Civil Rights Committee Workshop Minutes

Wednesday, February 10, 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, Dheeraj Khare, Kim Monaghan, Jim Sparks, Melanie Thomas, Rafina Young, Rachel Davis (Director, Thomas Memorial Library, Committee Secretary)

Absent: Miriam Esch Levanos,

Note: Valerie Deveraux joined the meeting shortly after 8:00 p.m.

1. Welcome and Call the Meeting to Order: Melanie called to order at 6:51 p.m. She announced that Paul Seidman has resigned from the Committee and thanked him for his service.
2. Acceptance of minutes from the January 27 workshop
   1. Requested change to the minutes: Melanie asked that point 5a be moved to point 4.
   2. Melanie made a motion to accept the minutes as amended; seconded by Jim; unanimously approved.
3. Committee Charge:
   1. Melanie suggested that we put the question of a possible name change for the Committee on the agenda for our next time and focus instead on the charge itself.
   2. Rafina suggested that before we work on the language of the charge the Committee should come to an understanding of what kind of group the Committee is--is it an educational group, an activist group, an advisory group? Discussion followed on this point. It was agreed that education should be part of the Committee’s purpose; it was also agreed that if a specific act of discrimination occurs within the Town, the Committee can advise the Town on how to address it, but cannot take on responsibility for addressing it directly. The Committee also agreed that political or social activism is generally understood, it is not appropriate for this Committee to be thought of as an “activist group.”
   3. The Committee collectively settled on four pillars that define its purpose:
      1. Education
      2. Community Awareness and Engagement
      3. Advise the Town on Policies and Practices
      4. Advocate for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
   4. The Committee then worked on drafting the language for the change for a standing committee, and began to outline duties and responsibilities that fall under each of the four aspects of the Committee’s proposed purpose. (See attached document entitled, “CRC Draft Charge--Purpose and Duties.” This work will be continued at the next workshop, which will take place on Wednesday, February 24 at 6:45 p.m.
   5. The Committee discussed making a presentation to the Town Council at their next meeting, which will take place on Monday, March 8.
   6. Other Business:
      1. Keyla wondered if the Committee schedule might change after the presentation to the Town Council is complete; Melanie asked that this be put on the agenda for the next meeting.
      2. Jim wanted to acknowledge the difficult period the Committee has been through and that it had been a painful few weeks. Other Committee members agreed and thanked Jim for his words. Keyla observed that from a process standpoint groups often go through turbulent times before reaching a point of flow. Everyone was happy to move on and continue moving forward with the Committee’s work.
   7. Adjourn: Melanie made a motion to adjourn the workshop; seconded by Rafina; unanimously approved. Workshop adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Rachel Davis, 2/11/21