

These minutes were approved at the April 5, 2023 meeting.

DURHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
FRIDAY, JANUARY 6, 2023
3:00 PM
Council Chambers – Durham Town Hall

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

Members Absent: None

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

Dr. Perkins-Howland 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 November 4, 2022, Meeting Minutes

The Rev. Belshaw made a MOTION to APPROVE the minutes of November 4, 2022, as presented. The motion was SECONDED by Dr. Perkins-Howland and PASSED unanimously 5-0.

The Rev. Belshaw proposed that agenda item #IX. "Continued discussion on Immigration and Housing" on today's agenda be removed as he had no further information to provide at this time.

Chair Marple MOVED to make the proposed change recommended by The Rev. Belshaw. The motion was SECONDED by Administrator Selig and PASSED unanimously, 5-0.

IV. Update on Final Human Rights Campaign 2022 Municipal Equity Index Score Card

Business Manager Gail Jablonski said the Town received a score of 92 this year from the Human Rights Campaign and was the highest scoring Town in the state. She said at this time the Town has earned points for all the items it has been able to achieve.

Dr. Perkins-Howland suggested that all town facilities/businesses be asked to consider and encouraged to have gender neutral restrooms if they aren't already in place.

Administrator Selig said he could put an item in a future Friday Updates regarding Dr. Perkins-Howland's request.

V. Durham HRC Composition

Dr. Perkins-Howland said she wanted to discuss work the Durham HRC could be doing and how it could accomplish the work.

Administrator Selig said that when the Durham HRC was first created, there was work such as reviewing the Town's Personnel Plan and other policies to determine if changes needed to be made regarding nondiscrimination language and then changes were made within those policies to address gender equality.

Dr. Perkins-Howland said she felt the Commission could be doing more. It could expand its membership and work more in a collaborative fashion with other Town boards and committees. She felt there were many opportunities to be proactive instead of reactive. As examples, she said the Commission could have been more active in helping to shape the final Climate Action Plan and going forward providing input regarding the current discussions around housing in Durham.

Dr. Perkins-Howland said her understanding is that Chair Marple would not be seeking reelection in March 2023 and that a new Chair would be selected, who would also serve as Chair for the Durham HRC. She felt there may be an opportunity at that time to expand membership to have more diverse voices on the Commission and to be intentional about diversity when recruiting people.

Administrator Selig said that the Commission originally consisted of just the Administrator, Council Chair, and Business Manager and was busier with work that could be accomplished administratively. Over time the members felt it made sense to add two citizen members but were mindful of keeping it as a weighted minority of

non-town official seats and a majority of administrative and Council seats in part to keep the work manageable to not get pulled in different directions and to not stir up issues that didn't already exist. During those years, the HRC dealt with issues such as the mural at the Durham Post Office and Frost Fest. He said that at present, the world is more aware of different human rights issues and perhaps the Durham HRC is at a point where it may make sense to talk about how it wants to move forward. He said that he and Business Manager Jablonski are focused on keeping the Town operating smoothly and do not have the time to spend talking about human rights issues that they believe Durham should be talking about unless confronted with a particular matter, at which time they can bring to the Durham HRC to talk it through.

Administrator Selig said if the goal the Durham HRC is to bring on citizens and actively root out and identify specific human rights issues in Durham, then that work would need to be done by the citizen representatives.

Chair Marple felt it was reasonable to have the Commission become more citizen-oriented and less administrative/Council focused.

Business Manager Jablonski agreed with both Administrative Selig and Chair Marple regarding changing the Commission's composition moving forward.

The Rev. Belshaw said there has been some talk about having different Town committees and boards getting together to discuss issues such as climate change. He said there are human rights issues imbedded in many topics confronting the Town, yet the Durham HRC has not received any invitation or consideration in joining such conversations. He agreed with Dr. Perkins-Howland that if there were two additional citizen members added then the Commission could be more involved and present to represent the Durham HRC, making people aware of human rights issues that might exist.

Dr. Perkins-Howland MOVED to increase the citizen representative seats on the Durham Human Rights Commission from two to four members, being mindful of diversity when recruiting new members. The motion was SECONDED by The Rev. Belshaw and PASSED unanimously, 5-0.

Dr. Perkins-Howland said she would craft a "solicitation" letter to be sent to selected individuals regarding joining the Durham HRC. It was agreed that she would send the draft letter to other Durham HRC members and receive any feedback they may have. Once that is done, she will send the final letter to Administrator Selig for his approval before moving forward.

VI. FY 2023 Goals Planning

Commission members discussed how the Commission could be more active in collaborating with other Town boards, commissions, and committees. After some discussion, Chair Marple said she would craft a letter that could be sent to board and committee chairs asking for Durham HRC members to be placed on meeting agendas to hold a dialogue relative to human rights issues and how the Durham HRC could be included and of assistance to the various Town boards.

There was some discussion about setting the Durham HRC for a particular day and time of a month once new members were in place.

Regarding other goals, the Rev. Belshaw listed housing as an item of interest. He also said it would be nice to connect with the University and work together with UNH on human rights issues, protecting the rights of the LGBTQIA community, and to be front and center with dignity and respect of all people. He noted that the University had held a Transgender Day of Visibility the end of March 2022.

VII. Bias Training Follow Up

Discussion centered around what type of additional follow up training might be beneficial to provide Town employees and board members. Administrator Selig suggested that because the Durham Police employees have had extensive training on this topic, it might be beneficial to invite someone to speak to the Durham HRC at its next meeting and then the Commission could decide how it would like to go forward from there.

VIII. Update on the Work of the Housing Task Force

Chair Marple said that because Durham is a student-centered community a lot of inexpensive housing is bought up quickly to rent to students. She said she is a component of workforce housing but there are barriers to finding places to have workforce housing within the community and whether it is do-able in Durham.

Regarding the Durham Housing Task Force, Administrator Selig said members will compile any feedback they receive regarding the taskforce's report and then determine if there are any finite changes it wants to recommend to the Town Council.

IX. Continued Discussion on Immigration and Housing

This item was removed from the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

X. Other Business

Members had no other business to discuss.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, March 30, 2023, at 3PM

VIII. Adjourn

The Rev. Richard Belshaw MOVED to adjourn the meeting. The motion was SECONDED by Dr. Perkins-Howland and PASSED unanimously, 5-0.

The meeting **ADJOURNED** at 4:13 PM.

Prepared by Jennie Berry, Administrative Assistant