

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Monday, April 4, 2022 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 867 3299 3658
- To listen to the meeting, please dial (646) 876-9923 and when prompted enter Meeting ID 867 3299 3658
- If you encounter issues accessing this meeting, please call (603) 757-1835 during the meeting

Members:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos
Dr. Dottie Morris
Janis Manwaring
Dr. Mohammed Saleh
Dr. Shaun Filiault
Marti Fiske
Hunter Kirschner
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Councilor Catherine Workman

Staff:

Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

Alternates:

Ritu Budakoti
Heidi Schwieger

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Approval of March 7, 2022 Minutes
3. Finance Report
4. Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report
5. Committee Programs for 2022
 - a. MLK Day – Monday, January 17th
 - b. Holi Festival – Spring
 - c. Pride Month – October
 - d. Juneteenth – June 19th
 - e. Keene International Festival – September 24th
 - f. Indigenous People Day – October 10th
6. New, Other Business
7. Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, May 2, 2022 at 5:00 PM

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

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4
5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Monday, March 7, 2022

5:00 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Councilor Jan Manwaring
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Chair
Dr. Shaun Filiault, Vice Chair
Marti Fiske, Ex-Officio
Hunter Kirschner
Rabbi Daniel Aronson
Heidi Schwieger, Alternate
Councilor Catherine Workman, via Zoom
(5:06 PM)
Dr. Mohammed Saleh (5:06 PM)
Dr. Dottie Morris (5:09 PM)

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation & Facilities
Director

Members Not Present:

Ritu Budakoti, Alternate

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9
10 **1) Welcome and Call to Order**
11

12 Mr. Bohannon called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM. He stated that since the HRC did not
13 meet last month, they need to hold elections for Chair and Vice Chair today. Roll call was
14 conducted. Mr. Bohannon welcomed guests Patrick Brown and Janelle Sartorio, here on behalf
15 of Keene Pride.
16

17 **2) Chair Elections**
18

19 Dr. Filiault made a motion to nominate Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos as Chair of the Human Rights
20 Committee. Councilor Manwaring seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.
21

22 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos nominated Dr. Filiault as Vice Chair. Councilor Manwaring seconded
23 the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.
24

25 **3) Approval of January 3, 2022 Meeting Minutes**
26

27 Ms. Fiske made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 3, 2022. Councilor
28 Manwaring seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

29

30 **4) Finance Report**

31

32 Mr. Bohannon stated that there should not be any changes in the Finance Report. He continued
33 that they did the MLK Day event at no fees, so the HRC total budget is \$3,891.88. The HRC is
34 the fiscal agent for the Keene International Festival (KIF), and their current balance is lower than
35 what is shown because there is a deposit he has not taken out, but for the most part, it is
36 \$2,041.32.

37

38 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if it is correct that they do not need to vote on this. Mr.
39 Bohannon replied that is correct.

40

41 **5) Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report**

42

43 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that it has been a few months, because last month the HRC did
44 not meet due to lack of quorum. She continued that the HRC members had homework, but since
45 it has been a couple months, she suspects that not everyone has done it. They were going to start
46 working on the Education section of the RJCS report, she believes. She asked what the best use
47 of their time is at this point. She has not seen the spreadsheet that they talked about. She
48 proposed spending 20 minutes of the agenda on this topic.

49

50 Discussion ensued. Councilor Manwaring stated that she does not believe they have that much
51 time today, given the other agenda items. Dr. Filiault agreed.

52

53 Dr. Filiault made a motion to table the Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report
54 agenda item until next month. Councilor Manwaring seconded the motion.

55

56 Ms. Fiske asked if there was an update on the statement [on inclusivity] that the HRC had
57 drafted. Mr. Bohannon replied that he shared it with Mayor Hansel, and at this point, the Mayor
58 does not want to bring it forward. He continued that the HRC can revisit that with him. He only
59 spoke with the Mayor briefly. One of the Mayor's points was that each committee chair has their
60 own process of how they go about running the meetings, and he did not want to interfere with
61 that. It may be worth another conversation with him, or another opportunity to review the
62 statement and bring it back to him. Discussion ensued. Mr. Bohannon stated that if he had to
63 guess, he thinks the Mayor found the statement too lengthy. It is worth taking a second pass at it
64 and talking with the Mayor again.

