

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Monday, November 1, 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 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 October 4, 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
 - f. Indigenous People Day
6. New, Other Business
7. Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, December 6, 2021 at 5:00 PM

More Time: Keene State College Outreach

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Monday, October 4, 2021

5:00 PM

Rm 22 of Rec Center and Zoom

Members Present:

William Hay, Chair
Councilor Jan Manwaring
Dr. Dottie Morris
Nancy Salwen
Dr. Mohammed Saleh
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation & Facilities
Director

Members Not Present:

Marti Fiske, Ex-Officio
Ritu Budakoti, Alternate
Dr. Shaun Filiault

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9
10 1) Welcome and Call to Order
11

12 Chair Hay called the meeting to order at 5:11 PM. Roll call was conducted. Heidi Schwieger,
13 Executive Director from the Jonathan Daniels Center for Social Responsibility (JDC), introduced
14 herself. She stated that she is primarily tasked with moving it from its status as a program of the
15 Historical Society to becoming its own non-profit in order to have a more activist role in the
16 community.
17

18 2) Approval of September 13, 2021 Minutes
19

20 Councilor Manwaring made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of September 13, 2021.
21 Dr. Morris seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.
22

23 3) Finance Report
24

25 Mr. Bohannon reported that the HRC is up to date on its finances, with the exception of the fact
26 that he paid some recent invoices to the Keene International Festival (KIF), so that line item has
27 changed a little. He continued that he changed in a few things in how he set up the Finance
28 Report, since the HRC does not need to know all the details of the KIF. He tried to make it
29 consistent to show all of the different events. Up top is the \$500 they get from the City of

30 Keene, the donations that come in from the KIF, and he can add another line if they get any
31 donations related to the HRC. There is an expenses line for each event – KIF, Pride month,
32 Juneteenth, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. There is room if they need to add anything else.
33 Everything has been audited.

34

35 Chair Hay stated that since this is informational only, there is no need for a motion to accept.

36

37 **4) Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report**

38

39 Chair Hay initiated a discussion of the Ad Hoc Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee
40 (RJCS Committee) Report.

41

42 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if it is correct that the expectation is that a portion of this report's
43 recommendations will be the HRC's responsibility to execute. Mr. Bohannon replied yes. Ms.
44 Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if it is correct that Public Safety and Education are not in their
45 purview, and the HRC is focusing on the Government Leadership section. Mr. Bohannon replied
46 yes, and if there is crossover they could do within any of those categories, they could go for it.
47 For example, if there was a particular event or educational opportunity that would cross over
48 everything, they could go for it. The highlight of his conversation with the Mayor is not
49 necessarily "Stay in your lane," but do what they need to do to move this document forward so it
50 does not just collect dust. It gives purpose to the HRC outside of just planning events. They are
51 the good steward of this particular document and the question is how they can keep it fresh and
52 relevant.

53

54 Dr. Saleh asked what the bond is between the HRC and the Monadnock Region Diversity,
55 Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (MDEIB) Coalition. Mr. Bohannon replied that the MDEIB is
56 a regional group, formed out of the YMCA. He continued that they are looking to use this as a
57 template, but they have been trying to form a job description for a person responsible for the
58 MDEIB at the YMCA and that person would potentially sit on the HRC, although they have not
59 talked about that yet. Having a person from the MDEIB be an alternate on the HRC would be a
60 good opportunity.

61

62 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she thinks other sections of the report that are within the
63 HRC's purview are Community Education and Public Input. She continued that for this meeting,
64 she suggests they look at each recommendation, starting with 1.A. Others agreed.

65

66 **Recommendation 1.A. – "That the City of Keene take a position against racism starting
67 with a strong anti-racist statement."**

68

69 Mr. Bohannon stated that he suggests the HRC revisit its purpose, which was last done about
70 eight years ago. He continued that there might be some language within that that can be part of
71 that anti-racist statement. The other piece that might be relevant is to have public statements or

72 proclamations when events occur, such as Pride month, Juneteenth, the KIF. That might be a
73 way to move 1.A. forward.

