Civil Rights Committee Workshop Minutes

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

6:45 p.m.

APPROVED

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 6:47 p.m.
2. Acceptance of minutes from the January 13 workshop
   1. Requested changes to the minutes: Keyla wanted it to be stated in point 5.d. that she not just asked why Mimi could not be a voting member of the Committee, but also asked if she could be made a voting member.
   2. Paul took issue with the New Business portion of the minutes, which stated that he had “expressed frustration with the limitations of the committee structure and wanted to explore alternatives.” He wanted it to be stated that he had identified the structure of the Committee as racist, and felt it was important for racism to be named, especially within the context of this Committee. Extensive discussion of this issue followed; some members stated they felt the Committee should focus on the work it was tasked to do, and that focusing on whether the rules that govern Town committees are the result of structural racism was divisive and distracting. After further discussion, Jim proposed the following change to the minutes under New Business: “Keyla offered to research how other cultures structure their meetings, stating that allowing for conversation at the start, in some cultures, is valuable. Paul raised the question of whether the Committee’s structure is the result of inherent structural racism, which does not allow other cultural approaches to decision-making.”
   3. Rafina made a motion to accept the minutes with these changes; seconded by Melanie; unanimously approved.
3. FOAA information: Committee members were asked to review the FOAA information, which had been provided; no one had any questions.
4. Item not on the agenda: Keyla asked Melanie for clarification about an email she sent stating that she wanted to make a statement about the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol. Melanie clarified that she had wondered if the Committee could make a statement for the Cape Courier, but had sought clarification and learned that she could make a personal statement instead, and that that was the more appropriate route. She also said she spoke with the Town Manager about the current charge for the Committee and relayed the information that the Committee would need to present activities like the 21 Day Challenge to the Town Council before pursuing them. A more comprehensive charge for the Standing Committee would allow for engaging in these kinds of activities without such prior approval.
   1. Keyla asked each Committee member to state what he or she believed was important for the Committee to do. Each member then stated their reasons for being part of the Committee and what they hoped the Committee would accomplish. Most felt a combination of policy review and engaging in more active educational activities were important for the Committee to pursue
5. Committee Charge:
   1. The Committee read through the various drafts of the language for a charge, which had been collected into a single document.
      1. It was decided that at the next meeting, Committee members would come prepared with their own notes on this document so that a charge could be drafted for presentation to the Town Council at their March meeting.
6. New Business:
   1. Valerie mentioned that at their February 1 workshop the Town Council would be hearing from a developer who wishes to create an affordable housing complex at the Town Center and, given that housing is one of the issues some members had identified as important, it might be interesting to attend.
   2. Adjourn: Keyla made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Jim; unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING:

1. EVERYONE: Come prepared with notes on the draft charge language read at this meeting in order to draft a charge at the next meeting.

ADDENDUM: The next meeting will take place on February 10 at 6:45 and will be another workshop.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Rachel Davis, 1/28/21