65

66 Mr. Bohannon stated that the HRC asked him to see if Superintendent Rob Malay would come to
67 a meeting to give an update on the schools, related to the RJCS report. He continued that he can
68 reach out to him and see if he is available for the next HRC meeting, if the committee wants.

69 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos agreed.

70

71 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called for a vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

72

73 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked the committee to review the report within a day or two of the
74 next meeting so they are prepared to discuss it. She continued that they had talked about parsing
75 out action items, but she is not sure if that is happening. Discussion ensued. Mr. Bohannon
76 stated that that could be a project for an intern. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if that is
77 realistic to accomplish by the next meeting. Mr. Bohannon replied that he does not want to
78 promise that, but he will give this some thought, and get back to Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos.
79 Discussion continued about the sections of the report.

80

81 **6) Committee Programs for 2022**

82 **A) MLK Day – Monday, January 17**

83

84 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that it sounds like MLK Day event was a big success. Mr.
85 Bohannon replied yes, they had approximately 45 or 50 participants, and a great conversation.
86 He thanked Dr. Morris for getting Karen Jennings to work her magic with the panelists, who
87 were all fantastic. The recording is on the HRC’s website.

88

89 **B) Holi Festival – Spring**

90

91 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if it is correct that the Holi Festival is on hold this year. Mr.
92 Bohannon replied yes.

93

94 **C) Pride Month – May/June**

95

96 Dr. Filiault stated that he spoke with representatives from an organization that is planning a
97 Keene Pride event and went before the City Council a couple weeks ago. He continued that they
98 have now reached out to the HRC to talk about coordinating efforts in planning Keene Pride
99 events. He met with him for about an hour, regarding their mission for Keene Pride and what the
100 HRC has been talking about. They are here today to talk.

101

102 Janelle Sartorio stated that she is with Keene Pride. She continued that their original
103 recommendation that went before the City Council was to have a Pride week starting Monday,
104 September 12, ending September 18 with a block party type of event, shutting off most of Main
105 St. and Central Square to allow vendors, food trucks, and stages for performances. That is their
106 big picture. They want to coordinate with local businesses and the City to decorate downtown,
107 and they want to host multiple, smaller events throughout the week in coordination with local
108 businesses and non-profits. It sounds like this is in line with what the HRC has discussed as
109 well, but the big thing that Keene Pride and the HRC might differ on is just the scale of what
110 they were thinking. Keene Pride has a grand vision of a large Pride event. They understand
111 there will be restrictions on what they can do, regarding size and scale. They are still in the
112 beginning stages of planning. They look to the HRC for feedback and to see about partnering.

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Dr. Filiault stated that the HRC tried to coordinate a Pride event for last year but ran against the brick wall that is COVID-19. He continued that he thinks it is difficult to plan a large-scale Pride event for Keene, particularly for an inaugural Pride festival. The difficulty is that it is Keene, NH. How many people could they draw into this area? They need to be cautious regarding the scope of the programming, especially since it is the initial Pride festival. Others who have organized Pride festivals in small New England towns recommend starting small and building up.

He continued that they are looking at a September event, because the June calendar is already saturated, and because a September timeframe allows coordination with Keene State College (KSC) so students can be involved. He agrees with the concept of a block party involving organizations throughout the region who are doing LGBTQ programming, some type of entertainment, and an after-party that is a little more adult-oriented. He would like the Library's involvement, like last year, with LGBTQ-themed books and resources; and potential involvement from downtown businesses like The Colonial Theatre. He thinks they should start with a small footprint and expand in the following years if it goes well. He thinks the HRC and Keene Pride have a similar vision, and it is just about how big they want to start for this first time.