74
75 Dr. Morris suggested that the public statement be read at events created by this body, and at any
76 public event that the City is doing, including prior to every City Council meeting. She continued
77 that at Keene State College (KSC), the Land Acknowledgement statement started with events
78 that her office put on, and now it is for every public event, including commencement. She does
79 not know if that would work for the City. Ms. Salwen replied that it would mean the message
80 would be repeated continuously to various groups of people and it sounds smart to her. Others
81 agreed and discussion continued.

82
83 Ms. Schwieger asked if the statement would be specifically to address issues of racism. Ms.
84 Salwen replied that she does not know, but the HRC's work is about racial justice as well as
85 other issues like gender identity. Ms. Schwieger replied that she is not hearing disability
86 included, and people with disabilities are the most marginalized population. Discussion
87 continued. Mr. Bohannon suggested that the recommendation for 1.A. be "a statement of
88 commitment read at every event." The HRC might want to craft that statement or have the City
89 Attorney help them craft it. He continued that the proclamations and Resolutions often come
90 from the City Attorney. The HRC could start working on this statement at the next meeting or
91 another future meeting. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos suggested it would be more efficient to have
92 someone draft a statement that the committee could then edit, as opposed to starting from
93 scratch. Others asked if she would be willing to draft something. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos
94 replied yes, and she will have it ready at the next meeting. Mr. Bohannon and Chair Hay offered
95 to assist her as needed.

96
97 **Recommendation 1.B. – "That the City work with community stakeholders to establish**
98 **clear community racial equity and inclusivity goals and that the goals be widely adopted by**
99 **the City and Keene agencies and businesses."**

100
101 Dr. Morris stated that this is what the MDEIB is working on. Mr. Bohannon agreed. He
102 continued that the HRC should tag team with them on this, related to events. He spoke with Dan
103 Smith, YMCA CEO, about how the HRC and the Y were both working on Juneteenth events and
104 tried to join together but did so too late in the planning process. If they want to work together,
105 the conversation should start in December or January. There is opportunity there.

106 Recommendation 1.B. could be the MDEIB and reporting back from that. Ms. Cunha-
107 Vasconcelos asked if he means the MDEIB would take on 1.B. and the HRC's role would be to
108 check in with them and see how to support them and coordinate efforts. Mr. Bohannon replied
109 yes. Ms. Schwieger replied that there might be a role for the JDC in that, too.

110
111 Councilor Manwaring asked if the MDEIB is addressing other topics as well as racism. Dr.
112 Morris replied that they are still forming and norming and she does not think that has been
113 clearly defined. Dr. Saleh replied yes, they are still focused on the steering committee formation.

114 Discussion continued. Mr. Bohannon stated that the MDEIB's public meetings should begin
115 soon. He will keep everyone updated.

116
117 **Recommendation 1.C. – “That the City continue its commitment and efforts toward racial**
118 **justice and community safety whether via an existing committee such as the Human Rights**
119 **Committee, a new equity and inclusion task force, or a joint effort of multiple community**
120 **organizations and agencies.”**

121
122 Councilor Manwaring stated that the report frequently talks about the need for surveys and data
123 collection. She asked if there is data, or if they are mostly talking anecdotally. Dr. Morris
124 replied that it depended on the topic, but the RJCS Committee heard testimonials from people
125 talking about their experiences; that was the main modality of information gathering. Some
126 committee members thought the survey was important to get a baseline, to be able to determine
127 whether changes are being made.

128
129 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if they are talking about posting a survey on the City of Keene's
130 website for people to fill out anonymously. Dr. Morris replied that the RJCS Committee did not
131 get that far. She continued that they planned on doing that to collect data for their report, but the
132 timeline was too short and they recommended another group take that on. It could be a
133 combination of surveys and focus groups. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that other actions
134 include public forums. A survey may be appropriate but she wants to speak about the scope.
135 They need someone who knows how to formulate this and pose the right questions. She loves
136 the idea of annual data collection, going forward, but they would need a budget and qualified
137 people; it is thus a bigger project. Councilor Manwaring replied that it would be a big but
138 exciting project. She continued that it could include data collection about the LGBTQ
139 community, disabilities, homelessness, and other topics.

