

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA**

Monday, October 4, 2021 at 5:00 PM

Room 22 Upstairs, Recreation Center

- This meeting will be conducted in person and by using the online meeting platform, Zoom. The public may view the meeting online at [www.zoom.com](http://www.zoom.com) and click on “Join A Meeting” enter Meeting ID 838 4094 3157
- To listen to the meeting, please dial (646) 876-9923 and when prompted enter Meeting ID 838 4094 3157
- If you encounter issues accessing this meeting, please call (603) 757-1835 during the meeting

Members:

William Hay, Chair  
Dr. Dottie Morris  
Janis Manwaring  
Dr. Mohammed Saleh  
Nancy Salwen  
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos  
Dr. Shaun Filiault  
Ritu Budakoti  
Marti Fiske

Staff:

Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

Guests:

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of September 13, 2021 Minutes
3. Finance Report
4. Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report
5. Committee Programs
  - a. MLK Day
  - b. Holi Festival
  - c. Pride Month
  - d. Juneteenth
  - e. Keene International Festival
6. New, Other Business
7. Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, November 1, 2021 at 5:00 PM

More Time: Keene State College Outreach

1 City of Keene  
2 New Hampshire

3  
4  
5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE  
6 MEETING MINUTES  
7

Monday, September 13, 2021

5:00 PM

Keene Library

Members Present:

William Hay, Chair  
Councilor Jan Manwaring  
Nancy Salwen  
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos  
Marti Fiske, Ex-Officio  
Ritu Budakoti, Alternate  
Dr. Dottie Morris

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation & Facilities  
Director

Members Not Present:

Dr. Mohammed Saleh  
Dr. Shaun Filiault

8  
9  
10 **1) Welcome and Call to Order**

11  
12 Chair Hay called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

13  
14 **2) Approval of June 7, 2021 Minutes**

15  
16 Councilor Manwaring made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 7, 2021. Ms.  
17 Fiske seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

18  
19 **3) Finance Report**

20  
21 Mr. Bohannon reported that The HRC budget is accurate but is not yet inclusive of the donations  
22 and expenses from the Keene International Festival. It is not caught up yet.

23  
24 **4) Racial justice and Community Safety Committee Report**

25  
26 Mr. Bohannon stated that hopefully everyone has seen the report of the Racial Justice and  
27 Community Safety Committee (RJCS). He continued that the HRC has been tasked with  
28 overseeing this report and making sure they are keeping in mind all of the report's

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29 recommendations and making sure they are doing their due diligence. The HRC is the shepherd  
30 of that document for the City of Keene and need to help it move forward. He is looking for the  
31 HRC's thoughts.

32

33 Discussion ensued. Ms. Fiske asked about the new group that was organized as a result of the  
34 report, and Mr. Bohannon explained that it started as a way of helping the Cheshire Medical  
35 Center work through their diversity issues, and after about a year and a half, it expanded to  
36 include other business leaders in the city. When the report came out, they wanted to expand  
37 further, and created the Monadnock Region Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging  
38 (MDEIB) Coalition. He continued that HRC members are welcome to participate. He himself  
39 has not been able to attend meetings regularly because the timing conflicts with other City  
40 meetings, but he and Mayor Hansel are the City representatives and it would be good to have  
41 another. Discussion ensued about possible City representatives.

42

43 Mr. Bohannon stated that the MDEIB Coalition is focused on the Monadnock region, whereas  
44 the HRC needs to focus on Keene and the RJCS report.

45

46 Chair Hay asked if Mr. Bohannon could find out how many HRC members could attend the  
47 MDEIB Coalition meetings at once, and what happens if they inadvertently create a quorum of  
48 the HRC. Mr. Bohannon replied that he could ask the City Attorney and find out how that would  
49 work.

50

51 Ms. Salwen asked Dr. Morris about her participation with the MDEIB Coalition and what work  
52 is happening now. Dr. Morris replied the big task right now is writing a job description similar  
53 to what she does at Keene State College [Chief Officer of Diversity and Multiculturalism], but  
54 for the whole region, and fundraising for the position. She continued that the YMCA is taking  
55 the lead, but other people are contributing. She asked at the last meeting if they were going to do  
56 something before that person gets here, in addition to just waiting for this person, and she did not  
57 really get an answer.

58

59 Discussion continued about the timing of the MDEIB meetings and the functionality of Zoom.  
60 Ms. Salwen asked if this seems like a worthwhile group. Dr. Morris replied yes, especially if  
61 they are working with everyone. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she would be interested,  
62 although she cannot attend every meeting. Chair Hay and Ms. Salwen agreed. Mr. Bohannon  
63 stated that he will have a conversation with Dan Smith from the YMCA and the Mayor, related  
64 to the status of everything, to find out what the best course of action would be for this group. He  
65 will send that information along to the committee.

66

67 Mr. Bohannon asked the group how they want to, as the HRC, move forward with the RJCS  
68 report. He continued that it needs to be led by the Chair, such as "Let's review the report, let's  
69 take action items out of it, and those are our agenda items for the next six months". Chair Hay  
70 replied that he had a lot of ideas while reading it, but that was a while back. Discussion ensued,

71 and the group decided to all review it and come ready to discuss it at the next meeting. Dr.  
72 Morris suggested they invite some people from the RJCS Committee.

