures and practices within the Keene community, encouraging a more diverse, inclusive community.
- To reassure and protect minorities that feel unsafe in Keene.
- To educate the community on the advantages of a more diverse and inclusive community.

Ms. Knight asked if there was a group called the Human Rights Council in town. Mr. Bohannon said there are at least four to five groups in Keene having the same discussions, but none with that name. Ms. Salwen said the City of Keene's Human Rights Committee or Committee for Social Justice makes a statement and would mean something to people. Mr. Saleh said dropping their names makes him feel a little uncomfortable. The discussion continued with Mr. Bohannon noting other resolutions the City has adopted and the Mayor wants to make sure there is a bigger, welcoming thought process; not to lose what Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jonathan Daniels stood for. Noting the Committee has floundered in the past, Mr. Bohannon said he thinks having a Human Rights Committee kind of drives the bus. The Human Rights piece allows the Committee to be broader in its scope of work and he thinks that is what the Mayor is trying to accomplish. Ms. Knight said the only Committee involvement she was aware of in the past was the annual Breakfast.

The discussion continued for some time with the following comments/questions being presented by Committee members.

1. Which name is more powerful- the City of Keene's Human Rights Committee or the City of Keene's Social Justice Committee?
2. The Committee name right now is vague. The question is what is it that you do?
3. The purpose of the Committee would still include Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jonathan Daniels but the resolution would expand the purpose and make it more inclusive.
4. Is this a work in progress or was it developed by a different Committee at City Hall?
5. How does workforce diversity fit into this Committee?
6. Does this Committee have any enforcement authority?
7. Is there a process for the Committee to make recommendations to City Council?
8. Social Justice Committee sounds like we will go out and make all the changes; whereas Human Rights Committee seems like more of an advocacy role.
9. Can we create some sort of forum to ask people of diversity what it is like being here?
10. Human Rights Committee sounds more like you look beyond the legal definition and try to expand what it means to be just.
11. We are trying to create an environment where all people feel safe.
12. We want our name to reflect what we stand for.
13. The name Human Rights Committee is bigger and more benign than Social Justice Committee.
14. Will the name change be contested at City Council?

As the discussion was winding down Committee members narrowed the name change down to several options:

- a. The City of Keene Committee for Social Justice and Human Rights
- b. The City of Keene's Human Rights Committee
- c. The City of Keene's Committee for Social Justice

Mr. Saleh motioned for the Committee's name to be changed to the City of Keene's Human Rights Committee. There being no second Mr. Saleh withdrew his motion.

Ms. Salwen then motioned for the Committee's name to be changed to the City of Keene's Committee for Human Rights. Mr. Saleh seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

2. City Resolution –

Mr. Saleh made a motion to accept Resolution R-2019-04 as proposed. Ms. Salwen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3. Upcoming Events-

Mr. Saleh and Ms. Salwen clarified the music portion of the January 31st event did not happen. Mr. Saleh asked for clarification the Committee was endorsing the events presented by Ms. Morris for the month of February. Mr. Bohannon confirmed the Committee's endorsements.

Mr. Bohannon reported on the Library's community book discussion "The Last of the Just" on

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Sunday, February 10th, at 2:00 PM. This event will be held at the Congregation Ahavas Achim,
84 Hastings Avenue, in Keene.

6) New Business-

- Committee Membership - 3 vacancies to fill –
Rev. Michael Hall is interested in returning to the Committee. Mr. Saleh will contact a friend in the LGBTQ community. Ms. Salwen will also reach out to some contacts. Discussion ensued with regards to having a student serve on the Committee.

7) Adjourn-

There being no further business Chair Hay adjourned the meeting at 6:10 PM.

Next meeting date: March 6, 2019

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats-Hall, Minute Taker
February 7, 2019