Ms. Fiske stated that at a previous meeting, she brought up the idea of painting a rainbow Pride flag on Central Square in the street. She continued that she did some research on that. The Public Works Director did not see a problem and said that the committee would have to supply the artist(s) to do the work. They would have to set up a meeting with the Mayor and the City Manager. The protocol committee, which includes Fire and Police, would review the plans for the event and if there were any planned issues relating to parking, safety, food vending, electrical needs for a larger-type event, and so on and so forth. If it was just about road closure to paint the Pride flag and the event was somewhere like Railroad Square that would not block traffic, it would go to the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee. If it was something larger that would close down more roads, including Central Square, it would go to the Planning, Licenses, and Development (PLD) Committee for an event license. The City Council would have to approve it. A chalk flag would involve closing Main St. for a couple hours, and would have to be done early on a weekend morning. Since it is a City committee, there would be no charge for the overtime costs of Public Works staff to do that close down.

Councilor Workman stated that she is a member of the MSFI Committee. She continued that she thinks this would have support from the MSFI and PLD Committees, but it is always easier if they are not talking about closing down Main St.

Dr. Filiault stated that there might not be a lot of public support for closing down Main St. for any amount of time and for using public dollars on temporary paint, for an issue that remains controversial to the public. Painting a public street seems like a lightning rod for an unnecessary purpose, when there are other ways to achieve the same outreach and messaging.

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156
157 Dr. Morris replied that they need to establish what their purpose *is*, in order to determine whether
158 painting the street would be in line with the purpose.

159
160 Discussion ensued. Some spoke in favor of creating visibility with banners and flags instead of
161 paint on the street/closing down the street. Others spoke about how closing down a street for a
162 festival has been successful for other events, such as A Taste of Keene, and how the public loves
163 a block party environment.

164
165 Ms. Sartorio stated that Keene Pride's purpose is two-part – the big goal is to raise awareness by
166 having this big public event. Secondary to that is bringing tourism into the area, and to Keene
167 businesses. The LGBTQ community has been underserved. This would be a strong show of
168 public support. Keene Pride would like to have booths available for area non-profits to bring
169 exposure to resources in the area. Mr. Brown added that some churches are interested in
170 participating. They want this to be inclusive to anyone who supports inclusivity. He continued
171 that they want to show that Keene is an open, welcoming community, to KSC students and
172 visitors, and people who will visit specifically because they travel to Pride celebrations. He does
173 not think closing Main St. for the event would be too disruptive if properly announced; there are
174 more people who will take great joy from the celebration than people who will be
175 inconvenienced.

176
177 Mr. Bohannon stated that the flags on light posts downtown belong to the Keene Rotary Club,
178 not the City. He continued that they should keep in mind that flags for the Clarence DeMar
179 Marathon are up for the whole month of September. Last year the HRC asked downtown
180 businesses, via letter, if they wanted a Pride flag, for free, to put in their window. There were
181 seven or eight flags given out, total. They hope to have a greater response this year.

182
183 Mr. Bohannon continued that Keene Pride has been asked to attend a protocol meeting with City
184 services, and that will be more of a wakeup call than this meeting. Although it was a great
185 success, A Taste of Keene was a lot of money. Even a small-scale event could cost the
186 organizers \$5,000 to \$7,500. The Pumpkin Festival cost approximately \$41,000 to put on.
187 Regarding closing Main St., emergency vehicles can only go south via Main St. and cannot use
188 side streets, so blocking off that corridor cannot be done unless it is a major event. Railroad
189 Square would be the easiest downtown location for a Pride festival. It would be easier to work
190 with City staff to block off a portion of Railroad St. to the parking garage. Another option is
191 Fuller Park in front of the Recreation Center, which does not have the costs associated with Main
192 St. The protocol meeting is the next step, and would have to be held this month or next in order
193 to have a September event. Protocol meetings are to ensure an event's success and safety, and
194 address every logistical issue the organizers may never have thought of. He recommends
195 starting on a smaller scale for this first Pride event and then growing in future years.