73  
74 Discussion ensued about larger meeting spaces, hybrid options, and how many people would be  
75 part of the meeting. Mr. Bohannon stated that he feels the group should be able to go remote but  
76 the law says otherwise. He continued that the law states that as long as a quorum of the HRC is  
77 physically present in the room, everyone else can be remote. They have the technology to do  
78 that, but they need five members to commit to be present to create a quorum.

79  
80 Councilor Manwaring stated that when she re-read the report today, she noticed that over and  
81 over it stressed the importance of community discussions. She continued that that is what has  
82 naturally been evolving from this committee – they held events and conversations for Pride,  
83 Juneteenth, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and so on and so forth, and would have done something  
84 for Indigenous People’s Day if they had met this summer. They should feel good about the  
85 successes they have had as a group. And next month it is time to start planning for the next  
86 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day event.

87  
88 Chair Hay asked everyone to really have the RJCS report down pat next month and come to the  
89 meeting ready to discuss it. He continued that they should invite other people to participate over  
90 Zoom. Discussion ensued about the location. Ms. Fiske spoke about the Library’s camera and  
91 speaker system. Mr. Bohannon stated that since the Library now closes at 6:00 PM on Mondays,  
92 the meeting can be in the Rec Center’s “Zoom Room” in case the meeting goes longer than 6:00  
93 PM. Councilor Manwaring agreed. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that given the nature of next  
94 month’s conversation, she does not think they should be in a position to feel limited by time and  
95 not be able to have the full conversation they need to have.

96  
97 **5) Event Recaps**  
98 **A. Pride Month**

99  
100 Mr. Bohannon stated that the Pride events were quieted because they ran out of time. He  
101 continued that the HRC will have to reexamine how they go about planning and holding events  
102 so they do not overload themselves. Pride was a good idea, and they distributed 6 or 8 flags to  
103 downtown businesses and have more for next year. Brief discussion ensued about different  
104 versions of Pride flags, diversity flags, and the meanings of flags and symbols.

105  
106 **B. Juneteenth**

107  
108 Chair Hay stated that the Juneteenth event went very well and the subcommittee did excellent  
109 work, and the speakers and performers were great. Councilor Manwaring agreed and stated that  
110 it was great to see it on the front page. Three hours was perfect for the event. She continued that  
111 Dr. Morris did a wonderful job. Other HRC members agreed and expressed positive feedback.

112

113 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the subcommittee did not get a chance to debrief as planned.  
114 She continued that it is probably worth at least each of them making some notes, though, and  
115 collecting them for next year. Discussion ensued about not meeting if it creates a quorum.

116  
117 Ms. Fiske stated that the feedback she received was that the event worked well for the first time  
118 it was held, but the communication could be tightened up, regarding the last minute changes in  
119 timing. There seemed to not be one specific subcommittee member to contact regarding, for  
120 example, the performers.

121  
122 Ms. Salwen stated that another improvement/intention for next year would be creating written  
123 programs. Ms. Fiske suggested they post the schedule at Railroad Square and on the website.

124  
125 Chair Hay asked what the YMCA was doing for Juneteenth, which was not coordinated with the  
126 HRC's events. Other HRC members replied that the YMCA was doing a membership drive and  
127 dedicated allies were upset that it was like an advertisement for the YMCA. Councilor  
128 Manwaring stated that the Juneteenth subcommittee met with the YMCA people twice, but by  
129 that point, the subcommittee had already been planning its event for three months and it was too  
130 late. The plan is for the YMCA people and the HRC subcommittee to plan together next year,  
131 starting in January. Mr. Bohannon added that the YMCA and the HRC each had different  
132 designs and were not willing to combine them. The marketing and design could be coordinated  
133 if the two groups started working together sooner next year.

134  
135 Ms. Salwen asked if other groups in the city were doing Juneteenth events, because she heard  
136 talk of it. Ms. Fiske replied that there was an organization collecting all of the statewide  
137 Juneteenth information and posting it on Facebook, trying to be a clearinghouse. Ms. Salwen  
138 asked if it would be best for Keene to have one big/major thing everyone is connected to. Ms.  
139 Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that it would mean taking one organization's overarching vision.  
140 She continued that the HRC subcommittee saw things differently than the YMCA. Councilor  
141 Manwaring replied that they also tried connecting with the Historical Society. Dr. Morris added  
142 that a reenactor was also interested. Councilor Manwaring replied that now that they know all  
143 these folks are interested, they intend to start in January and to plan it together, to have different  
144 things going on. Discussion continued.

145  
146 Ms. Salwen stated that Railroad Square was a great location. Others agreed. Mr. Bohannon  
147 stated that he agrees with keeping it downtown. He suggested in front of the Rec Center as an  
148 alternate location, so they can move right inside if the weather is bad.

149  
150 **C. International Festival**

151  
152 Ms. Budakoti reported that the International Festival will be Saturday, September 18, 11:00 AM  
153 to 3:00 PM, at the Rec Center, as COVID-safe as possible. Masks are highly recommended.  
154 She continued that there will be food, activities, crafts, and performances. Mr. Bohannon shared

155 a few more details and thanked Ms. Budakoti and the team for the hard work they have put into  
156 this.

157  
158 Mr. Bohannon asked HRC members to please let him know if they know of anyone interested in  
159 fiscally sponsoring this event. Ms. Budakoti added that there are some volunteer spots because  
160 some people have backed out. Councilor Manwaring replied that she will help.