140
141 Discussion ensued about who might be qualified for this work and how to find them. Dr. Morris
142 stated that there is a team of people at Antioch University of New England (AUNE). She
143 continued that perhaps this could be a project for students of Pierre Morton, but it depends.
144 Councilor Manwaring stated that maybe there could be grant money. Ms. Salwen stated that this
145 could get so complicated that it just does not happen. She continued that she wonders if there is
146 a simpler way, similar to how Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos is going to draft the [anti-racist statement]
147 and then get feedback. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she would rather put it in the hands
148 of someone genuinely qualified. Ms. Salwen expressed a desire to really make this an action
149 item and get moving with it. Discussion continued about methodology, budget issues, who is
150 “qualified,” and what data sources may already exist through KSC, AUNE, the Keene Police
151 Department, the School District, and so on and so forth.

152
153 Mr. Bohannon asked: what is the purpose of the data? He continued that before they focus on
154 the budget issues and who will collect the data, the HRC should determine what data they want
155 to collect and why, and whom they are collecting it for.

156

HRC Meeting Minutes
Month Date, Year

157 Councilor Manwaring stated that she thinks they should be forming subcommittees. Chair Hay
158 replied yes, in multiple arenas, such as education, which they have not yet covered. He spoke
159 about misinformation he received from teachers many years ago as a student. He stated that
160 currently, there are teachers who do not know how to handle it when their students are victims of
161 racism.

162
163 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that before they move on to the next recommendation, she would
164 like to have the action item for 1.C. to at least be to come back to this. Others agreed. Councilor
165 Manwaring suggested they write down thoughts to bring to the next meeting.

166
167 Mr. Bohannon stated that if they create the anti-racist statement from 1.A. it will flow into 1.D.,
168 and they are already taking care of 1.E. Dr. Saleh replied that 1.A. is a statement, which does not
169 automatically lead to recommendation 1.D., “That the City promote diversity in its boards and
170 commissions membership and responsibilities.” That implies representation, not just in spirit.
171 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that Mr. Bohannon is suggesting that the anti-racist statement be
172 shared at the beginning of events and also, as Dr. Morris suggested, be spread to something
173 shared at the beginning of City Council and other meetings, but Dr. Saleh is right – the spirit of
174 this item suggests that it should be represented in the makeup of the boards. She is not sure what
175 power the HRC has over that. Mr. Bohannon replied that is correct. He continued that the
176 Mayor is working on this and has asked staff liaisons for the boards and commissions to keep
177 aware of the groups’ diversity and try to bring people in. Every email notification about board
178 and commission meetings ends with a statement saying “If you want to volunteer [or serve on a
179 City of Keene Board or Commission], click here.” He created that about a year ago when the
180 conversation began. Councilor Manwaring stated that the Mayor also talks about boards and
181 commissions having more alternate members, so more people can be included.

182
183 Ms. Schwieger stated that regarding 1.D., “...build sensitivity to and eliminate implicit bias,”
184 those are action words. She asked if there is training around implicit bias available to City
185 employees. Examining one’s own implicit biases is tough work. Mr. Bohannon replied that
186 there have been conversations about it, and the HR Department would need to spearhead that
187 training. The HR Department has been working on it but they have had some turnover. He
188 participated in the L2E2 Program [Leadership Learning Exchange for Equity] through the UNH
189 Cooperative Extension, and he recommends it. Dr. Morris stated that the HRC attempted some
190 trainings a few years ago, which were well attended. It would have to be a lot more organized.
191 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if it would be appropriate for the HRC to check in with the HR
192 Department and see what the status is and offer support if needed. Mr. Bohannon replied that he
193 can check in with HR.

194
195 Councilor Manwaring stated that it would be great if someone who is a good writer could do a
196 regular column in the Keene Sentinel or the Shopper, because, for example, she is not sure
197 people really know what terms like “equity” or “inclusion” mean. Others agreed and discussion
198 ensued. Mr. Bohannon stated that this is how the MDEIB group initially started – Cheshire
199 Medical Center was writing an op-ed related to the subject, and it became a bigger thing. Dr.

200 Morris spoke about how she and Mary Gannon conducted trainings for municipal employees in
201 Putney and Brattleboro in VT, at the request of the HR Departments there. Discussion continued
202 about the logistics of trainings and financial compensation for the trainers. Ms. Salwen asked if
203 Dr. Morris would be open to doing similar trainings for the City of Keene. Dr. Morris replied
204 yes.

