

**DURHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**  
**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2022**  
**3:00 PM**  
**Council Chambers – Durham Town Hall**

Members Present: Chair Kitty Marple, Administrator Todd Selig, Dr. Janet Perkins-Howland, The Rev. Richard Belshaw

Members Absent: Business Manager Gail Jablonski

Others Present: None

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Kitty Marple called the meeting to order at 3PM 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 September 13, 2022, Meeting Minutes**

Chair Marple noted two non-substantive amendments, which have been included in the minutes.

*Chair Marple made a MOTION to APPROVE the minutes of September 13, 2022, as amended. The motion was SECONDED by The Rev. Belshaw and PASSED unanimously 5-0.*

**IV. Immigration and Housing**

The Rev. Belshaw said that when talking about immigration and refugee settlement, it is not about people crossing borders to get to the United States for whatever reason. He said it is his understanding that there needs to be an assessment and process for

those coming to the United States seeking asylum. He said that the conversation around refugee immigration resettlement in the United States is about those people who have applied for and have gone through the administrative process to be resettled in this country. In Durham, the biggest issue is the lack of housing.

The Rev. Belshaw said that New Hampshire needs workers. He said there is a lot that goes into settlement (i.e., housing, language, education, health) and any other issues that someone coming to this country would need to work through. He said that for anyone interested in becoming involved in this work, the need is for help in the aforementioned areas.

The Rev. Belshaw noted a few organizations that provide help in these areas:

1. The National Institute of New England, centered out of Manchester, NH. This is a good organization to contact if you are an employer looking for prospective employees.
2. Building Community of New Hampshire, which is run by and for refugees.
3. NH Alliance of Immigrants and Refugees. This organization assists and engages people in this country by making them aware of political issues and assisting them with voting, if they are eligible, and to become leaders in their communities.
4. Welcoming New Hampshire is a good place to get general information.
5. Ascentria Care Alliance assists Ukrainians seeking refuge.

The Rev. Belshaw said it is his understanding that between 6-7% of all people living in New Hampshire are recent arrivals to the country, and another 8% or more are children who have at least one parent who has recently arrived in this country. He said that in the research he has done, his sense is that that New Hampshire would like to welcome more immigrants, but it is difficult for people to move to New Hampshire because of the lack of housing specifically and other reasons in general. He said there are a lot of failing states in the world today and there are people eager to come to the United States, but without family or connections, it's a daunting prospect.

The Rev. Belshaw said that although as a Town, Durham is not able to financially engage in this type of work, he thought it was important for the community to know there are several people that on their own and through churches, faith communities, and synagogues are eager to do this work. He said that he would be happy to serve as the point person for information regarding this issue and welcomed anyone to contact him.

The Rev. Belshaw said he reached out to the Freedom Café, and although Freedom Café's focus is on child trafficking, they would be interested in refugee settlement as well. He also reached out to the ORCSD administration to get a general idea of how many immigrant students are in the school system and was informed it would take a

lot of staff time to sort through records, etc., to obtain that information, which he completely understood.

Dr. Perkins-Howland also noted that the Four Rivers group has been involved with the placement of an Afghanistan family and Ukrainian family in Durham. She also added the country of Haiti to the watch list, which is on the brink of a Civil War.

Administrator Selig asked The Rev. Belshaw if communities should be prepared and have networks set up to handle incidents such as what recently occurred when one state filled two planes with immigrants and flew them to another state.

The Rev. Belshaw said it was important to have community systems, just in case. He said that he did not come across that particular situation, so did not have a direct response to Mr. Selig's question.

## **V. Follow up From Inclusive Bias Training**

Dr. Perkins-Howland said that in terms of where to go from here, some thoughts she had was if the Durham HRC wanted to have another training, maybe it be on what an individual would do if they noticed bias occurring in their workplace or in Town, for instance.

Dr. Perkins-Howland also agreed with The Rev. Belshaw with respect to the difficulties around immigrants receiving housing and felt this would be an excellent topic for a future bias training session, and could include the Housing Task Force, Planning Board members, and Durham HRC members. She welcomed feedback on these suggestions from other Durham HRC members.

Chair Marple said she did not particularly care for the training and was not necessarily impressed with the facilitators and thought that the presentation was gimmicky and kitschy.

Dr. Perkins-Howland said she has been through a few bias trainings, and she loves the vulnerability that comes from it.

Administrator Selig said that for those who have never participated in any kind of implicit bias training, he thought it was a good introduction to the topic and helped to bring awareness to the matter. He was personally hoping the training would delve a little deeper into the topic (i.e., with some suggestions about how to handle a situation involving bias) but that would have required more time and resources. He noted a few instances where there was challenges for some staff to be able to participate because of not having the technology available to them.