161  
162 Councilor Manwaring asked if the HRC will have a table. Mr. Bohannon replied no. He  
163 continued that he did not know how much value there would be in that, and they were trying to  
164 consolidate the groups, and this committee had not met in three months. Ms. Budakoti stated  
165 that if they have something to communicate to a wider audience, there will be a welcome kiosk;  
166 that is a possibility. Chair Hay asked if anyone wanted to write something up. Ms. Budakoti  
167 suggested photos from Pride or Juneteenth. Ms. Salwen stated that she took a lot of video, but  
168 she does not know how to send it to people. The files are on her computer. Discussion ensued  
169 about how to share media. Ms. Salwen agreed to put the files on a thumb drive and give the  
170 thumb drive to Mr. Bohannon.

171  
172 **6) New, Other Business**

173  
174 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the sharing video topic brings up something to keep in the  
175 back of their minds: the website, content, and how the group is reaching out to the community.  
176 She continued that the Juneteenth information did not get distributed as well as they had hoped.  
177 This is not something to discuss now at this meeting, but how they are handling their media and  
178 a public face is a topic to keep in mind. Mr. Bohannon replied that that is a good suggestion,  
179 because they need information ahead of time and then they can distribute it among all the  
180 platforms. He continued that he will give this some thought and put “marketing concepts” on the  
181 next agenda.

182  
183 Discussion ensued about the City’s website, Facebook and other social media platforms, and  
184 what content the group wants to see on the HRC’s webpage on the City website. Ms. Cunha-  
185 Vasconcelos stated that when people ask about HRC events, she tells them to check the City’s  
186 website because she thought it had events listed, but it does not. The HRC should do more to  
187 promote its events in advance. Ms. Salwen agreed. Mr. Bohannon replied that they also need to  
188 make sure their events are well planned in advance so they are not waiting until the last minute to  
189 make edits to events. He continued that for example, last year they pulled off the Martin Luther  
190 King, Jr. Day event, but it was last minute.

191  
192 Ms. Fiske clarified that the calendar on the City’s website is only for meetings of public boards  
193 and committees. She continued that there is a separate “news and events” tab. Content needs to  
194 be posted by the City’s IT Department, so anything the HRC wants posted has to be sent to IT.  
195 Mr. Bohannon added that the City is starting a major website update.

196

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197 Councilor Manwaring stated that she wanted the HRC to do something for Indigenous People's  
198 Day, because it is important, but the HRC did not meet for three months. She continued that she  
199 made some good connections, and through one of those, learned of an event at which Robert G.  
200 Goodby will speak about a book he has written and what it is like to be a Native American in this  
201 area. She distributed flyers, and stated that it is called "A Deep Presence: 13,000 Years of  
202 Native American History." It will be at the Historical Society on October 11. She asked  
203 everyone to please spread the word.

204  
205 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that because the summer cuts them off at the knees a bit, if they  
206 want to do something for Indigenous People's Day, they have to plan well in advance. Mr.  
207 Bohannon replied that this year was crazy because of COVID, but it also has given the  
208 committee a taste of what it is like to have an ambitious calendar and manage expectations and  
209 planning. They have to make sure that they are going to be meeting what they have committed  
210 to do, and to do it well. That is one thing to be cognizant of.

211  
212 Councilor Manwaring stated that she is not running again for City Council but she will ask the  
213 Mayor if she can stay on this committee. She continued that if everyone is okay with it, she will  
214 ask Councilor Workman if she can be the representative. Mr. Bohannon replied that Councilor  
215 Manwaring is not the City Council representative to this committee. He continued that there is a  
216 City Council liaison seat, but she chose to be a member. A liaison does not get a vote. Dr.  
217 Morris stated that Councilor Workman was on the RJCS Committee.

218  
219 Chair Hay asked if this committee is complete with its nine members or if there is room for  
220 more. Mr. Bohannon replied that the Mayor wants to add people to be alternates. That way if  
221 someone is not here they could have a quorum easier. Chair Hay spoke about someone he knows  
222 who may be interested in joining this committee. Councilor Manwaring stated that they do not  
223 want the same three or four people doing everything and it would be good to have more.

224  
225 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if next month's agenda can include the Martin Luther King, Jr.  
226 Day event so they can start planning. Others replied yes.

227  
228 **7) Adjourn – Next Meeting is Monday, October 4, 2021 at 5:00 PM**

229  
230 There being no further business, Chair Hay adjourned the meeting at 5:56 PM.

