

DURHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
TUESDAY, MAY 10, 2022
3:00 PM
Council Chambers – Durham Town Hall

Members Present: Council Chair Katherine (Kitty) Marple, Administrator Todd Selig, Business Manager Gail Jablonski, Dr. Janet Perkins-Howland, The Rev. Richard Belshaw

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Cathy Fletcher, UNH Sustainability Fellow; Vivian Jablonski, ORHS Math teacher and JEDI program faculty advisor; Zoe Selig, ORHS Junior and student participant in JEDI program

I. Call to Order

Chair Marple called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM and introductions of members present were made.

II. Land Acknowledgment Statement

Chair Marple read the Durham, New Hampshire Land, Water, and Life Acknowledgment Statement:

The town of Durham, New Hampshire wishes to acknowledge the spiritual and physical connection maintained by the Pennacook, Abenaki and Wabanaki peoples to N'dakinna (homeland), aki (land), nibi (water), lolakwikak (flora) and awaasak (fauna). New Hampshire has been home to these Indigenous people for thousands of years. The residents of Durham acknowledge the ongoing hardships endured by our Indigenous neighbors after the loss of their unceded homelands which we now steward and we will work to foster relationships to support the well-being of Indigenous people who carry forward the traditions of their ancestors.

III. Approval of Minutes – March 15, 2022

Chair Marple MOVED to approve the meeting minutes of March 15, 2022, as presented. The motion was SECONDED by the Rev. Richard Belshaw and PASSED unanimously, 5-0.

IV. Notification from the Human Rights Campaign that Durham will be included in the eleventh edition of the HRC's Municipal Equality Index (MEI)

Chair Marple asked why the Town of Durham has been included in the HRC's MEI for so many years. Business Manager Gail Jablonski responded it was because the Town of Durham is home to the flagship university for the State of New Hampshire.

Administrator Selig noted that the letter sent to the Town was included in the commission members' packets if they would like to read what it says. He said it is pretty standard and consistent with past correspondence.

V. Discussion with Sustainability Fellow Cathy Fletcher

Administrator Selig explained that the Town of Durham joined the Global Covenant of Mayors at the beginning of 2021 and has since been working to fulfill its obligation as part of that covenant. He said one of those goals/obligations was to create a Climate Action Plan. Mr. Selig said that UNH Sustainability Fellow Cathy Fletcher has taken the lead on this project and has prepared a draft plan for review and to receive feedback on, which is what she will be presenting to the commission members today.

Mr. Selig reminded the commission members that they had indicated at an earlier meeting their interest in the HRC being included in the review of the document once finished. He said that the topic of "equity" is one of the items covered in the plan.

Ms. Fletcher provided her PowerPoint presentation of the draft Climate Action Plan, which included background information that she briefly outlined on the following items:

- Introduction to Climate Action Plan
- Developing Durham's Climate Action Plan
- Durham's Proposed Climate Action Plan
- Next Steps
- Feedback

Dr. Perkins-Howland thanked Ms. Fletcher for her presentation and said she was glad that she had come before the Durham HRC because she believed that the climate change crisis is related to human rights and that every worldwide major organization, including the United Nations and Amnesty International, would agree that human rights are connected to the climate change crises (with respect to food, water, sanitation, etc.) which were mentioned in Ms. Fletcher's plan.

Regarding the "Risk & Vulnerability Assessment Findings & Goals" in the document, Dr. Perkins-Howland said she was particularly interested to hear about the high vulnerability, including public health threats and extended power failure, where she believed there was a desperate affect on certain communities. She said she was not certain where the Durham Human Rights Commission might fit into the plan, but she did believe that the commission is inextricably related to certain aspects within the document.

Ms. Fletcher responded that in the Risk & Vulnerability Assessment one of the requirements under the Global Covenant of Mayors is to identify specific populations that are impacted by each risk, which is a piece of the vulnerability part of it. She said

if there were any of the current goals and actions the commission was really passionate about, it was welcome to sustain any of the proposed reactors. In addition, based on those findings from the risk and vulnerability assessment, there may be more specific goals and actions that are focused specifically on that, which might be an area where the Durham HRC could be a lead.

The Rev. Belshaw said that for him, there was permeability in all of this with human rights, and what stands out for him is housing and financial/economic issues, specifically related to energy. He also felt that the public health aspect was important. He said it might be possible for the HRC to be more involved with housing and how it affects those with lower incomes, for example. He thanked Ms. Fletcher for her presentation and said he hoped that the goals within the plan can be met.

The Rev. Belshaw asked Administrator Selig how much land the Town owns (including forest land) relative to private property. He said one of the things mentioned in the plan under "Durham's Focus Areas" "Natural Resources-Goal #1" was for the Town to increase its holdings of forested land and asked if that was offset by private development on land not owned by the Town.