With respect to housing and bias, The Rev. Belshaw wondered how the Durham HRC could move forward and discuss this topic with other Town committees.

Dr. Perkins-Howland suggested that this be a group effort with the Durham HRC, Planning Board, and Housing Task Force. She noted that the Housing Task Force was coming before the Planning Board on November 9, 2022, to propose amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to enhance housing opportunities in Durham.

Chair Marple said there are developers that do not mind building not expensive homes and there can be covenants made with these developers to build homes for adults and not students.

Administrator Selig said right now it is trendy to talk about workforce housing in particular, and if that is all the Town is trying to create, then that really requires a deep dive into the statistics of what Durham currently has for workforce housing. He said so far, the Housing Task Force has not done that. He said his perception is that the task force is working under the approach that workforce housing is important, it is a need in this region of the state, there is not enough of it in Durham, so let's create more.

Administrator Selig said Durham could use a wider variety of housing types that work for a variety of different people and their need situations. (Example: A couple moved to Durham when they were first married, purchased a large house, and raised a family. Their children are now grown and have moved out of the house. The couple is nearing retirement age and want to downsize to a smaller home (perhaps one-story) and stay in Durham, but they can't because there is not that type of housing stock available in Durham).

Administrator Selig said if the conversation changes to a variety of housing forms that are energy efficient for the modern day, he felt that is a better and healthier conversation and then the question from there becomes where to place them in a way that works. He said the challenge that Durham has, unlike other surrounding communities, is it has the University and there is a heavy demand for off-campus student housing and the Town has been unwilling/unable to allow sufficient off-campus density and availability for student housing to let some air out of the balloon. That means, if there is something that is small within walking distance to campus, it gets eaten up with student dollars, which many residents do not want. Therefore, how does Durham allow sufficient off-campus capacity to welcome students into housing units when their nature tendencies can be managed, and they won't cause socially destructive behavior?

Dr. Perkins-Howland said the reason she felt the Durham HRC should be involved in these types of discussions with other boards is to be able to frame it and bring to the

table what its' goals are and how does it impact inclusion and being a welcoming community.

Chair Marple said that one would need to get to the table those people who have not wanted significant development. Dr. Perkins-Howland said that is what she would propose doing.

The Rev. Belshaw said that collecting the factual development information would also be another important aspect.

Dr. Perkins-Howland said she would prepare something on behalf of the Durham HRC that she will read during the Public Comments portion of the Planning Board's meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup>.

## **VI. Representation and Makeup of Committees, Commissions, and Employees**

Dr. Perkins-Howland said this item relates in terms of trying to increase diversity in voices in decision-makers and how to have this conversation occur (i.e., how do you get younger people, people of color, people within the LGBTQ community, etc. to join various Town committees). She said that having diverse membership could perhaps spark different conversations.

She said in thinking about how to recruit people to run for Town offices or seek appointments to Town boards, a few ideas she had was to reach out to the school district's PTO, using social media, or approaching UNH graduate students.

The Rev. Belshaw said that he has found in working for the Town's DCAT office, when recording meetings, oftentimes women will sit on one side and men on the opposite side. He wondered, for the optics at least, if Town committees could make sure that doesn't happen. He also added that it is difficult to find people to run for Town Council or Planning Board that have the expertise and time that are required for these types of boards.

Chair Marple felt the process needs to be natural. A person must have the will and desire to serve on boards and committees. She also wondered how one would recruit people appropriately.

Administrator Selig added that some of the boards are technical in nature, and it can take a long time for a new member to learn, particularly on the Zoning Board and Planning Board, where there are rules and procedures they must learn about and how precedent works. He said he has never been one to support term limits. He liked the fact that people step forward and either they run for election, and whether they are elected or not is their term limit, or whether someone is appointed again or not is their term limit. He said if someone is working hard, is committed, and are rational and

seem reasonable, great; particularly since there are vacancies on most of the Town boards and committees and the Town can't find people to fill them. He said if Town boards were fully populated and there was a long list of people seeking appointments, that might be a reason to look at a transition.

## **VII. Other Business**

Members had no other business to discuss.

**NEXT MEETING: Friday, January 6, 2023, at 3PM**

## **VIII. Adjourn**

*The Rev. Richard Belshaw MOVED to adjourn the meeting. The motion was SECONDED by Chair Marple and PASSED unanimously, 4-0.*

The meeting **ADJOURNED** at 4:22 PM.

Prepared by Jennie Berry, Administrative Assistant