231  
232 Respectfully submitted by,  
233 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

234  
235 Reviewed and edited by,  
236 Andy Bohannon, Director Parks, Recreation and Facilities

7/1/19- 6/30/20	HRC	KIF	7/1/20- 6/30/21	HRC	KIF	7/1/21- 6/30/22	HRC	KIF
Balance 7/1/19	\$ 4,574.00	\$ -	Balance 7/1/20	\$ 4,096.73	\$ 3,411.00	Balance 7/1/21	\$ 3,691.88	\$ 2,541.89
	This was entered at 4574.70							
<b>Income</b>			<b>Income</b>			<b>Income</b>		
City of Keene	\$ 500.00		City of Keene	\$ 500.00		City of Keene	\$ 500.00	
Donations KIF		\$ 6,847.83	Donations KIF		\$ -	DONATIONS KIF		\$ 5,000.00
subtotal	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,847.83	subtotal	\$ 500.00	\$ -	subtotal	\$ 500.00	\$ 5,000.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 500.00</b>	<b>\$ 6,847.83</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 500.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 500.00</b>	<b>\$ 5,000.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			<b>Expenses</b>			<b>Expenses</b>		
International Festival		\$ 3,436.83	International Festival		\$ 869.11	International Festival		\$ 4,910.57
			Pride Flags - 15	\$ 104.85		Pride Month	\$ -	
			Juneteenth Presenters \$200	\$ 800.00		Juneteenth	\$ -	
			Steve Schuch					
			Hadi Lanceric					
			Jonah Wheeler					
			Nicole Young					
Martin Luther King Day			Martin Luther King Day	\$ -		Martin Luther King Day	\$ -	
Peter Blood	\$ 500.00							
KSC Dining	\$ 477.27							
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 977.27</b>	<b>\$ 3,436.83</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 904.85</b>	<b>\$ 869.11</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 4,910.57</b>
<b>Net 19-20</b>	<b>\$ (477.27)</b>	<b>\$ 3,411.00</b>	<b>Net 20-21</b>	<b>\$ (404.85)</b>	<b>\$ (869.11)</b>	<b>Net 21-22</b>	<b>\$ 500.00</b>	<b>\$ 89.43</b>
<b>Balance on hand</b>	<b>\$ 4,096.73</b>	<b>\$ 3,411.00</b>	<b>Balance on hand</b>	<b>\$ 3,691.88</b>	<b>\$ 2,541.89</b>	<b>Balance on hand</b>	<b>\$ 4,191.88</b>	<b>\$ 2,631.32</b>



**City of Keene**  
New Hampshire

# Racial Justice & Community Safety Committee Report

*March 18, 2021*

***Committee Members:***

Dr. Dottie Morris, Co-Chair  
Richard VanWickler, Co-Chair  
Catherine Workman, City Councilor  
Julia Atkins  
Tia Hockett  
Pierre Morton  
Eli Rivera, Sheriff  
Aditi Saleh  
Gail Somers

***City Staff:***

Rebecca Landry  
Shane Maxfield

## INTRODUCTION

As the nation witnesses acts of racism from unfair lack of access to resources and opportunities to brutal acts of violence against people of color, an examination of Keene, the community we call “home”, is important. It is essential to engage in sincere efforts to understand the lived experiences of people of color living and/or working in the community, to analyze systems, and to develop an effective and sustainable plan to address any concerns as key steps in creating an equitable and anti-racist community. The Ad Hoc Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee (the “Committee”) began meeting in July 2020 upon being charged with “developing recommendations to prevent or correct systemic and cultural inequities in Keene.”

Racism for many people in Keene is invisible while, for others, racism is present in their lives. The Committee held open forums during which people of color shared personal experiences in schools, in the workplace and in public settings that illustrated the realities of both blatant and implicit bias in our community. The City of Keene elected officials (in collaboration with others in business, education, law enforcement and others) have such an important responsibility to engage the greater community in stopping racism and bias; in moving toward equity, diversity and inclusion; in ending unfair treatment of people of color and making Keene a better place for all people.

This brief report serves to make recommendations that will both create a racial equity lens for the City, businesses, and individuals throughout the community and also build a foundation for what will, ideally, be beginning steps in a long-term, sustainable, and effective approach to advancing racial equity.

## THE PROCESS

### 1. Buckets

The Committee realized at the onset that the substantial and important work required would benefit if organized into key categories or bucket lists based on input received in the June 2020 public forum hosted by Mayor Hansel. The public provided comments in the forum that were grouped by the Committee along with members’ thoughts into the following “buckets”, and additional public forums were later held for each individual category.

- **Community Education and Schools**
  - Fairness and opportunity for all students, faculty and staff
  - Prevention of achievement and opportunity gaps
  - Strategic programs and curriculum that prevent implicit bias and that promote a culture of fairness
  - Multi-racial leadership development
- **Laws, Policy and Policing**
  - Advancement of racial equity
  - Development of policies that facilitate the integration of racial equity into decision-making
  - Identification of impacts desired of policy solutions
- **Social and Community Justice**
  - Implementation of tools to open racial equity discussions that lead to progressive change in the community
  - Identification of ways to change programs and practices that perpetuate implicit bias

### 2. Speakers

The Committee invited a number of guest speakers and subject matter experts with the intention of educating the committee and public on current practices and identifying opportunities. There were also

members of the SAU29 School Board, local teachers, City department heads and others who participated in the meetings.

- Steven Russo, Keene Police Chief  
Chief Russo reviewed the KPD use of force training and policy as well as KPD's Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) accreditation.
- Elizabeth Dragon, Keene City Manager  
The City Manager reviewed City hiring and recruitment practices; the charge and activities of the City Human Rights Committee; the importance of the KPD's CALEA accreditation; the NH Commission on Law Enforcement, Accountability, Community and Transparency created in June 2020; and the KPD body camera trial program.
- Sheena Bice, Veteran and First Responder (VFR) Healthcare  
Ms. Bice provided a presentation overviewing the purpose of VFR Healthcare highlighting the high-risk, high-stress nature of first responder jobs and the importance of mental healthcare in this field.
- Robert Malay, Superintendent of Schools, NH SAU 29  
Superintendent Malay reviewed school curriculum, staff training and inclusionary opportunities; recent Keene School Board activities; and disciplinary data, policies and opportunities.