Mr. Selig responded that if one calculates the land owned by the Town, the University of New Hampshire or private entities that is undevelopable (a conservation easement on property for example), it is approximately 42% of the land area of Durham which is extraordinarily high compared to other communities. He noted the positive aspects of that are it affords more opportunities for recreation and better quality of life. However, the downside is that it does take land off the table that might otherwise be developable to broaden the tax base.

The Rev. Belshaw asked Mr. Selig if the Goss building located on Technology Drive were to ever be fully occupied in the future, would that vastly increase the energy consumption numbers for Durham and should there be an allowance for that to happen.

Mr. Selig replied that the Goss facility has the capacity to use a lot of power, and it did for many years. However, Goss has largely vacated that site and the building has been on a downward trend of usage. It has been recently sold and the new owner is considering what development opportunities will be determined for the site. So, at this point, it is unclear how it will be developed, but if the facility goes back online again, that will largely dictate the power demand.

VI. Discussion with ORCSD Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion group – Vivian Jablonski, Zoe Selig, and others

Vivian Jablonski, a Math teacher at ORHS and ORHS Junior Zoe Selig introduced themselves. Ms. Selig explained that there was a student that graduated last year who

was instrumental in getting a student voice involved in the Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (JEDI) group (formerly DEIJ) who wrote a letter to the Superintendent and School Board stating the need for change in the Oyster River Cooperative School District relating to how to discuss and teach about civil rights, African American history, racism in America, and general inclusion in the district.

Ms. Jablonski, the faculty advisor for the JEDI group, provided her PowerPoint presentation and explained that the "Superintendent's DEI Committee" was first formed in 2017 in response to a racial incident and that in 2020 faculty and staff expressed a need for explicit antiracism work within the school district. She said that she had experience teaching in other schools that are much more diverse than Oyster River and witnessed these schools reacting to the death of George Floyd (in May of 2020) in different ways and explicitly talking about the incident with students, something she did not witness occurring in the ORCSD. She said it was very exciting to have the students expressing to her the need to both talk about it in their district and also deal with other underlying issues that were coming to the surface at that time.

Ms. Jablonski spoke about the faculty involvement in the JEDI group and how that was developed. She said that the high school faculty developed and implemented an antiracism syllabus and started a monthly newsletter called AntiRacist Discussion and Growth for Educators (ADaGE), which was meant to continue discussions relating to antiracism, even once the protests and unrest settled down after the George Floyd murder.

Zoe Selig said that while the JEDI faculty group was being developed, it became clear to the students that the school's administration and teachers did not really have an idea regarding what the students were thinking about and understanding, as well as what they were being taught and not being taught in the district with respect to antiracism and general inclusion. She said 6 students started a very long list of issues that were occurring they thought should be changed, or of things they thought should occur that were not happening. Ms. Selig said the group then presented the list to the full JEDI program, and shared the list with other teachers within the district as well.

Ms. Jablonski continued with her presentation, explaining how the JEDI group progressed throughout 2021/22, as follows:

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| Spring 2021: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing an ORCSD racism and antiracism policy.• High school students lead a vigil honoring a victim of police brutality.• District committees host a forum for Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) heritage month. |
| Summer 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• District committee continued to meet and discuss format of the work for the upcoming school year. |

- High school teachers work with a UNH intern to create a large report on the state of DEIJ at ORCSD.
- Fall/Winter 2021-22
- District committee members help develop a procedure to use in case of complaints launched against teachers related to HB2, signed by Governor Sununu on June 25, 2021, which added, in Section 297, new provisions to RSA chapter 354-A entitled, "**Right to Freedom from Discrimination in Public Workplaces and Education**".
 - Student group creates and shares guidance around religious inclusion, shared districtwide.
 - District committee hosts a workshop about the history of education for marginalized groups in the US.
 - District committee hosts a "building bridges" conversation for the community.
- Spring 2022
- Begin work revising the ORCSD transgender policy.
 - Interview candidates for the new DEJI coordinator position.
 - High School student group hosts a discussion with transgender guest speaker Tona Brown, centered around intersectionality with the middle school student group that also has guest speakers.

Ms. Jablonski concluded that in moving ahead, the group's goals include:

- Hire a JEDI coordinator and connect them with all stakeholder groups to begin assessing needs for next year.
- Coordinate summer Professional Development for teachers, especially the Social Studies and English teachers.
- Finish revising a transgender policy and have it approved.

Chair Marple said the things that the JEDI group is learning about and have discovered was relevant to a comment that one of the Town Councilors made at the most recent Council meeting, in which they said in walking around town, people would ask "what does it mean that we are a welcoming community?" She said most people feel they are welcoming, when in fact, they aren't. She said that when she sees what JEDI has done and plans to do going forward, she is grateful to have been on the Town Council and to have encountered and learned about these issues. She also cited the HRC's and Council's involvement regarding the Indigenous Peoples issue and learning a lot from that as well.

Dr. Perkins-Howland encouraged Ms. Jablonski and Ms. Selig to continue to get information out to the community and school district. She said that she attended the talk given by Tona Brown and was particularly impressed with Ms. Brown, saying that she felt her talk to the students was transformational.

