Civil Rights Committee Workshop Minutes

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

6:45 p.m.

DRAFT

As a result of the COVID-19 virus, the Civil Rights Committee conducted the meeting via Zoom remote access as provided by Maine law. Zoom allowed all Civil Rights Committee members and members of the public to hear all discussion as required by law.

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

Absent: none

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:48 p.m.
2. Melanie read a statement about the January 6 insurrection, followed by Paul, who read a statement of his own (see attached document, “Member Statements about 1/6/21”)
3. Acceptance of minutes from the December 30 meeting: motion to approve by Jim, seconded by Paul, unanimously approved
4. 21 Day Challenge:
   1. Rachel shared a Google document she began based on the Freeport 21 Day Challenge, and suggested that the library formally partner with the Committee on the project so that the library’s existing infrastructure could be used to promote the program and register participants. She suggested that at a future meeting committee members could add or substitute items on the events calendars before the project is launched.
   2. With regard to sharing Google documents and information, Valerie reminded the committee of the rules for conducting committee business in the open, and to be careful about email conversations or other work done outside of meetings.
   3. Rachel noted that Deborah Lane, the Assistant Town Manager and Town Clerk, asked all committees to review the rules governing public meetings at their next meeting. Those documents will be reviewed at the Committee’s January 27 meeting and will be attached to the agenda. There was a suggestion to include attending one of our meetings as an activity on the calendar.
   4. Melanie suggested that we include items specific to Cape history, as well as Malaga Island, on the calendar, as well as links to our meetings
   5. Other suggestions included:
      1. Liking the Cape Diversity Coalition on Facebook
      2. Attending a Community Conversation on civil rights issues at the library
      3. Offering a poem for each day
      4. Writing down some way in which you noticed yourself being racist, or did something to interrupt racism--Paul noted the difference between being an ally, and being an accomplice. (See attached document, “White Accomplices,” shared by Paul.) He suggested that we include an active component to each day, encouraging action, and not just passive consumption of information.
      5. Keyla suggested that we include three types of activities for each day: a short one, like a poem; a longer reflection, like a book, a film, or a reading; and an active one, so that people can participate at the level that they are able to each day.
5. Committee Charge: Valerie noted that we are scheduled to make a presentation to the Town Council on February 8, but we could postpone that presentation until March. It was suggested that we decide whether to keep that date at the January 27 meeting.
   1. Kelya shared a folder containing examples of charges from other communities. The committee decided to postpone looking at these documents.
   2. Paul, Jim, and Melanie have drafted statements to the Town Council stating why the Committee should become permanent. It was suggested that going forward we work from a Google document that contains all the drafts of charges and edit them on the screen in real time at a workshop. ACTION ITEM: Send Rachel draft statements to include in this working document.
   3. Melanie made a motion for a vote on whether we believe our Ad Hoc Committee should become a Standing Committee. Seconded by Kim.
      1. Discussion: Valerie noted that the Council will be busy with other priorities for the next few months and may not get to our charge for a while, so we should take our time in crafting it.
      2. Our committee will exist as an Ad Hoc Committee until 12/31/21.
      3. Paul asked if there was any reason our committee should not be permanent. No one could identify any reasons for that.
      4. Vote to make recommend the Committee become permanent: Unanimously approved.
   4. Keyla asked why Mimi could not be a voting member. Valerie clarified that it was because she was a school representative, and she is under 18. Paul suggested that she could informally weigh in our votes so we are able to take her point of view into consideration.
   5. Jim asked if we could put on the agenda a discussion of the name of the Standing Committee.
6. Next meeting: January 27. Melanie made a motion to make this meeting a workshop; seconded by Paul; unanimously approved.
7. Agenda items 5 & 6 from today’s meeting were tabled for a future workshop.
8. New Business
   1. Melanie asked if we could add a Current Events item to the agenda for each meeting to allow members to discuss items in the news, or other issues related to Civil Rights. Valerie noted the need to keep items on our agenda relevant to the committee’s charge; she said that it is common for committee members to offer reports on work they are doing outside of a committee or board that is relevant to the work of the committee; for example, Melanie could report on what she is learning by attending the schools’ task force.
      1. Paul expressed frustration with the limitations of the our committee structure and wanted to explore alternatives
   2. Melanie read aloud the letter that she and Mimi drafted to send to the school principals (see attached document, “Letter to principals by Mimi and Melanie;”) the committee encouraged them to send the letter.
   3. Paul reported that he had several communications to send out on his own behalf, including contacting REACH about working with the Wabanaki Community, sharing information about decolonizing Land Trust properties with CELT. He also mentioned proposing Indigenous land acknowledgement at the start of meetings.
   4. Adjourn: Jim made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Kim; unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING:

1. EVERYONE: Send draft charge statements to Rachel for inclusion in working Google document
2. EVERYONE: Read FOAA documents to be included with agenda for 1/27 workshop.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Rachel Davis, 1/5/21