

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

DRAFT

Minutes: Nov. 17, 2022

In attendance: Tina Burgos, Cynthia Ganung, Jennifer Howard Schroeder, Kerry Hurwitch, Amelia Klein, Finn McKeon, Lisa Mesciek, Bud Schram, Marlene Schultz, Eme Ward
Town Tech host – Cyndi Gonzalez

Absent: Nate Hyman, Rinaz Mala and Liaisons: Belinda Carroll and Katie King

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 pm by Tina Burgos, chair

Minutes from 9/15/22 meeting were approved as presented

Public Participation – None

Future NHRC Meeting Format:

It was decided to continue to meet on ZOOM, at least until April. When members were asked about meeting in person, some said they would only feel safe if everyone agreed to wear a mask. The chair heard from some other members that they were not willing to wear a mask.

Subcommittee meeting re: Anna Giraldo Kerr's incident at Sudbury Farm - Tina

Tina talked with the Town Counsel who said that there were no legal restrictions on what the committee can do, because there are not yet any policies or procedures in place. Tina also talked with Katie King. If the NHRC were to talk with Sudbury Farms, there could be no assurance that there would be no consequences for them.

Proposed actions: Reach out to Anna to ask for a meeting to hear what her goals are in bringing this complaint. The NHRC could offer to have a member accompany her to a meeting with Sudbury Farms representatives. Rinaz and Tina are working on this.

It was noted that the Complaint Process training on 11/19 could help the members understand the procedures. The procedures will include putting a complaint in writing.

There will be another training later with the Town Counsel and a Police Dept. representative.

Discrimination Complaint Process – Marlene

Facilitators: Liora Norwich and a second facilitator

Arrive at 8:45am – coffee; session is 9am - noon

Location - Great Plain Room, Town Hall, use side doors to enter.

Masking is recommended.

NHRC members were asked to complete a survey prior to the session. Liora is tailoring the session to meet the needs of the participants. The town is paying for the training.

Interfaith Transgender Day of Remembrance Memorial Vigil sponsorship – Cynthia

Sunday, Nov. 20, 4:00 pm, front lawn of First Parish in Needham (23 Dedham Avenue) – sixth annual vigil, 1st in person since 2019. Led by participating members and congregations of the Needham Interfaith Clergy Association. "We will solemnly remember trans and gender

non-conforming people who were killed in hate crimes in the past year, and rededicate ourselves to the work of anti-transphobia.”

We voted to be a sponsor of the TDOR vigil, Nov. 20, 2022. We also voted to continue to support the TDOR vigils in coming years.

Tina proposed that there also be an observance of TDOV, Trans Day of Visibility on March 31.

NDI Diversity Summit – Nov. 6, Pollard Middle School

Having the Summit “in person” allowed for more interaction during the session and the coffee and sharing at the end was great. It also worked well for people who attended virtually.

People thought that the keynote speaker and youth panel were fantastic.

NHRC members Jen, Kerry and Tina led a Break Out Session on Critical Race Theory. NPS Supt. Dan Gutekanst presented about what the schools are doing. There was positive feedback about the session. They thought that more people in the town would be interested in hearing about CRT and what is happening in the schools.

Multicultural Fair - Tina

The date of the fair will be changed (new date is March 19) because it conflicts with the Muslim calendar. Rinaz is doing a great job of chairing the fair. NHRC members Amelia, Marlene and Bud and many different people are part of the planning committee and outreach.

Juneteenth Planning Committee - Tina

The Select Board approved having the observance of Juneteenth become a town wide event and they want to involve other groups. The town wants to have five members on this planning committee. Tina will be a member. The plans will be based on the work that the HRC has done. Myles Tucker will staff the committee. The NHRC can help with publicity and by attending the event and with publicity. Tina will keep us updated.

MLK Day Program – June 16, 2023, 10am-11:30am, Needham High School

The NHRC has been asked if we want to contribute anything (other than sponsorship)? Members said “no”.

