

D-R-A-F-T

DURHAM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2023

3:30 P.M.

Council Chambers – Durham Town Hall

Members Present: Chair Sally Needell, Administrator Todd Selig (arrived at 3:34 p.m.), Business Manager Gail Jablonski (via Zoom), Dr. Janet Perkins-Howland, The Rev. Richard Belshaw, Kathy Collins, Deborah Hirsch Mayer (arrived at 3:34 p.m.)

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Rich Reine, Public Works Director
Audrey Cline, Code Enforcement Officer

I. Call to Order

Chair Sally Needell called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. The members introduced themselves.

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.

Commissioner Perkins-Howland mentioned her concern about the human rights violations going on right now across the world. A moment of silence was taken during which Commissioner Belshaw issued a statement of remembrance and support of those who are currently going through difficulties in the Middle East and Ukraine.

III. Approval of August 15, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Chair Needell asked Commissioner Perkins-Howland if she would like to come back to the statement that she felt that one of the Council goals was biased. Chair Needell re-read the Goal in question. Commissioner Perkins-Howland did not feel that the minutes adequately reflected her concerns with that goal. It was decided that the

DCAT recording should be reviewed again and the minutes would be updated and brought back at the next meeting.

Commissioner Belshaw mentioned that on the second page of the minutes, "Commission Belshaw" should be "Commissioner Belshaw."

IV. Presentation by Anne Weidman, CPSM, of Access Navigators on Disability and Accessibility Concerns

Postponed until later in the meeting as Anne Weidman is not able to attend until 4:00 p.m.

V. Presentation by Planner, Michael Behrendt, on the efforts of the Historic District Commission in pulling together a forum to discuss the Oyster River "Massacre" state historic marker?

Mr. Behrendt gave some background on the Oyster River plaque and the history it reflects. The NHDOT and the Division of Historic Resources have tried to re-word the plaque. However, there hasn't been a consensus between them and the Durham Historic District Commission on what the wording should be. So, the Historic District Commission suggested that they host a meeting and that the Town hire an outside facilitator who would work with representatives from each of the major stakeholders to find a solution. The HDC is hoping to hire someone soon and schedule a meeting in early November. The HDC would like two representatives from the HRC to attend.

VI. Discussion on choosing two Human Rights Commission members to represent the HRC at the Oyster River Plaque forum and future discussions

Chair Needell asked who might be interested in serving as representatives to this HDC forum. Commissioner Belshaw and Commissioner Perkins-Howard volunteered to be representatives. Commissioner Collins volunteered to be an alternate.

VII. Discussion and possible approval of Amended By-Laws

Chair Needell reviewed the changes she felt needed to be made to the By-Laws. Commissioner Hirsch Mayer liked the changes made to the statement of purpose. She had mixed feelings about the mission statement, however.

Commissioner Perkins-Howland asked where the list of prejudices mentioned in the By-Laws was taken from. Administrator Selig stated that the list was taken from other cities' Human Rights Commission by-laws when Durham established the HRC. Commissioner Perkins-Howland would like to see the list updated and shortened.

It was decided that suggestions for changes to the By-Laws would be sent to Commissioner Hirsch Mayer and she would make corrections. It would then be reviewed again at the next meeting.

Commissioner Perkins-Howland asked if every board/committee/commission in the Town had a public comments portion of the meeting. Chair Needell stated that for the boards it is important to hear public comments, but it is not a forum for give-and-take. She suggested that there could be Public Comments after the minutes for future HRC meetings.

VIII. Discussion of Introductory Letter to other Boards, Committees and Commissions written by Janet Perkins-Howland

Commissioner Perkins-Howland passed out a draft letter. She mentioned that they should not send it out until the By-Laws were completed. Chair Needell suggested that it would be good to include information in the letter rather than have a link to the information.

Presentation by Anne Weidman, CPSM, of Access Navigators on Disability and Accessibility Concerns

Commissioner Collins introduced Anne Weidman of Access Navigators. Ms. Weidman stated that Access Navigators has become the darling of the tourism industry as well as economic development. They work with municipal planners, public works departments, etc. regarding community planning. Access Navigators collects information on the accessibility of a community's restaurants and public spaces and has that information available to anyone who needs it. They also have worked with undergraduate nursing students and OT grad students at UNH. If there were someone in Durham who would like to keep the Durham information on the Access Navigators' website up-to-date, Ms. Weidman would be pleased with that.

Ms. Weidman mentioned that they have partnered with the City of Portsmouth to make the city more welcoming to people with disabilities. She gave some examples of improvements that she was able to suggest to the Portsmouth Department of Public Works. She asked some wheelchair users what was keeping them from downtown Portsmouth. Issues with parking was one of the conversations that came up.

Ms. Weidman asked what the thoughts of the HRC are about accessibility. Commissioner Perkins-Howland asked how Ms. Weidman gets the information she needs - how would the Town of Durham get the information? Ms. Weidman mentioned that you need to seek the people out who experience disabilities. Chair Needell mentioned that there was a population at Bagdad Woods that they could potentially speak with.

Commissioner Hirsch Mayer suggested getting Oyster River or UNH students involved. Also, they could speak with parents who have children with disabilities. Ms. Weidman suggested speaking with the Institute for Disabilities at UNH. She has

spoken with them herself. Commissioner Hirsch Mayer also suggested looking at hearing and vision issues as well.

Chair Needell asked if Rich Reine or Audrey Cline had any comments. Mr. Reine mentioned that at Public Works they have Public Highway Accessibility Guidelines. They have a good understanding of compliant vs. non-compliant curb ramps. If you alter a street or sidewalk you need to make the curb ramp compliant. Lighting at crosswalks is also very important. The Public Works Department is in the process of doing a pedestrian crosswalk analysis.

IX. Discussion of IPD (Indigenous Peoples Day) celebration

Postponed until the next meeting.

X. Other Business

There was discussion on when the next meeting should be. It was decided that December 14 at 11:00 a.m. would be the next meeting.

XI. Adjournment

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

The meeting **ADJOURNED** at 5:00 pm.

Prepared by Karen Edwards, Administrative Assistant