

These minutes were approved at the January 19, 2024 meeting.

DURHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 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 (arrived at 10:40 a.m.), Kathy Collins

Members Absent: None

I. Call to Order

Chair Sally Needell called the meeting to order at 10:33 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 and June 13, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Business Manager Jablonski MOVED to approve the minutes of April 5 and June 13, 2023. The motion was SECONDED by Chair Needell and it PASSED unanimously.

IV. Discussion of Completing the Report for the Previously Held Anti-Bias Training

Commissioner Perkins-Howland read the questions that needed to be answered for the organization that held the anti-bias training. She also read the answers that she had drafted. She asked if there was a story of impact that they could include. Commissioner Belshaw mentioned that he hadn't heard of any specific stories. He feels that this work is very important and would like to find a way to keep it going. He was willing to make himself available to anyone who wanted to talk about any issues.

There was discussion on how to get the word out about the HRC and what could be done to further anti-bias discussions. Business Manager Jablonski thought that

training every two years would be good. The Police & Fire Departments already complete training every year. There was discussion about reaching out to partner with others already doing this work.

Administrator Selig stated that there needs to be a decision on who the target audience is. Commissioner Perkins-Howland feels that the target audience are town employees and board members. Administrator Selig mentioned that some boards have very strict guidelines to reviewing applications, and there may be conflict with equity considerations. That is ok, but how do you think through those competing goals?

V. Discussion of Disability and Accessibility Concerns

Commissioner Perkins-Howland stated that this issue came up with accessibility to Durham Day activities downtown.

Administrator Selig stated that there is a State agency that did an audit on accessibility on town building years ago. He stated that whenever there is an update to a road or sidewalk, there is an update to accessibility. He will get in touch with Public Works and the building department to see if a new audit should be performed.

Commissioner Collins mentioned that there is a non-profit organization that will help with reviewing accessibility issues, including noise. The owner of the organization is Todd Hanson. Commissioner Collins will try to contact Mr. Hanson.

Chair Needell asked about Durham businesses. Administrator Selig mentioned that businesses would have to invite someone to do an audit on their own. Typically, when a business renovates, ADA compliance codes come into play and things get updated then.

VI. Discussion about Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Commissioner Belshaw feels that this document is good background and would recommend that the Commission have it. Chair Needell mentioned that it could be incorporated onto the website.

There was discussion on updating the website and placing a notebook with past HRC minutes in the Public Library.

VII. Discussion of HRC's Outreach to the Boards, Commissions, and Committees

Commissioner Perkins-Howland mentioned that this topic also includes #VIII with the discussion of Town Council Goals. She attended the last Housing Task Force

meeting. She mentioned that she suggested to them some changes they could make for human rights issues.

Chair Needell asked if they just wanted to attend other Boards, Committees & Commission meetings to introduce themselves, or do they want to address certain issues. It was decided that it would be good to introduce themselves with a statement that they could write. Commissioner Perkins-Howland was willing to create a statement.

VIII. Discussion of Town Council Goals

Chair Needell read #5 of the goals. Commissioner Perkins-Howland felt that the goal was biased. She would take out the words “welcoming & inclusive” because the goals don’t seem to be about human rights. This comment was followed with a discussion of suggested changes to the wording. It was recommended that the words "by offering the following, but not limited to" be added to Town Council goal #5 so that it reads, "...by supporting the needs of residents, families, and other identified stakeholders by offering the following, but not limited to..." This change would be recommended to the 2024 Town Council when setting its goals. There was additional discussion of how the Town Council goals are created.

IX. Other Business

It was decided that the next meeting would be Tuesday, October 17 at 3:30 p.m.

Resident Tolu Afolayan introduced himself. He is a software engineer. He is interested in creating a way for people to communicate with each other. He feels that there are a lot of ways that technology can make outreach to the community easier.

X. Adjourn

Commissioner Richard Belshaw MOVED to adjourn the meeting. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Hirsch Mayer and it PASSED unanimously.

The meeting **ADJOURNED** at 12:10 pm.

Prepared by Karen Edwards, Administrative Assistant