Needham Memorial for Enslaved and Indigenous Peoples – Cynthia

This First Parish Unitarian-Universalist committee includes community members. Cynthia is a NHRC liaison to the committee. At the Nov. 7 meeting the Memorial committee proposed that the NHRC consider giving their support to these three actions:

1. *Rename “Hemlock Gorge” to “Nehoiden’s grant”*. Select Board member Kevin Keane proposed this action which was approved as a SB goal. Since the land is owned by MA DCR (Dept. of Conservation & Recreation), then the Town Manager will need to make a proposal to the state to change the name. (Select Board goal 4.2 “Explore the option of petitioning to rename Hemlock Gorge to “Nehoiden’s Grant” (FY 2024.)

2. *Memorial for enslaved people in the Needham Cemetery*. Proposed by Dr. Gloria Greis and Rev. Catie Scudera. Erect a headstone in the Needham Cemetery to acknowledge the enslaved people who lived in Needham and were buried there. The Needham Cemetery was historically the only burial ground in Needham. The headstone would be placed in the part of the cemetery

that has no makers. This proposal was also discussed by Greis and Scudera during the NDI Summit Break Out session: "Enslavement in our town and its aftermath".

3. *Rename the Needham Nike Site for an enslaved person* (no name proposed yet).

Proposal by Joe Leghorn, Needham Community Farm, which is on this property, also a Dog park. (This 18 acre site formerly had missiles. It is off Pine St., next to Ridge Hill.

Response:

The NHRC appreciates the work of the Memorial committee and supports these proposals. No. 1. It would be important to ask Indigenous People what they think.

Cynthia's response. Communication from Natick Praying Indians, Chief Caring Hands. She thinks the renaming is a good idea. Nehoiden was called "Nahaton" (his Algonkian name) and was a Praying Indian. She thought that the Needham History Center writeup by Gloria Gries about Nehoiden's Day was accurate.

For all the proposals. It would be important to have a plaque/signs. This is a way to honor them and their heritage. The signs could also explain why the name was chosen. There needs to be a way to maintain the signs.

The NHRC asks the Memorial Committee to let us know what is happening and anything else they need from the NHRC.

MAHRC

Cynthia was present at the Oct. MAHRC meeting but Nate was there as the representative from Needham. He can be asked to report at a future NHRC meeting. Marlene was asked to send out the list of dates that NHRC members agreed to attend the MAHRC meetings.

Needham Interfaith Clergy Association Thanksgiving Service

It is a virtual service. The link will be publicized and the video will be posted on Wed., Nov. 23.

Needham Connects book discussion group - Spring 2023 planning - Jen

Ideas for a book. Marlene suggested Horse by Geraldine Brooks. It is about slavery in the south. Jen proposed Born of Crime by Trevor Noah. it was read at Needham High School.

New proposal

Jen proposed considering offering a program about people crossing the southern border. The numbers are going up and there is a need for people to understand that applying for asylum is a human right under international law. If we offer this program, we should partner with the Needham Immigration Justice Task Force.

Reminder - Dec.10 – International Human Rights Day

The meeting was adjourned at 9:11pm

Meeting Minute Takers – Need someone for the December meeting.

- December 15: ?
- January 19: Lisa
- February 16: Nate

- March 16: Jen
- April 27: Rinaz
- May 18: Tina
- June 15: Bud

- Announcements:

- Monday, November 21, 7:00—8:00 PM, virtual.

"Settler-Colonist Ties to Thanksgiving & Columbus: Taking Back the Narrative", by Claudia Fox Tree, member of the Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness board. Cosponsored by Belmont Against Racism and area public libraries. Registration required:
<https://belmontpubliclibrary.assabetinteractive.com/calendar/settler-colonist-ties-to-thanksgiving-columbus-taking-back-the-narrative-b-registration-required-b/>

Submitted by: Cynthia Ganung, recorder