### 3. Public Forums

The Committee held three public forums in November and December 2020, one for each of the subject buckets identified herein. The Committee unanimously values the importance of public input in identifying the local Keene community's specific challenges and opportunities, and strongly recommends that the City provide ongoing opportunities for the public to provide input in a manner that is open and safe for members of our community. The input received was revealing and helpful, however, there is concern that more people might have participated if they felt their input had the potential to affect change and, importantly, if they were confident their input would not subject them to racist treatment or criticism resulting in negative outcomes.

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

There were common themes that became evident throughout the Committee's process of collecting information to form recommendations. Acceptance of these observations as truth is critical to the success of any actions taken to advance our community toward equity and inclusivity for black people, indigenous people and all people of color.

### 1. Racism Exists In Keene

Based on the lived experiences spoken by people of color in Keene, the Committee concludes that racism exists in Keene. The public is calling for community leaders to immediately take a clear anti-racism position by addressing systemic, cultural and individual manifestation of racism.

*"There are people of goodwill who haven't experienced racism. If it's not part of your everyday consciousness, there is a blindside. We often think that racism is about a person's behavior. Some people, we think, act in explicitly racist ways toward racial minorities. Those are the 'real' racists, we tell ourselves. But racism is not merely a function of individual attitudes, and it can't be eradicated by changing hearts and minds. Racism is the social, legal, political, and economic distinctions that mark and maintain unequal access and entry points to privacy, property, protection, prosperity, and*

*personhood. Racism is embedded in structures, institutions, and ideas, especially those about work, deservingness, representation, redistribution, and government's role."*

(source: [global.cornell.edu/themes/silence-racism](http://global.cornell.edu/themes/silence-racism))

The Committee received clear public testimony from members of the community who experience racist slurs, aloof comments about slavery, school curricula that are inadequate regarding the important experience and influence of black Americans, lack of anti-racism policy, fear of reprisal for any response to racist activity and lack of racial diversity in important services such as medical services, for example. These are just brief examples of the bigger picture of racism that plague many quiet American communities, and Keene is no exception. A recurring acknowledgement amongst both Committee members and the public is that there is a need for everyone to understand that everyone is harmed by racism. It will take our community as a whole to make changes that effectively improve equity and inclusivity for all people of color which will, in turn, make our community better for all.

## 2. Implicit Bias Must Be Identified

Many members of the Keene community have not experienced racism and, yet, may unintentionally perpetuate racial inequities, discrimination and biases. The purpose of identifying sources and practices of implicit bias is not to cause conflict, but to ultimately unearth unconscious bias and teach people and organizations to use a lens of equity in working together as a community to promote health and wellbeing for everyone. The creation of processes to "call in" each other (or organizations) into dialogue when addressing problematic and potentially harmful behaviors will help affect positive change.

## 3. Open Dialogue Requires Significant Expansion

In every meeting of the Committee, the need for open and ongoing dialogue was identified as paramount to achieving progress toward eliminating racial inequities and improving outcomes for all racial groups. The group considered the use of one-time surveys, regular climate surveys, citizen and stakeholder groups, student groups and other inclusive opportunities for open dialogue. The activity is community engagement, but the specific goal here is for victims of racial injustice to have safe and effective channels to share their personal experiences and ideas and for people who may have implicit biases to listen, learn and engage.

## 4. Community Education is Essential

The Committee received numerous ideas from members of the public highlighting the importance of community education. Ultimately, overcoming racial inequity and bias in Keene will require disrupting local complacency and expanding the knowledge base of everyone in the community. Educating citizens, organizations, leaders and community groups about the experience of people of color in our community as well as teaching how to identify implicit bias and adoption of newly embraced policies, procedures and practices rooted in the principles of equity are essential.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee makes the following recommendations to the City Council and to the community at large based upon information gleaned from its research, discussion and public input. Though this is the result of the work of a City committee, the recommendations will be most effective as adopted by an intended audience including all businesses, educational institutions and government agencies throughout Keene and the greater region. It is acknowledged that this will likely include some overlap and coordination with additional local and state initiatives focused on racial justice.

