

NEEDHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

AGENDA

June 17, 2021

7:30pm - 9:00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81994635826>

In attendance: Tina Burgos, Marcus Nelson, Cynthia Ganung, Ashok Mehta, Amelia Klein, Marlene Schultz, Kerry Hurwitch, Bud Schram, and Julie Venebles. Lt. Belinda Carroll police liaison, Katie King.

- Approval of Minutes: May 15, 2021

Minutes approved unanimously.

- Public participation

Anika Ray, rising 9th grader and Lauren Lipscomb rising senior at NHS attended the meeting from First Parish to talk about a project they are working on related to slavery in Needham. To raise awareness, we want to put up a memorial in the town. Their hope is this would educate the community about how slavery happened here in the North and honor those who were enslaved. Discussion about where it would be, but they have not decided where yet--possibly in town center of the center of Needham Heights. A central location would mean more people would be likely to come across it. They do not know yet what exactly the memorial would look like. They are looking for support from community groups and for people to attend some of their meetings. Marcus encouraged the students to let the NHRC know more details as they are developed. They do not have a meeting date set yet but meet about once a month. They will be doing more research and getting more input from others in town. Marlene and Marcus suggested they connect back with Ms. Greis at the Needham Historical Society since she is the person who did so much research on the issue. Marlene offered to connect any interested committee members the information about next meeting plans. The committee thanks Anika and Lauren for their hard work and for coming to the meeting.

- Juneteenth Update (Tina)

Great feedback on the Juneteenth efforts on Facebook. Might want to explore finding a way to share the info in other venues besides Facebook. The postings have really helped NHRC visibility based on Facebook stats. Tina is going to send out a really good article about language to be used talking about slavery. The last day, Marcus will be reading the NHRC statement in commemoration of Juneteenth.

- Discrimination Complaint Process (Tina, Marlene, Julie)

- Flow chart

- Complaint comes in, NHRC decides if they are the appropriate body to hear the complaint. This process is being discussed.
- Contact made with complainant to determine what they are looking for.
- Present case to NHRC to determine if there is a human rights issue
- Assign minimum of 2 factfinders to investigate the case
 - Question raised whether this creates an open meeting law issue

Katie clarified two laws in play: open meeting and public records. The public records issue

makes it difficult to promise any party confidentiality. The Committee discussed whether the lack of confidentiality would be problematic. The Committee would need to be trained in how to handle these kinds of complaints, what types of language would be appropriate. The process will definitely take time, possibly a couple of months. There would at least be an initial response from NHRC that the complaint was received.

Do we want to present the case collectively? Could the investigators make the decision? Tina is going to circle back to town counsel about having 2 people doing the fact finding.

NHRC is not ready to present to Select Board in July. The subcommittee will meet again to think more about the process. Perhaps present to Select Board in September or October.

- Intake form
 - To be discussed at a later meeting.
- NUARI (Jen, Marcus)

Marcus will be meeting with the Chief of Police, along with two other NUARI members to talk about some of the big picture issues related to race and policing in Needham.

Some members of the NHRC

There will still be some outreach coming on educating committees and boards about what the NUARI principles. Groups that have endorsed the statements are highlighted on the NUARI website.

Many people in town across the civic organizations looking to work together and with the Town on developing some community conversations.

- Rapid Response Network (Katie)
- Voice In Unity Community Outreach (Amelia)
- Community Commemoration of the George Floyd Murder
- General Statement of Condemnation
- Opening in the NHRC/Committee Member Expectations

Ashok is resigning from his position on the Committee for serving five years. The Committee is very thankful to him for his service.

Tina discussed the importance of each Committee member committing to doing the work of the whole Committee. This needs to be stressed to the potential new members. The Select Board needs to also be aware that this is a “working committee” so they know what to look for as well. Announcements will go out in Town to announce the vacancies.

- Reports

- Select Board (Katie)
 - Town Issues (Belinda)
 - Inquiry for Action: Micah Bernat (Amelia)
 - Needham High School (Jared & Sophia)
- Announcements
 - Confronting Racial Injustice Panel Series: visit <http://masshist.org/confronting-racial-injustice> for monthly programming and registration details
 - Newton-Needham Regional Chamber: How to Build an Anti-Racist Organization; June 23 from 11:00am to Noon:
<https://nnchamber.chambermaster.com/eventregistration/register/10801>
- Future NHRC Meeting Dates and Recorders

September 16