

Needham Human Rights Committee
November 15, 2018
Highland Room, Town Hall

Attendance: Jennifer Howard Schroeder (Co-Chair), Christina Mathews (Co-Chair), Cynthia Ganung, Ashok Mehta, Lt. John Kraemer, Bud Schram,
Absent: Nadaa Ali, Abdul Cader Asmal, Kerry Hurwitch Amelia Klein, Jared Pizzuto, Marlene Schultz, Julie Venable,

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Jennifer Howard Schroeder

1. Minutes from October 18, 2018 meeting were approved unanimously, as presented.

2. Public participation – None

3. Old Business

Portrait of a Needham Graduate – Ashok reported that the next meeting on Nov. 16 would be the last meeting of the committee.

Needham Freedom Team: The subgroup: Amelia, Marlene, Christina & Cynthia will meet on Nov. 19

Needham Public Schools Professional Development program on equity – Nov. 21. The Superintendent Dan Gutekanst invited members of the NHRC to attend the keynote talk given by Beverly Daniel Tatum at start of the day. Amelia, Marlene, Christina, Cynthia and Julie plan to attend.

Needham Race Equity Access Leadership (REAL) update – Jen who is a member of the REAL team attended the last meeting. They will meet three more times, and then give a report to the School Committee.

Jen passed around a list of the team members and described what is happening. The school department is working on professional development and curriculum development. Members of the team have been asked to help explain to the community why all the issues of equity are being addressed through the race lens. Johnny Cole, asst. principal, NHS and Mary Lammi, asst. supt. are the team leaders. There are six areas of focus:

1. Curriculum, Programs & Data
2. Professional learning
3. Policies, Procedures & Practices
4. Culture and climate
5. Hiring & Employment practices
6. Communications & community engagement

What does equity mean?

“Equity at NPS

Just and fair access, inclusion and participation; the practice of nurturing a learning environment in which all children are empowered to grow, create and achieve; freedom from bias and discrimination; an understanding that each student possesses personal gifts and attributes and brings these to the classroom which strengthen learning for all; a process by which we ensure justice, engender respect, and inspire hope.”

The team is exploring METCO and the involvement of METCO and ELL families.
Roles for NHRC - Support goals and get message to the community.
Ideas - Invite the leaders Johnny Cole and Mary Lammi to a NHRC meeting
NHRC sponsor a program to help communicate with the community

Role of NHRC with Town Select Board

Announcement– the MA House of Representatives passed a bill to change the name of the Needham town board of Selectmen to Select Board (first step in the MA legislative process to approve the bill)

Jen had a telephone discussion with Select Board member Dan Matthews to clarify the best way to communicate with the Board. Matthews suggested contacting Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager as a first step to addressing the Board.

Christina and Jen met with Town Manager, Kate Fitzpatrick to review activities of the NHRC.

Needham Transgender Coalition The 10/22 community event with speaker Sarah McBride was inspiring and well attended. Cynthia proposed that the NHRC be one of the co-sponsors of the Needham interfaith Transgender Day of Remembrance and Resilience on November 19, 7-8:30pm at First Parish in Needham, UU. Sponsors include seven houses of worship and four community groups including the Needham Transgender Coalition of which NHRC is a member. Members approved having the NHRC become a sponsor.

Potluck Conversation. The Oct 21 event at Temple Beth Shalom was well attended and had very positive evaluations. The NHRC was asked if we would like to host the next potluck conversation, maybe at Town Hall. Members thought it would be better to have it hosted by the congregation of a house of worship who could more easily host a dinner and recruit people to work on the event. NHRC has members on the planning committee and will continue to support these conversations. The debrief meeting is on Dec. 6.

Diversity and Discussion Book Club meeting March 14, 2019

Jen reported that the proposed book is Refugee by Alan Gratz. This was the school-wide book read at Pollard Middle School and there was a parent/student discussion in Sept. It was suggested that Pollard students be invited to be part of the program. A facilitator is needed. This will be brought to the next meeting.

Needham Diversity Summit – Nov. 17, 8am-2pm, Pollard Middle School

A copy of the draft program for the Summit was passed around. NHRC members who plan to attend: Christina, Ashok, Cynthia, Jared and maybe Bud. Christina will bring the NHRC Display to the Summit. Bud expressed concern about getting more high school kids to attend.

4. New Business:

Connecting with the Needham Housing Authority

Jen has talked with the interim NHA Director (Bernhard Kirstein) about having a NHRC at the Housing Authority building with the goal of our learning more about the Housing Authority. Unfortunately the Needham Housing Board of Commissioners meets at the same time as NHRC. It was suggested that someone meet with the director or attend one of their meetings.

Gerry Rovner, new chair, Needham area Immigration Justice Task Force invited NHRC to send a representative to the TF monthly meetings. The next one is on Dec. 10, 7:15pm at the Congregational Church. Meetings include a program – Dec. 10 will have representatives from the Metrowest Immigrant Solidarity network.

Discussion of ideas for 2018-2019 programming – discuss at December meeting.

5. Reports

- ☐ Town Issues (Lt. Kraemer) – no issues to report
- ☐ Needham Public Schools – no report
- ☐ Needham High School – no report

Adjournment: 9:00pm

Cynthia Ganung, Recorder