## 1. Government Leadership

- A. **It is recommended that the City of Keene take a position against racism starting with a strong anti-racist statement.** The Committee received multiple suggestions that the City Council issue a strong and clear public statement stating its anti-racist position and commitment to racial equity and inclusion. The public is looking to the City for leadership at a time when acts of racism around the nation are a cause for alarm and a call for change. In addition to issuing a statement, it is recommended that the City Council adopt a Council Goal specifically focused on achieving racial equity in Keene.
- B. **It is recommended that the City work with community stakeholders to establish clear community racial equity and inclusivity goals and that the goals be widely adopted by the City and Keene agencies and businesses.** This report is just the beginning of a process. Next steps will require identification of clear and measurable goals and accountability measures together with other organizations across the community as well as a plan for implementation and review of progress made over time. This process can only be successful if built upon information gathered in section 2 of this document, "Public Input and Community Education", which aims to specifically identify the local challenges and biases to overcome.
- C. **It is recommended that the City continue its commitment and efforts toward racial justice and community safety whether via an existing committee such as the Human Rights Committee, a new equity and inclusion task force, or a joint effort of multiple community organizations and agencies.** Again, this report is just the beginning - just the first step. There is much work to be done and much motivation to make a difference. A strategic approach to moving Keene toward racial justice and inclusivity will require consistent effort, analysis and adjustment including regular follow-up on the recommendations in this report. There is also much data available that, when collected and analyzed, can help identify where and to what extent bias exists in our community. This data will help build awareness of the situation and emphasize the danger of complacency.
- D. **It is recommended that the City promote diversity in its boards and commissions membership and responsibilities.** Racial diversity amongst City committee members will provide important diverse perspectives that benefit the community and will help build sensitivity to and eliminate implicit bias over time. Committee charges and responsibilities should be evaluated to determine if they welcome diversity and provide realistic opportunities for inclusion.
- E. **It is recommended that the City promote festivals that celebrate racial diversity.** The International Festival and Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast are good examples of existing local celebrations that welcome and promote racial equity. Juneteenth, Holi Festival, Pride Celebrations, Cinco De Mayo, and other celebrations provide additional opportunities to appreciate diversity and to overcome stereotypes, build awareness and encourage unity.

## 2. Public Input & Community Education

- A. **It is recommended that the City, school systems (k-12-college) and community organizations and groups provide regular, safe and open opportunities for difficult conversations about local, personal racial justice experiences allowing input to be in-person or written, anonymous or personally identified.** The purpose of this effort must be specifically focused on welcoming and encouraging testimony from black people, indigenous people and people of color about their experience in Keene – including those who are reluctant to share or who may not trust that their input will improve racial equity in Keene. It is also of utmost importance that those who wish to share anonymously have the opportunity to and that they feel comfortable doing so.

There are members of the public who are reluctant to speak about their concerns. People have stories that they are not sharing. Personal conversations are needed to get tangible feedback, but being vulnerable and exposed is not comfortable. The committee did hear some testimonies and agreed that bringing these personal experiences to light will be necessary to disrupt local implicit bias and complacency, to build a broader awareness of the true extent of the problem in Keene. This will require multiple platforms such as anonymous surveys and strategic dialogue including public bodies and key stakeholders. There are two important objectives here: to provide a safe and welcome means for victims of racism to share their experiences without fear of negative consequences, and to engage those who do not experience racism in order to increase awareness of the existence and the consequences of silent racism.

- B. **It is recommended that the City meet regularly with other businesses to share local observations and data and to develop, implement and measure organizational and community programs designed to 1) improve racial equity and inclusivity and 2) build public awareness of and knowledge to combat implicit bias.** Keene is not alone in its motivation to address racial inequity and to improve inclusivity. There are well established programs and standards that can establish key objectives and a framework for this work. Examples include the NH Governor's Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion, the New Hampshire Commission for Human Rights, the "Restorative Justice Vehicle for Dialogue, Organization For Chief Diversity Officers Tenets", and the "Race and Equity in New Hampshire Series", to name a few. Businesses engaged in this process should include the following, at minimum.

Government Agencies	Regional NAACP
Schools	Regional ACLU
Churches	Cohen Center For Holocaust and Genocide Studies
Healthcare Providers	Keene State College
Chamber of Commerce	Franklin Pierce University
Keene Family YMCA	Antioch University New England
Keene Police Department	River Valley Community College
Cheshire County Sheriff	Keene Public Library

This will likely require implicit bias training for the people involved, and meetings should be facilitated by a professional with racial equity experience and skillset.

- C. **It is recommended that the services of local colleges and universities be engaged to conduct community racial equity and inclusion climate surveys every two years and that survey results and findings be shared with community leaders, the City Council, the general public, and organizations listed in section 2.B. for their education and response.** Racial equity climate surveys measure a community's – or an organization's – or a group's – level of adoption of a racial equity lens in its employment, programs and services. A regular effort is important to both increase people's receptivity and cooperation which yields better information and to assist in identification of specific needs and opportunities to advance racial equity.

In June of 2020, for example, Living Cities administered their fourth such annual climate survey and provides the following feedback which shows how helpful this approach can be in designing programs that address the specific needs of an organization or community.

*"In comparison from past years, we saw that staff were more willing and have more language to name tensions that they're holding as well as dissonances they are seeing within the*

*organization. Many of the dissonances named are a direct result of how adding elements of pro-Black culture without actively dismantling white supremacy culture is insufficient to grow an organizational culture that is pro-Black... Last year, staff reported deepened understanding of interpersonal, institutional and structural racism. This year, we saw even deeper analysis and interrogation on what it might take to address the different levels of racism and how much they are interconnected. At the same time, staff felt the tools they have for addressing racism within the organization are insufficient.”*

(source:<https://www.livingcities.org/resources/372-internal-scan-2020-racial-equity-and-inclusion-competency-survey-results>)

### 3. Public Safety

- A. **It is recommended that the Keene Police Department continue its CALEA accreditation and continue to publicize what is required for the CALEA accreditation as well as its most recent assessment report.** CALEA accreditation is voluntary, and in August of 2020 the KPD was one of just fifteen NH law enforcement agencies with this accreditation, which it has held since 2009. It requires a lengthy annual review and regular audit of policies, procedures and records for the ultimate purpose of fairness in the application of justice. Among the many practices carefully reviewed by CALEA are hiring processes and use of authority and force, for example.

