

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Purpose: To promote human rights, personal dignity, and positive relations between all residents and visitors to the Town of Maynard.

Meeting Date: December 16th, 2019

Location: Room 201, 195 Main Street, Maynard, MA 01754

Members Present:

Chris DiSilva

Kathleen FitzGerald

Michael Lisasa (not yet sworn in)

Caroline Mahiti

Mike Noble

Eliot Prisby

Rachel Tryba

- I. CALL TO ORDER
 - A. Meeting called to order at 7:08pm
- II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - A. Ms. Mahiti motioned to approve meeting minutes from November 18th 2019.
Mr. Prisby seconded.
- III. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - A. No public comments.
- IV. DISCUSSION OF HUMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT
 - A. Ms. Tryba opened a discussion regarding the wording of the Committee's mission statement. She stated word "different" is problematic.
 - B. Mr. Lisasa agreed.
 - C. Ms. Tryba emphasized the sentiment is correct but some of the wording needs to be addressed.
 - D. Ms. FitzGerald wonders how the committee approaches the town government. Mr. DiSilva stated that recommendations can be brought before the Board of Selectmen, and permission is not needed for certain things like events.
 - E. Ms. Tryba suggested changing the word "different." Mr. Prisby offered suggestions similar to use of similar services in other groups, such as "neighbors" or "vulnerable groups." Ms. Mahiti pointed out that no one sees themselves as "different." Mr. Noble suggested framing the language as positive instead of

negative, to encourage people to come forward and be seen. Ms. FitzGerald suggested simply eliminating the second part of the statement. The committee also addressed the use of the word “different” in the second paragraph of “Purpose.”

- F. Ms. FitzGerald asked about affiliate members. Mr. DiSilva suggested anyone who wishes to come and speak is welcome to contribute, suggested “interested community members.”
- G. Mr. Lisasa asked if we would use the Committee for a more civil discourse for heated topics, Mr. DiSilva suggested the group remains open for people to be heard, it is important for people’s problems to be heard first-hand, not for the Committee to decide what people’s problems are. Mr. Lisasa said inside points of view are helpful, and the committee is an opportunity to bring people together. Ms. Tryba emphasized people want to be listened to and heard. Mr. Prisby emphasized the importance of goal-based discussion.
- H. Mr. DiSilva suggested that the role of the committee expands beyond the police department. Ms. FitzGerald emphasized a human relations component. Ms. Tryba suggests a reciprocal relationship between committee members as well as between the committee and the community. Ms. Fitzgerald talked about cultivating discussion before problems begin, Mr. Noble agreed, emphasizing “putting out the fire before it starts.”
- I. Mr. Lisasa emphasized our professional conduct reflects upon our efficacy as representatives of the town.
- J. Ms. FitzGerald wanted to research ways to bring people together. Mr. DiSilva asked how to start a conversation with people “outside the room.” Ms. Tryba suggested following the example of the group involved with Indigenous People’s Day. Mr. DiSilva worried about the scope of the Committee’s work - is doing something like trying to change Columbus Day to Indigenous People’s Day too much - he emphasized supporting Maynard residents specifically. Ms. Tryba suggests acknowledging the concerns of local residents. Ms. FitzGerald emphasized opportunities for building community. Ms. Fitzgerald discussed ways to reach out to the community.
- K. Ms. Mahiti suggested using our pictures to build familiarity to help bridge the gap. Mr. Lisasa agreed. Mr. Noble suggested participation at the Taste of Maynard. Mr. Prisby suggested Maynard Business Alliance, Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce. Mr. DiSilva suggested mentioning it at Town Meeting in May, and other town events. Mr. Lisasa suggested business cards, flyers, social media presence. Ms. Mahiti suggested flyer with questions, other opportunities to give feedback. Ms. FitzGerald suggested a survey, Mr. DiSilva reminded that we can use the town and school websites for free - school website could reach people

who might not otherwise be connected to the town. Ms. Mahiti suggested asking “what kind of prejudices do you face?”

- L. Mr. Lisasa referenced the Assabet Boys & Girls Club changing their mascot. Ms. Tryba discussed bringing in other perspectives. Mr. Prisby advised against call out culture and encouraged conversations that address the issues without making people feel attacked.
- M. Ms. FitzGerald suggested a Land Acknowledgment for each meeting. Ms. Tryba reminded us of the tragic history of the Nipmuc tribe, the indigenous people of Maynard. Ms. Tryba noted her personal interest in Native American burial areas. Mr. Noble suggested having an indigenous person work with the committee to compose our land acknowledgment. Mr. Lisasa wondered if a similar speaker could talk at other town events, Mr. DiSilva suggested reaching out to the sesquicentennial committee. Mr. Prisby offered to speak to a connection he has to the Grafton community, where the remaining Nipmuc people live.
- N. Ms. FitzGerald talked about small ways to be more inclusive, used the visitors’ section of the Town Meeting as an example. Ms. FitzGerald suggested ways of learning best practice for civic engagement and public discourse - opportunities for learning. Mr. Lisasa wondered as to the extent of the Committee’s ability to change policy in other areas, such as schools. Ms. FitzGerald suggested some ways in which teachers and staff can start to change the historical narrative.

V. DISCUSSION OF INCLUSION OF CLERGY ON THE COMMITTEE

- A. Mr. Prisby suggested Father Adriano Natalino, the priest of the Brazilian congregation at St. Bridget’s Parish as a potential representative for the committee of faith organizations in Maynard. Ms. Mahiti emphasized that clergy members would bring credibility and compassion. Mr. Noble added they bring communication. Mr. DiSilva suggested reaching out to all local churches. Mr. Prisby worried that clergy may not respond to a general request - Ms. Mahiti suggested a formal letter as well as a personal invitation if available, also a report or agenda item from the faith community. Ms. Tryba suggests they will know the people who are most vulnerable. Mr. Prisby suggests a translator for ESOL clergy. Mr. Lisasa agreed. Mr. Tryba asked if Town website and documents are available in other languages, Mr. DiSilva pointed out the Maynard Progressive Committee subgroup focused on translation. Mr. Noble said the police department has forms in multiple languages but website is only in English. Ms. FitzGerald asked where to find a list of churches, Mr. DiSilva suggested the Beacon Villager.

VI. DISCUSSION OF MAYNARD POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY

- A. Regarding Maynard Police Department policies, we agreed to table it until the next meeting. Mr. Noble had drafted a new policy which he will share. Mr.

Lisasa emphasized the importance of communication between vulnerable communities and the police department. Mr. Noble handed out copies of current policy for committee to review prior to the next meeting.

VII. ACTION ITEMS

- A. Mr. Prisby will reach out to his connection to Grafton to contact the Nipmuc Nation.
- B. Mr. Prisby will adjust the language of the Mission Statement.
- C. Ms. FitzGerald will draft a letter to local clergy.
- D. All will review the Maynard Police Department mission statement and policies in preparation for discussion at next meeting.
- E. Mr. Lisasa will get sworn into the committee.

VIII. NEXT MEETING

- A. January 13th 2020, 7-8:30pm

IX. ADJOURNMENT

- A. Meeting adjourned at 8:32pm