205
206 Mr. Bohannon noted the time and the need to move on in the agenda. He asked everyone to read
207 through sections 2 and 4 of the report again in preparation for continuing the discussion next
208 month.

209

210 **5) Committee Programs**

211

212 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked what the HRC had decided about doing something for Indigenous
213 People's Day. Others replied that it is this coming Monday, so the HRC will not be doing
214 anything. Chair Hay added that Mayor Hansel is going to read a proclamation at 9:00 AM in
215 front of City Hall. Councilor Manwaring added that he will read it at the City Council meeting
216 on Thursday as well.

217

218 **a) MLK Day**

219

220 Mr. Bohannon stated that he reformatted the HRC's agenda to show each event in "Committee
221 Programs," so they are present in committee members' minds. He continued that Martin Luther
222 King, Jr. Day is definitely on the horizon and they need to start the planning now.

223

224 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked for Indigenous People's Day to be added to the events list on the
225 agenda. She asked for the dates to be put next to the names as well, to help with planning. Mr.
226 Bohannon replied that he will add that, for the events that have dates.

227

228 Councilor Manwaring stated that she thinks for MLK Day, they should do what they did last
229 year. She continued that they could have a speaker at Heberton Hall or another location. Ms.
230 Salwen replied that she liked what they did a couple years ago with the music. Chair Hay
231 agreed. Discussion continued. Mr. Bohannon stated that at the next meeting they should come
232 in with ideas about who to have at the event, and whether it will be a Zoom or live event, and be
233 ready to execute funding for a speaker, and so on and so forth.

234

235 Ms. Salwen asked if others would still be interested in potentially inviting the author of Raising
236 White Kids to speak at the MLK Day event. She continued that she had expressed interest last
237 time. Discussion ensued about budget issues.

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239 **b) Holi Festival**

240 **c) Pride Month**

241 **d) Juneteenth**

242 **e) Keene International Festival**

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6) **New, Other Business**

Chair Hay asked if there is any new business. There was no response.

7) **Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, November 1, 2021 at 5:00 PM**

Chair Hay stated that the next meeting is Monday, November 1, 2021 at 5:00 PM, here in Room 22 of the Recreation Center.

There being no further business, Chair Hay adjourned the meeting at 6:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

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							
Income			Income			Income		
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
Total Income	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,847.83	Total Income	\$ 500.00	\$ -	Total Income	\$ 500.00	\$ 5,000.00
Expenses			Expenses			Expenses		
International Festival		\$ 3,436.83	International Festival		\$ 869.11	International Festival		\$ 5,500.57
			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							
Total Expenses	\$ 977.27	\$ 3,436.83	Total Expenses	\$ 904.85	\$ 869.11	Total Expenses	\$ -	\$ 5,500.57
Net 19-20	\$ (477.27)	\$ 3,411.00	Net 20-21	\$ (404.85)	\$ (869.11)	Net 21-22	\$ 500.00	\$ (500.57)
Balance on hand	\$ 4,096.73	\$ 3,411.00	Balance on hand	\$ 3,691.88	\$ 2,541.89	Balance on hand	\$ 4,191.88	\$ 2,041.32

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)

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.

Human Rights Committee

The human rights committee exists to promote the principles of social justice, non-violence, equity, diversity, inclusion, and multiculturalism through educational programs, community service and public events.

The human rights committee shall have the following powers and duties:

- 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, equity, and multiculturalism through education programs, community service and public events;
- To encourage the elimination of barriers, which may exist within the Keene community that discourage a more diverse and inclusive community.
- To reassure and support under-represented groups who may feel unwelcome in Keene.
- To educate the community on the advantages of a more diverse and inclusive community.
- The committee is authorized to conduct fundraising events to further its goals. All gifts and donations presented to the human rights committee shall be formally accepted by the city council.



Further Information

[Biography of Jonathan Daniels](#)

[Human Rights Committee - MLK Day - Dr. Jim Waller Video from 01/18/2021](#)

[Racial Justice & Community Safety Committee Report](#)

Staff Liaison

Andrew S. Bohannon: 603-357-9829

Schedule

Meetings are generally held the first Monday of each month at 5:00 PM.

View the [City Calendar](#) to confirm the date and time of the next meeting.