196

HRC Meeting Minutes

197 Dr. Filiault asked when Keene Pride wants the block party to be. Ms. Sartorio replied Sunday,
198 September 18. She continued that some people have lingering concerns due to Pumpkin Festival
199 [ending with riots], so they do not want to give the impression that this will be a “big party.”
200

201 Mr. Kirschner asked how much input Keene Pride is getting from local members of the LGBTQ
202 community. Ms. Sartorio replied that their board is half queer, half straight. She continued that
203 they have reached out to event organizers in Northampton, MA and the area. The board
204 president came from NYC. They are still looking for additional input and welcome people’s
205 input. Mr. Kirschner asked who the event is for – the queer community? Or is it about raising
206 awareness? Ms. Sartorio replied that they want it to be for the queer community, but also for
207 everyone. They want it to be a place where people feel comfortable in other people’s spaces.
208

209 Ms. Fiske asked if Keene Pride has youth (high school or younger) represented. Ms. Sartorio
210 replied no, not right now, although they have reached out to the school systems. Mr. Brown
211 replied and libraries.
212

213 Dr. Filiault stated that within the LGBTQ community, Pride has a particular meaning and a 50-
214 year history that is important to be aware of. He continued that he recommends being careful
215 about invoking the meaning and history of pride without really knowing it, because it is not just a
216 party.
217

218 Dr. Saleh asked if there is meaning to the September timeframe, instead of June. Mr. Brown
219 replied that there is already a lot happening in June, and KSC students would be gone. They are
220 back in September. The KSC community is important to Keene Pride’s success.
221

222 Discussion continued about Pride’s history. Dr. Morris recommended the work of Guilford, VT
223 filmmaker John Scagliotti, such as his Before and After Stonewall film.
224

225 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that it sounds like they have a lot of questions [about the Pride
226 event], and she is not sure they will be answered tonight. She asked Mr. Brown and Ms. Sartorio
227 to report back next month about what they see as the HRC’s participation.
228

229 Dr. Filiault made a motion for him to continue to liaise with Keene Pride to develop a vision of
230 what the interaction between Keene Pride and the Human Rights Committee will be. Mr.
231 Kirschner seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.
232

233 Mr. Bohannon stated that in the meantime, he encourages Keene Pride to set up a protocol
234 meeting. Ms. Sartorio replied that one is scheduled for the end of the month.
235

236 **D) Juneteenth – June 19**

237

238 Councilor Manwaring stated that the Juneteenth working group met with the YMCA on February
239 17, trying to decide how to work together on this. She continued that her impression was that the

HRC Meeting Minutes

240 YMCA was clear on what they were going to do. Their theme is something like “health and
241 wellness.” They have another meeting on the third Thursday at 4:00 PM. She does not see the
242 HRC really coordinating together with the YMCA. She thinks they are looking at separate
243 events. Last year’s Juneteenth event at Railroad Square was successful and well received. She
244 hoped the HRC would do the same thing. Last year, the HRC’s goal was to educate people about
245 what Juneteenth is. This year they are thinking about moving beyond education to action. What
246 action can they take, given the themes of inclusivity and equity? This is a big year, when it
247 comes to voting this fall. Her vision is a small historical piece, and music and entertainment like
248 last year. Jenna Carroll from the Historical Society is a speaker so far. She runs a program to
249 find African American folks in Keene from 1790 when the census was first taken.

250
251 Ms. Schwieger stated that the Johnathan Daniels Center would be interested, especially if they
252 will be addressing voting rights issues. She and Councilor Manwaring can talk.

253
254 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that last year they wanted to have a voting registration table at
255 the event and ran into some protocol issues. She continued that maybe they can really make it
256 happen this year. Discussion continued. Dr. Morris spoke about the Black Heritage Trail.