The Committee’s efforts involved a general overview of KPD reports, training practices, use of force and other policies. The City Council and public are encouraged to visit the KPD website, “About” and “Resources” pages which include detailed information about training required by the KPD and its most recent CALEA assessment report which provide in-depth information including recent data and activities. The Committee found this information to be helpful in its review.

- B. **It is recommended that the KPD and other local law enforcement and first responder agencies engage external resources to conduct a review of recruitment and job application processes to identify and correct any possible bias that may limit applications from or the advancement of black people, indigenous people, and people of color.** Diversity in law enforcement personnel is essential for effective law enforcement and for community relations. Chief Russo made it clear that the Keene Police Department is actively seeking applicants, and racial diversity is desired, but a shortage of applicants in general continues to be a challenge in law enforcement in and well beyond the Monadnock region. In addition to the CALEA accreditation process which includes a thorough review of hiring practices, there is an opportunity to look more closely at the recruitment and skills testing processes used by the KPD and other local law enforcement and first responder agencies to attract a diverse workforce. There may be opportunities to reach a more diverse applicant pool, to improve the message of racial equity and inclusion within recruitment programs, and to post job openings with services that have a more diverse following. It is also recommended that the Keene Police Department review and update its recruitment video with these goals in mind.
- C. **It is recommended that the KPD provide public education on what methods are trained and used by the KPD to limit any necessary response to what is reasonable within various circumstances.** Committee discussions included a review with the KPD of what is commonly referred to as “use of force”. There were questions about what is legal and what is not, what is considered reasonable response to resistance and what is not, how KPD personnel are trained to respond in various circumstances, and how data regarding incidents involving use of force is recorded. It became clear in these discussions that the KPD has specific and ongoing training, review and reporting requirements regarding its response to resistance activities and policies that the public is not

generally aware of, and that could aid in improving public knowledge of KPD practices.

- D. **It is recommended that the City Council support the need for more community mental health services and any opportunities to assist the KPD in its response to emergencies requiring these services.** This recommendation is specifically focused on community safety and addresses the concern that some emergencies that involve psychological or behavioral crises have the best possible outcome for all involved when assisted by or managed by mental health professionals.

The Committee considered mobile crisis intervention services that could possibly provide immediate stabilization in cases of psychological or behavioral crisis. These types of services, however, do not transfer the responsibility of response from law enforcement to the mobile crisis resources because, in times of emergency, the dispatching of services must be immediate and, thus, cannot include a level of questioning or decision making required to determine whether mental health services might be needed. The immediate dispatch of law enforcement response continues to be required to meet public safety requirements and expectations. The potential promise of fewer crises if there are more community mental health resources, however, is a good reason to support any increase in these services to our community.

- E. **It is recommended that the KPD continue to engage the services of organizations such as the Veteran and First Responder Healthcare organization to support the needs of KPD personnel.** First responder jobs come with high risk, big expectations and nontraditional work hours. Recognition of stress response and engaging support services when needed is important for first responder health which is directly related to job performance and community relations.
- F. **It is recommended that the KPD continue to engage directly with Keene youth and families to maintain and build upon community relations and acceptance.** The KPD has a great track record with programs such as the Police Athletic League (PAL), for example, which helps children in the community build relationships with and see the human side of Keene's law enforcement personnel. The very visible reporting of nationwide incidents of racism including law enforcement makes it incredibly important now to build and maintain a positive rapport between the KPD and Keene children and families. It is understood that the COVID-19 pandemic limits these types of opportunities, but, even in this difficult and unusual time, the KPD can use creative ways (such as a pen pal program, for example) to proactively connect with Keene youth and families and is to be commended for their efforts thus far.

#### 4. City and Community

The path to racial equity in the Keene community will require organizational change, and it will require leaders amongst Keene's employers to serve as catalysts for change. The goal is to create and use a racial equity lens and implement a community process to empower businesses to advance diversity and inclusion. The following recommendations are intended both for the City of Keene as well as all Keene businesses. Many of these actions will require the assistance of experienced diversity and inclusion consultants.

- A. **It is recommended that the City assign an administrative role within the City government moving forward the mission of diversity, equity and inclusion set forth by this Committee.**



- B. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers regularly conduct diversity, equity and inclusion training for employees that fosters an open and welcoming workplace culture for all people.**
- C. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers review employee recruitment, retention, pay and promotion policies to achieve improved diversity and equity amongst applicants and throughout organizational personnel at all levels.**
- D. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers expand and regularly provide internship positions that specifically attract underrepresented populations and create career opportunities.**
- E. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers Identify where skills are transferable amongst potential applicants to help provide opportunities and widen the applicant pool (military to law enforcement, for example).**
- F. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers update traditional skills testing procedures that may unnecessarily disqualify black, indigenous and people of color and that the parameters of applicant tracking systems be broadened.**
- G. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers seek and generate incentives to promote equity in employment.**
- H. It is recommended that the City and Keene employers review and update initiatives, systems, operations and mission statements to identify practices that limit or thwart diversity.**
- I. It is recommended that the City intentionally factor diversity into community driven development projects such as the arts corridor and the skate park, for example.**
- J. It is recommended that the Keene Public Library as well as school libraries expand collection diversity, that feedback be sought from the community for this purpose, that the Keene Public Library facilitate reading groups to promote diversity within its collection, and that libraries seek financial donations to help expand the collection diversity.**
- K. It is recommended that the City review Cheshire TV programming and encourage additions and changes that promote diversity and inclusion.**

## **5. Education**

Building and appreciating racial diversity in ways that create real opportunities and promote long term community success starts with youth and, therefore, must involve Keene's schools. This will be a very effective driver for long term positive outcomes in racial equity in the Keene community. It is understood that the City of Keene does not govern Keene public school policy, however, racial equity and community safety throughout our city will require efforts outside of City Hall.

