

These minutes were approved at the August 15, 2023 meeting.

DURHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2023
10:30 A.M.
Council Chambers – Durham Town Hall

Members Present: Chair Sally Needell, Administrator Todd Selig, Business Manager Gail Jablonski, Dr. Janet Perkins-Howland (arrived late), The Rev. Richard Belshaw

Members Absent: Deborah Hirsch Mayer

Others Present: Kathy Collins, Councilor Emily Friedrichs (via Zoom)

I. Call to Order

Chair Sally Needell called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m., and introductions of members present were made. Chair Needell gave an introduction of herself and her history with human rights issues.

II. Land Acknowledgment Statement

Chair Needell 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 January 6, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Page 5, Motion to adjourn should be 5-0, not 54-0.

Page 3, first line – as not has

The Rev. Belshaw made a MOTION to APPROVE the minutes of January 6, 2023, as presented. The motion was SECONDED by Gail Jablonski and PASSED unanimously 3-0 with one abstention.

IV. Presentation on Durham Police Department protocol on handling mental health issues and the process for bias complaints to the Police – Chief Rene Kelley, Deputy Chief, David Holmstock

Chief Rene Kelley introduced himself and his career in law enforcement. He handed out the Code of Conduct for the Durham Police Department. He stated that the Durham Police Department is a nationally accredited Law Enforcement Agency. As such, the Department is required to comply with over 464 policies that have been deemed best practices. Every year they are reviewed by a Police Manager. Every 4th year they are visited on-site by experts in law enforcement management. Durham has reached a gold level standard since 1997. The Deputy Chief of the Department is in charge of monitoring civil rights issues.

Deputy Chief David Holmstock spoke on the complaint process that the Durham Police Department has. There is a risk assessment tool that they use for evaluating officers' behavior.

Councilor Emily Friedrichs asked a question about recording of information on an individual. Chief Kelley stated that information is recorded on an individual anytime an enforcement action is done.

Dr. Janet Perkins-Howland arrived at 10:50 a.m.

Chief Kelley spoke on the type of bias training, de-escalation and ethics for Durham officers. He stated that he is very proud of his department. The number of officer complaints over the years has been miniscule, sometimes zero. The quality of candidates and the training that is mandated is very high in Durham. The hiring process is very sound.

Administrator Selig mentioned that he has noticed that the police are dealing with many mental health incidents out in the public sphere. He would like to know how the Department is trained for this type of call.

Chief Kelley stated that, yes, they are seeing a tremendous expansion of mental health calls. He is looking to find a way to better track those calls.

Deputy Chief Holmstock mentioned that they've been working on this tracking of mental health calls. He stated that the mental health training starts with the hiring itself. They have extensive training at the academy. They get continued training throughout the years. The officers also receive training for their own wellness. This training is continuous.

Rev. Richard Belshaw mentioned that he also sees mental health issues as a minister. He asked what the policy is about visiting people who were elderly but also own a

gun. Chief Kelley stated that he has seen this issue come up. They try to get the family involved in either removing the firearms from the residence or having the guns locked up.

Dr. Perkins-Howland mentioned that she appreciates the culture in the Durham Police Department and the willingness to learn.

V. Development of Program ideas for Juneteenth for Town Council and/or Community

Chair Needell mentioned that the Council chose to move their meeting date so as to not meet on Juneteenth. Chair Needell thought maybe the reciting Amanda Gorman's The Hill We Climb at a meeting would be appropriate.

Dr. Perkins-Howland thought it would be good to get some information on what Juneteenth is all about. She wondered if there was anything that the library was doing that the Town could partner with.

Rev. Belshaw mentioned that Juneteenth is a couple of weeks after Durham Day so maybe something could be done at Durham Day. Dr. Perkins-Howland said she would like to have a table at Durham Day.

Ms. Kathy Collins mentioned that she is part of Oyster River Equity & Justice, and they will have a table at Durham Day with the focus on book-banning. She could help with Juneteenth as well.

