

Needham Human Rights Committee Meeting

March 21, 2019

Highland Room, Town Hall - 7:30 pm

Committee members in attendance: Jennifer Howard Schroeder (Co-Chair), Tracy McKay, Ashok Mehta, Jared Pizzuto, Cynthia Ganung, Amelia Klein, Marlene Schultz, Kerry Hurwitch, Bud Schram, Christina Mathews (Co-Chair)

Committee Members Absent: Nadaa Ali Khan, Julie Venables

1. Public Participation – None.
2. Meeting Minutes from Feb 28, 2019 were approved unanimously.
3. Old Business
 - New Zealand Mosque attack Solidarity Vigil Update – Over 100 people from Needham, Wellesley, Wayland and Natick came together. From our committee, Amelia, Cynthia and Christina attended. There were a wide range of people in attendance representing various groups in these 4 towns, including many Muslim families who were so grateful for this sign of solidarity. There were also some Wellesley High School students.
 - Amelia met with the Needham Times to discuss the idea of a profile series on various organizations and groups in town.
 - Upcoming Potluck Conversation on March 24: It Happened Here: The History of Slavery in Needham and how we reconcile this past. Speakers include- Gloria Greis from the Needham Historical Society and Rev. Darrell Hamilton II from First Baptist Church, Jamaica Plain. Co-sponsored by NHRC.
 - Upcoming Growing Up Other forum on Sunday, April 7 at the Unitarian Church in Needham. Young adults from diverse backgrounds narrate events that shaped their lives while attending school in Needham and other suburbs. Co-sponsored by NHRC.
 - Diversity and Discussion Book Group – We had 17 people attend the last book group and it was a lively, active discussion, which included students, teachers and administrators from Pollard Middle School. The next book discussion group is May 9 and the book, Evicted, will be discussed. It is about the impact of being unstably housed. We need someone to volunteer to lead this discussion.

- Race Amity Day will be on June 9, 5:30-7:30 – NHRC is a partner, and needs to help with outreach. NDI is inviting METCO families to attend and they will be the guests of honor. Ashok suggested that we should have our Race Amity Day celebration in Boston sometime, so it would be easier and more likely for families in the METCO program to attend.
- The Rapid Response proposal subcommittee has not met again to further discuss, so they will update us at our next meeting in May.

4. New Business

- Racial Equity in Action – Community Forum – April 24, 6-8pm at Needham High School cafeteria. This will be hosted by NPS so the community can hear updates on the equity work that has been happening this past year, and as a space for community members to ask questions. NPS has decided to host this event and NHRC will support it with outreach. We should ask if parents with children in the METCO program are invited to this event
- Jen proposed the idea of a Community Forum on Diversity and Equity in Needham to the Select Board. A similar forum was hosted by the Wellesley Select Board in which community groups, businesses, and others shared their perspective on what equity looks like in their work place. There were representatives from the library, realtor's offices, ESL teacher, business people and World of Wellesley. Our Select Board said that since this is a very busy time of year, we should revisit this in June as a potential program for next year.
- Suitcase Stories – Update from Cynthia. On March 25, there is a meeting of the Resettle Together group, a Needham chapter of the International Institute of New England. They are meeting at Cheryl and Michael Cohen's home. Cheryl Hamilton who is in charge of Suitcase Stories will be there. This will be an educational meeting and also a chance for people to discuss what we can do as a community to support resettling members.
- NDI's Diversity Summit this year is on mental health. The Summit will be held on Saturday, November 16, 2019 from 8:30am – 2pm.
- Subcommittees – Jen proposed the idea that we have subcommittees for the HRC that would include: Programming, Communications, Outreach, etc. We need more involvement from all committee members, so that we can do our work thoroughly and effectively. We will discuss this further at our next meeting.

5. Reports

- Town Issues - Lt. Kramer was not present this week. He updated us by email and spoke to the Chief about the Hate Crimes task force and said that they would be willing to talk more about this.

The Human Rights Committee will not have a meeting next month as we have the Racial Equity Community Forum from NPS that we will all be attending on April 24, 2019.

Our next meeting will be on May 16, 2019.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10pm.