

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

DURHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13, 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, The Rev. Richard Belshaw, Deborah Hirsch Mayer

Members Absent: Kathy Collins

I. Call to Order

Chair Sally Needell called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

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 April 5, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Richard Belshaw mentioned that he didn't have the minutes. Chair Needell decided that the approval of the minutes would be postponed until the next meeting

IV. Presentation by Rachael Blansett, DEIJ Coordinator, on her work at the Oyster River Schools

Ms. Blansett introduced herself. She mentioned that she would like to talk about the original goals given to her in the fall of 2022 when she was first hired and the goals that she has set up since that time.

Her original goals were as follows:

1. Coordinate the Superintendents' DEIJ Community Group and the Steering Committee. They meet once a month. Next year she would like to utilize the group to do more community education.
2. Meeting with faculty regularly. This is the biggest part of her role - supporting faculty. She's had faculty outreach over 50 times this year.
3. Identify needed professional development for staff. This was a core task for this year.

4. Meet with students and support student-led groups.
5. Introduce herself to the community. This was the most difficult part of her job last year due to confusion about her role.
6. Communicating, collaborating, learning and growing with the community. There are only 4 DEIJ people across the state, and she tries to meet with them at least once a month.

Ms. Blansett stated that this semester she has been able to do more projects. She created a teacher DEIJ professional development plan. This has been a large part of her work this semester.

Chair Needell asked how the SEL competencies were done with the students. Ms. Blansett stated that when new faculty come in, they are trained on SEL competencies. There is no set standards or class.

Commissioner Perkins-Howland stated that she is glad to hear that part of the focus is to get the word out to the community. She asked whether the 4 DEIJ coordinators were just in the public schools. Ms. Blansett stated that yes, they were. Ms. Blansett has also connected with the DEIJ coordinator at UNH.

Commissioner Perkins-Howland asked about recruitment and retention of a more diverse workforce for the school. Ms. Blansett stated that it is part of the strategic plan.

Commissioner Perkins-Howland also asked if there had been thoughts on having focus-groups with those that have lived-experience. Ms. Blansett stated that yes, she makes sure that all policies go through students, and she is hoping to have more group time with students.

Commissioner Belshaw thanked Ms. Blansett for the work she is doing. He was wondering where the other 3 DEIJ coordinators are located. Ms. Blansett stated that Manchester was the first, then Exeter and then just recently Concord. Commissioner Belshaw asked if there were any focus on indigenous issues. Ms. Blansett stated that, at the moment, there is not anything that they are doing.

Commissioner Hirsch-Mayer asked if Ms. Blansett's work also encompasses students with disabilities and students with different religious backgrounds. Ms. Blansett stated that, yes, those students would fall within her purview.

V. Development of Resolution for Juneteenth by Town Council - An Update

Administrative Selig updated the Human Rights Commission on the Council adoption of the Resolution for Juneteenth.

There was discussion of the wording of the Resolution. Commissioner Belshaw feels that this is a good first step.

VI. Discussion about Policy on Indigenous Foraging Rights endorsed by the Conservation Commission – Shall the HRC recommend its adoption to the Town Council?

Chair Needell introduced the document which was endorsed by the Conservation Commission.

Commissioner Perkins-Howland asked about the practical implications of this document. Administrator Selig stated that it is mostly symbolic. Chair Needell stated that it doesn't involve changing any ordinances.

Commissioner Belshaw made a motion that the Human Rights Commission is in support of adopting the resolution recognizing indigenous foraging rights on Durham public lands. Commissioner Hirsch-Mayer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

VII. Discussion about Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Commissioner Perkins-Howland stated that this was something that she had brought up and it also could be combined with the next item on the agenda. The United Nations adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. She is still wondering about the purpose of the HRC. She is wondering if the HRC charge needs updating. She would like to connect more with other groups.

Commissioner Belshaw would support a Declaration of Human Rights and making it very clear that the HRC supports the Declaration.

Chair Needell asked if they would like to have time to read the Declaration and then bring it back for discussion at the next meeting.

Administrator Selig gave a brief history of the development of the Human Rights Commission.

Commissioner Belshaw would like the Commission to be a bit more active. Commissioner Perkins-Howland would like to see the Commission be more pro-active rather than reactive.

There was discussion about whether other boards and committees are aware of the Human Rights Commission and what they cover.

VIII. Discussion of Town Council Goals

Commissioner Perkins-Howland had questions about the Town Council goal to leverage other committees to align with the goals of the Council. There was discussion on Town Council goals and bringing HRC goals to the Council. Commissioner Hirsch-Mayer stated that she thinks it is good practice for committees to have written goals each year.

Commissioner Belshaw stated that he thought it would be good for the HRC to work on the Declaration of Human Rights and come to the next meeting with what portions of it that the HRC wants to adopt. There was discussion about learning about other commissions and

committees' goals. Administrator Selig believes there is a sheet that listed of all the charges for each of the boards and committees that could be supplied.

Administrator Selig asked when the HRC would like to meet next. It was decided on August 15 at 10:30 a.m.

IX. Discussion of how Durham Day went for the members of the Human Rights Commission

Chair Needell asked how things went on Durham Day. Commissioner Perkins-Howland stated that one of the people that stopped by their table suggested a review of how handicap accessible Durham is downtown. Administrator Selig suggested having Public Works come to the HRC to discuss this.

Commissioner Belshaw mentioned that he had a binder with the Human Rights Commission ordinance and all of the minute and agendas for the last two years. There was discussion of possibly having this type of binder at the library.

X. Other Business

Commissioner Belshaw welcomed Ms. Hirsch-Mayer to the HRC.

Commissioner Perkins-Howland stated that they need to complete a report for the anti-bias training that was held. She was granted an extension on submitting the report because the report asked for next steps and she wanted input from the HRC. Commissioner Belshaw stated that it should be on the agenda for the next meeting.

XI. Adjourn

Commissioner Richard Belshaw MOVED to adjourn the meeting. The motion was SECONDED by Administrator Todd Selig and it PASSED unanimously.

The meeting **ADJOURNED** at 12:05 pm.

Prepared by Karen Edwards, Administrative Assistant