Rev. Belshaw asked if the high school still had poet laureate, and whether that person could read The Hill We Climb.

VI. Anti-bias training follow-up as needed

Dr. Perkins-Howland mentioned that she still hasn't submitted a report for the grant they had received. She wasn't sure about next steps. Chair Needell asked if there was a sense of a need for another training with Town employees?

Rev. Belshaw stated that he feels that there is always a need. There was additional discussion on what might be done for further training. Dr. Perkins-Howland mentioned that the training doesn't have to be about bias.

Administrator Selig mentioned that within the last year there have been three major trainings – one was for how Historic District/Heritage Commissions work, one was for bias training and the last was active shooter training for the Town Hall. Looking ahead, he would like to have another emergency preparedness training due to the new staff that have been hired recently. He felt that the bias training was by-and-large positively received.

VII. Discussion regarding Historical Markers in the town

Administrator Selig gave an overview of the history of the Oyster River Massacre marker. The marker was removed approximately 18 months ago. The Durham Historic Association was asked for potential revised language by the NH Division of Historical Resources. There was some concerns about the proposed revisions from the NH Commission for Native American Affairs. At the current time Amy Dixon of the NH Division of Historical Resources is looking at all of the suggestions for revised language and will be creating a final draft.

Administrator Selig stated that he was wondering if there should be additional markers in Durham that paints another view of the event.

Rev. Belshaw stated that maybe there should be an acknowledgement of both sides.

Council Friedrichs mentioned that there is language that both sides do agree on. There could also be a QR code on the marker that would introduce you to other resources that would expand on the history of the event.

Administrator Selig reminded the Commission that the marker is a State marker not a Town marker, and Amy Dixon has the final decision as to what will be on it. If in the end, the language was not what the group wanted, would the Commission want to consider not having a marker but an information kiosk instead?

VIII. Update on the Work of the Housing Task Force

Dr. Perkins-Howland mentioned that the Housing Task Force has been working on how the Town could increase the diversity of housing stock. Is there a place for the HRC to amplify the voices in the community that struggle to find housing?

Administrator Selig felt that during the Forum which will be upcoming, the members of the HRC should go and express their opinions. He believes that a survey is part of the outreach and will be focused on people who live in Durham.

Council Friedrichs suggested that there should be some focus on those who work and own businesses in Durham as well.

IX. Review of Elected Governing Body Official Stipends

Dr. Perkins-Howland mentioned that the Councilors and Planning Board do not receive enough pay for babysitters. How can we make it easier to diversify the people who serve on these committees?

Chair Needell mentioned that some members give the stipend they receive back to the Town or use it for the Town.

Dr. Perkins-Howland asked if babysitters could be provided. Administrator Selig feels that the Town should leave it up to the parents to provide childcare. However, there could be reimbursement for childcare rather than increasing the stipend which would need to be changed through the Charter. There is also the option of providing food for evening meetings.

Councilor Friedrichs mentioned that she loves the idea of the reimbursement of babysitting and providing food.

X. Discussion of “The US and the Holocaust” Documentary Film Screening & Discussion Series at the Portsmouth Public Library beginning April 19

Dr. Perkins-Howland mentioned this program which is centered around the Ken Burns documentary. She has signed up for the program.

XI. Other Business

Dr. Perkins-Howland mentioned that former Chair, Kitty Marple, had mentioned crafting a letter to other Boards & Committees’ chairs to have presentations from the HRC members. She wondered if that had been done. Chair Needell stated that she did not know.

Administrator Selig mentioned that the Conservation Commission is working on a foraging policy for indigenous peoples on Town-owned land. Chair Jake Kritzer has forwarded a draft to Administrator Selig, and he would like to have the Town Attorney take a look at it before bringing it to the HRC.

XII. Adjourn

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

The meeting **ADJOURNED** at 12:25 pm.

Prepared by Karen Edwards, Administrative Assistant