

Civil Rights Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 30, 2020, at 5:30 PM

DRAFT

As a result of the COVID-19 virus, the Conservation Committee conducted the meeting via Zoom remote access as provided by Maine law. Zoom allowed all Conservation Committee members and members of the public to hear all discussion and hear votes, which were taken by roll call, as required by law.

Present: : Valerie Deveraux, Keyla Alston-Griffin, Dheeraj Khare, Miriam Esch Levanos, Kimberly Monaghan, Paul Seidman, Jim Sparks, Melanie Thomas, Rafina Young, Rachel Davis (Director, Thomas Memorial Library)

Absent:

1. Welcome and Call to Order: Rachel Davis called the meeting to order at 5:39 p.m. Committee members introduced themselves individually to the group.
2. Citizen comments of items not on the agenda: none
3. Selection of Chair of Committee:
 - a. Rafina nominated Keyla; seconded by Rafina
 - b. Paul nominated Melanie; seconded by Keyla
 - c. There was a discussion of the possibility of having co-chairs; the group was in favor of this arrangement; Valerie confirmed that the committee had the ability to have co-chairs if so desired. Committee voted on both co-chairs: Melanie Thomas and Keyla Alston-Griffin were voted as co-chairs by unanimous vote.
4. Selection of the secretary: Jim nominated Rachel as secretary; seconded by Paul. Committee voted Rachel Davis as secretary by unanimous vote.
5. Review of the Civil Rights Committee Charge: The co-chairs read the charge aloud.
6. Discussion of next steps:
 - a. The committee discussed the need to review existing Town policies related related to affordable housing, zoning, non-discrimination.
 - b. Jim noted the need for the Committee to identify any barriers to identifying systemic racism. Rafina suggested we should define terms such as “systemic racism,” “white privilege,” and other terms that are currently part of the national discussion so that all members of the Committee are on the same page going forward.

- i. Paul offered to find definitions of common terms for the Committee to review, discuss, and adapt for the Committee's work going forward.
 - c. Melanie wondered how the Committee could obtain copies of Town policies.
 - i. Valerie offered to put together a list of Town departments and policies that the Committee might want to review. Valerie suggested that Rachel could share the list on the screen at the next meeting so everyone can look at it together.
 - d. Jim offered to come up with a list of critical questions as a lens through which to view the policies so we know what we are looking for; Keyla offered to work with Jim on this.
 - e. Jim asked how we should handle working on tasks outside of the meetings given public meeting rules; Valerie said the norm was to do some work outside of meetings, but to discuss the work in the meeting; Kim noted that it is also possible to have workshop sessions in addition to public meetings.
 - f. Jim suggested that we should look into best practices--what changes make a difference in a Town and what has worked in other communities
 - i. Rachel offered to do some research and gather articles about best practices in other communities; Kim noted that Portland is embarking on a long term planning process, and that we might want to look into what they are doing; she said she believes the Press Herald is going to be documenting their efforts.
 - g. Valerie clarified the meaning of the three month deadline for Committee work. Right now, this Committee is not permanent. In three months, the Committee should determine whether it should be made permanent and decide what the work of a permanent committee would look like, and create a draft charge. But not all the work of the Committee needs to be wrapped up in three months.
 - i. Keyla suggested the need to come up with a framework for the charge, and create a plan over the next two months so that the committee is prepared for the three month deadline for the charge
 - ii. Melanie liked the idea of having some workshop times for the Committee to tackle some of the issues as a group
 - iii. Kim suggested that that a shared Google document might be a good way for the Committee to collaborate
 - 1. Rachel offered to set up a Google folder and share it with the Committee; there was discussion of editing and tracking changes of documents; it was agreed that for documents created by one member, Committee members would comment and not edit in order preserve the original document.

- h. Meeting schedule: The committee discussed a plan to meet every other week on Wednesday evenings at 6:45; in the case of a Monday holiday, which pushes Council meetings to Wednesdays, the Committee would meet on Thursdays. Paul made a motion to agree to the meeting schedule; seconded by Melanie. Voted and unanimously approved. Next meeting: Thursday, October 15 at 7:15 p.m. (later start time to accommodate Jim's schedule that day.) Following meeting: Wednesday, October 28 at 6:45 p.m.
- i. Action items:
 - i. Rafina and Valerie will work together on identifying Town departments and compiling a list of policies to be examined
 - ii. Rachel, Melanie, and Dheeraj will work together on identifying best practices in other communities
 - iii. Paul will work on definitions of terminology, and asked other Committee members to send him suggestions for other terms to research
 - iv. Rafina asked Mimi (Miriam) what she would like to work on and what was important to her for the Committee to tackle. Mimi said she would like to look at Police Department policies. She also wanted to address the language used, often without thought or understanding, by other students in the schools. Keyla mentioned her experience with her children at Community Services, and the need for clear policies that address hate speech. Dheeraj mentioned that the issue of School Resource Officers might be something that we should discuss. Valerie noted that the schools are developing their own task force to address racism in the schools, and that this Committee was focused on Town departments. There was discussion of where the funding for the School Resource Officer comes from. Rafina said she believed that the SRO's work in the schools is funded by the School Department, and his other work is funded by the Town.
 - v. Rafina acknowledged that the issues we are confronted with are huge, but encouraged the Committee to stay focused on what's important locally right now and not get bogged down in the bigger picture.
- j. Motion to adjourn by Melanie, seconded by Jim.
Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Rachel Davis, 10/1/20