The following recommendations are made as a reflection of comments and concerns received by the public for the consideration of Keene school leadership, and the City Council is respectfully asked to support these recommendations upon any opportunity to do so. The Committee appreciates the participation of Keene School Board members and SAU29 Superintendent of Schools, Robert Malay, in the discussions had on this topic.

- A. **It is recommended that Keene schools develop specific anti-racism policies and appeal to the State of New Hampshire to establish a standard anti-racism policy as a baseline for all schools.** The Committee heard concerns from the public that the current general anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies in Keene schools are not sufficient in handling situations of racism. The use of racial slurs and other types of racist behavior call for a clear and specific response that sends a message of zero tolerance, tends to the needs of the victims and helps to break down implicit bias. The reports of racist behaviors and the fear and hesitation that victims and victims' parents have to report incidents give credence to the need for specific anti-racism policy and practice.
- B. **It is recommended that Keene schools review discipline data regularly and address systemic issues of racial inequality.** The purpose of this recommendation is to take a proactive approach to address inequalities in schools at all levels rather than a response-oriented approach. Superintendent Malay reported that a new model at the Keene High School includes a Dean of Students position that oversees all student discipline that will help make progress in this direction at that particular school.
- C. **It is recommended that Keene schools facilitate and maintain recurring student forums for student input and conversations about racial equity and inclusion at all levels.** Much like public input is key to achieving racial equity and inclusion in the greater community, student input is key to making progress in this direction within the schools. The intent is to provide a safe and welcoming means to build awareness of the problems that exist and to reveal and correct implicit bias in the school system.
- D. **It is recommended that Keene schools conduct regular, anonymous equity and inclusivity climate surveys and youth risk behavior surveys.** Parents and students of Keene schools represent a significant portion of Keene's population. This provides the schools with an opportunity to use annual surveys to measure racial equity and inclusivity awareness and experience and to implement programs to affect positive change.
- E. **It is recommended that schools thoroughly review special education, food security and other student and family assistance programs to determine where racial bias exists and make efforts to correct it.**
- F. **It is recommended that Keene schools review all curricula with a lens of racial equity and change or replace curricula as necessary to eliminate bias and help ensure all students feel respected and included.** This is an issue that came to light during Committee meetings and public forums where it was made clear that students of color have found themselves in uncomfortable situations due to biased or inadequate texts and topics. The National Education Association conducted an initiative to eradicate institutional racism in public schools and provides helpful information and resources to help with this type of effort. Superintendent Malay suggested Social Studies content as a good example of material that needs updating to eliminate bias that has been otherwise overlooked to date.
- G. **It is recommended that Keene schools ensure equity in the education system by promoting diversity amongst faculty including concerted outreach to organizations and institutions where diversity exists.** Having teachers of color can help schools improve curricula selection, mentor all students and challenge implicit bias. The opportunity exists to review position descriptions, postings and recruitment practices, remove any inherent bias and adjust as necessary to appeal to a more diverse pool of candidates to the extent possible. It is understood, however, that faculty diversity is stagnant nationwide – Keene is not alone.

- H. **It is recommended that Keene schools conduct social equity and justice training for teachers and implement culturally responsive pedagogy.** The Committee heard from a local teacher who noted that the use of common social innuendos, stereotypes and practices of assimilation occurs in schools, and that there are training programs available to help teachers recognize and adjust these practices. The goal is a comfortable and enriching academic experience for students of all races.
- I. **Additional creative programs and approaches in schools that promote awareness and support of diversity and inclusion are encouraged,** such as international pen pal programs with local elementary students, for example.

## CONCLUSION

“The whole of us is affected when the least of us is affected.” *(Gail Somers, Keene Resident)* The specific number of complaints received does not reflect the impact or severity of the problem – this is one of the challenges. Our City has limited diversity to begin with, and that fact means we may not get mass complaints. This does not make the reality of racism in Keene insignificant or unimportant. Ultimately, the goal is to “build a community that is safe, just and accessible to all through ongoing community and government commitment that is codified, measurable and accountable in and for every single member of our community. This puts forward the values we believe in.” *(Pierre Morton, proud member of the Keene community)*

The Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee presents this report to the City Council with both sincere concern and optimism. Keene is a beautiful and safe community, but the existence of racism and implicit bias cannot be denied. It is important that the City assume a leadership role in affecting change that builds racial equity and inclusion. Committee members agreed that there is much work to do, and it is difficult to stop meeting because there are many opportunities for further examination in addition to positive community energy on this topic, however, in the important interest of making an immediate impact, these recommendations are advanced. The continuation of this process with community involvement and to include ongoing examination, dialogue, measurement and change will be key to long term movement in improving racial justice and community safety for Keene.