The Rev. Belshaw thanked Ms. Jablonski and Ms. Selig for their presentation. He likewise encouraged students to bring up issues and notify adults and teachers of issues they may encounter or would like to see changed. He noted that he is a parent of a transgender child and that he knows of at least one UNH professor that is a transgender person that he has heard speak on the topic, and it is obvious to him that the more information is shared on what it means to be transgender the better.

Administrator Selig said that one of the things the HRC is trying to work on is how to bring the community along on this journey and there are a groups they are working on: 1) The community at large; people who call Durham their home; 2) Members of the community that serve on various Town boards, commissions, and committees. How can the Town reach them and broaden their perspective on these issues; and 3) Town staff members. What training could be provided to them that would be most useful?

He noted that JEDI has employed a number of different ways of providing different training to different groups. He asked Ms. Jablonski and Ms. Selig if they felt any particular training type or method was more effective than another. Ms. Jablonski felt that any way of receiving real honest feedback from different groups could be eye opening.

Ms. Selig said that she would add that approaching conversations with no assumptions of right or wrong has been the most effective in her experience. Approaching it at a level of conversation and not through training has yielded the best results for her.

Administrator Selig asked what kind of push back or wall have the students run up against.

Ms. Selig said the current wall students are trying to get through are those teachers that are not interested in the JEDI's work. They are not reading the information students provide or attending sessions that are being offered. She said the student group needs to brainstorm how they can connect with those teachers that really do not want to connect to them.

VII. Review proposed resolution to recommend for possible adoption by the Durham Town Council discouraging any town public meetings on commonly accepted Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim religious holidays

Following up on the last HRC meeting, Administrative Selig said a lot of thought has been given on how to recognize and encourage Town boards, commissions, and committees to not schedule meetings or important events on significant religious holidays. He said the list that the ORCSD had created was used as the template to start with because although there were many holidays included on that list, not all of them

would be considered significant holidays to warrant not holding a meeting on that night. Input was sought from Pastor David Grishaw-Jones from the Community Church of Durham, Nadine Petty, UNH Chief Diversity Officer; Pastor Larry Brickner-Wood from the Lee Congregational Church, and a couple of other faith leaders of the Muslim and Hindu religions. Based upon their feedback, a draft resolution has been cobbled together that he believes includes “particularly significant holidays”.

Commission members reviewed the draft resolution and discussion occurred around how the additional holidays were listed within the document. Discussion was also held concerning the Good Friday and Easter Christian holidays that were not on the list. It was decided they did not need to be included as public meetings do not typically occur on Friday evenings or Sundays when Easter is recognized.

Commission members discussed the language within the resolution, which yielded the motion below.

Dr. Perkins-Howland MOVED to forward the HRC's suggested resolution to the Town Council for possible adoption with the following exclusions and additions:

After “meetings on” eliminate the words “following” and “particularly”, leave in “significant”, eliminate “recognized” and add “such as”. Also add at the end of the resolution the notation that “This resolution will be reviewed periodically”.

The motion was SECONDED by the Rev. Belshaw and PASSED unanimously, as amended, 5-0.

VIII. Bias training proposal – Dr. Janet Perkins-Howland

Dr. Perkins-Howland said she would like to propose to the Town Council that there be antiracism training provided to the Town employees, as well as Town boards, commissions, and committees and indicate to the Council that at today’s commission meeting, members heard about how such “training/conversation” is a journey for some people. She said the HRC serves as an advisory committee and as part of that should be recommending and offering professional development and training.

Dr. Perkins-Howland said that she had contacted trusted sources and received some recommendations for professional development instructors. After reviewing applications, she selected Tara Flippo as someone who could do the work for the Town. If Ms. Flippo were to be hired, she would be accompanied during the sessions by a co-collaborator who is a person. Ms. Flippo provided some pricing, which Dr. Perkins-Howland said was probably a little more than was anticipated. For planning a program specific for Durham, the cost would be \$3,000, plus each session would cost \$2,000.

Dr. Perkins-Howland and Administrator Selig met with Ms. Flippo and discussed a number of scenarios that could be developed for Durham. Dr. Perkins-Howland said she applied for a grant from the NH Charitable Foundation for \$10,000. She is still awaiting word as to whether or not the Town has been awarded this grant. If not, she said there may be other grants available, and if not, they could work with Ms. Flippo to come up with a more affordable training program.

Administrator Selig said if training occurs during the day, there would need to be thought given as to how it would be implemented for Town Hall employees, Police, DPW, and Fire as they all operate on different schedules. Also, thought would need to be given as to how to engage the various Town boards, commissions, and committees.

IX. Other Business

The next HRC meeting was scheduled for July 12, 2020 at 3PM.

X. Adjourn

The Rev. Belshaw MOVED to adjourn the meeting. The motion was SECONDED by Business Manager Jablonski and PASSED unanimously, 5-0.

The meeting **ADJOURNED** at 4:50 PM.

Prepared by Jennie Berry, Administrative Assistant