Civil Rights Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 5, 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: : Rafina Alonzo-Young, Keyla Alston-Griffin, Dheeraj Khare, Jim Sparks, Melanie Thomas, Rachel Davis (Director, Thomas Memorial Library, Committee Secretary)

Absent: Valerie Deveraux, Miriam Esch Levanos, Kim Monaghan

1. Welcome and Call the Workshop to Order: Keyla called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m.
2. Acceptance of minutes from the April 7 workshop
   1. Jim identified a few minor typos in the minutes, and Rafina corrected her last name
   2. Jim,made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected; seconded by Dheeraj; unanimously approved.
3. Policy Review Framework:
   1. The committee discussed whether we would submit a report on each policy as it is done, or one comprehensive report; a definitive consensus was not reached, but the general feeling was that one single report would have more impact
   2. There was discussion of the use of “his or her” versus the more inclusive “they” as a substitute for the use of the male pronoun throughout the Personnel Code. Rachel reported her research that advised reserving “they” for plural use as being grammatically correct; Rafina pointed out that municipalities may be bound by using particular terms based on governmentally-protected classes; Dheeraj suggested we look at how other governmental bodies are handling this issue; Rafina offered to do some research. Different ways of noting the recommendation that the Personnel Code use gender-inclusive language were discussed.
   3. Melanie made a motion for our next meeting to be a workshop to discuss the Personnel Code using the framework; seconded by Kelya; unanimously approved
4. Outreach Discussion: 21 Day Anti-Racism Challenge
   1. Melanie reported that the school task force is delaying their challenge until the fall, so there is no timeline that we need to be cognizant of in planning our own challenge
      1. Committee members are asked to look at Freeport’s challenge and note activities we want to include, as well as any others we come up with
      2. The committee discussed doing a survey after the challenge after the community has had a chance to participate and think about issues
      3. Rafina was surprised that we were moving ahead with the 21 Day Challenge as our first outreach activity and wondered when we had made that decision, as it had been included as an activity in the Town Council presentation; Melanie clarified that we had discussed it as a desired activity since it was first presented; the committee had discussed and voted on it officially at the April 21 meeting which Rafina had been unable to attend.
5. Meeting schedule
   1. Melanie proposed keeping our current schedule of meeting every other week
   2. Dheeraj suggested a compromise of every three weeks
   3. Keyla suggested some morning meetings
   4. Rachel offered the possibility of taking a month off during the summer, as some other committees do this
   5. Jim made a motion to table further discussion until our next regular meeting; seconded by Melanie; unanimously approved
6. Other Business:
   1. Report format: Jim started a discussion of how we will submit our report--will we do something similar to the Portland report?
      1. Committee members are asked to take a look at the Portland report prior to the next workshop
      2. Keyla noted that the Portland report has a different focus, and someone was paid to compile all the information.
      3. Jim likes the coherent voice in the Portland report, and expressed concern that if we present our findings as they are completed our impact will be diluted
      4. Dheeraj mentioned that his employer has a task force with a DEI Manager, and wondered if we might invite her to attend a meeting as a consultant to share her insights and keep our information current
      5. Jim suggested that we list specific things the committee would like to learn about and look for experts to help us
   2. Melanie mentioned that DA Jonathan Sahrbeck, who lives in Town, would be a great guest at one of our meetings
   3. Affordable Housing proposal: Melanie mentioned that the Town Council will be addressing the affordable housing proposal again at their meeting on Monday, May 10
7. Next meeting: Will be a workshop on May 19 at 6:45 p.m.
8. Keyla made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Jim; unanimously approved. Workshop adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Rachel Davis, 4/28/21