257
258 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they will meet with the YMCA monthly. Dr. Filiault asked
259 for clarification on the YMCA running their own Juneteenth event with the theme of “health and
260 wellness.” He asked if that is essentially an advertisement for the YMCA, run in June.
261 Discussion continued, including about how the Chair of the Monadnock Region Diversity,
262 Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition was affronted by this, and spoke about how without
263 acknowledging harm, healing/health does not happen. Councilor Workman stated that she thinks
264 the YMCA’s “health and wellness” theme for Juneteenth came from a national coalition that
265 plans Juneteenth. There is a lot that could be done under the theme of “health and wellness,” on
266 a community level, such as addressing the health disparities of people of color, mental health,
267 and so on and so forth. Mr. Bohannon replied that he thought of the health disparities, too, but
268 the HRC just did a panel/presentation about that for the MLK Day event. Maybe there is a way
269 to do it differently for Juneteenth? He will let the committee decide. Dr. Morris stated that Mr.
270 Morton speaks of the importance of having a solid understanding of and acknowledgement of the
271 historical pieces; it is not okay to just pick up as if that did not matter. Discussion continued.

272
273 Councilor Manwaring stated that the Juneteenth working group needs to get together and get
274 going with finding music and speakers. They will send out an email to schedule a meeting.

275
276 Councilor Workman stated that something she learned while doing research for Black History
277 Month, which she did not get to fully flesh out - a great opportunity to highlight for Juneteenth,
278 is that Keene is thought to be one of the towns listed in the Green Book as a “sundown town.”
279 She is trying to find out if that is still an Ordinance, and if it is, get it abolished and have that
280 done for Juneteenth. Mr. Bohannon suggested starting with the City Clerk Office’s. Discussion
281 continued.

282

283 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked that the Juneteenth working group meet before their next
284 meeting with the YMCA. Ms. Fiske asked if the theme will be established within the next
285 month. Councilor Manwaring replied yes. Ms. Fiske replied that knowing the theme will help
286 the other groups and organizations that want to help, like the Library.

287

288 **E) Keene International Festival – September 24**

289

290 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she does not think anything is needed from the committee
291 about the Keene International Festival yet. Mr. Bohannon replied that the KIF is doing some
292 board recruitment, if anyone wants to join. A few people have left. They could use help with
293 logistics and fundraising. They have people lined up to ask, but need people to help do the
294 asking. They have some good programming/planning scheduled with The Colonial Theatre.

295

296 **F) Indigenous People Day – October 10**

297

298 Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she wanted to quickly touch on this, because the HDC has
299 historically run out of time with this. Ms. Fiske stated that she had agreed to chair the working
300 group for this. She continued that she had not yet starting looking down this runway, but now
301 she will. Councilor Manwaring stated that since they are doing Pride on September 18, and
302 Indigenous People Day is October 10, it will be really tight. Last year she attempted to get
303 Sherry Gould, an Abenaki basket maker, to present. Dr. Morris stated that elsewhere in the state
304 is a project of taking the original, indigenous name of a local lake, for example, and including it
305 with the current name of the lake. She continued that it would be nice to find, say, three major
306 landmarks in this area to including the original, Abenaki names of them. Discussion continued
307 about others doing similar work.

308

309 **7) New, Other Business**

310 **A) 2022 Meeting Calendar**

311

312 Councilor Manwaring made a motion to accept the 2022 meeting calendar. Dr. Filiault seconded
313 the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

314

315 **8) Adjournment – Next Meeting Monday, April 4, 2022 at 5:00 PM**

316

317 There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 6:10 PM.

318

319 Respectfully submitted by,
320 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

321

322 Reviewed and edited by,
323 Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and Facilities 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	\$ 3,391.88	\$ 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					
			Jalissa Rodriguez					
			Amina Jordan-Mendez	\$ 300.00				
Martin Luther King Day			Martin Luther King Day	\$ -		Martin Luther King Day	\$ -	
Peter Blood	\$ 500.00		Dr. Jim Waller					
KSC Dining	\$ 477.27							
Total Expenses	\$ 977.27	\$ 3,436.83	Total Expenses	\$ 1,204.85	\$ 869.11	Total Expenses	\$ -	\$ 5,500.57
Net 19-20	\$ (477.27)	\$ 3,411.00	Net 20-21	\$ (704.85)	\$ (869.11)	Net 21-22	\$ 500.00	\$ (500.57)
Balance on hand	\$ 4,096.73	\$ 3,411.00	Balance on hand	\$ 3,391.88	\$ 2,541.89	Balance on hand	\$ 3,891.88	\$ 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.