

## **Deerfield Human Rights Ad Hoc Committee (Final Minutes)**

Date: February 21, 2023

Attendees: Assistant Town Administrator Chris Nolan, Deerfield Police Sergeant Jennifer Bartak, Grant Bialek, Charlene Galenski, Shawn Durrett, Deborah Yaffe, and Hannah Yaffe

Absent Member: David Wolfram

Meeting Commenced: 7:02 PM using Zoom

Deborah Yaffe motioned to call the Human Rights Ad Hoc Committee meeting to order. Shawn Durrett seconded the motion. The acceptance of the February 15, 2023 minutes was tabled to the next meeting.

The first agenda item involved reviewing various towns' Human Rights documents mission statements. Jen Bartak stated she liked the Hull mission statement which emphasized there is no place for hate. Initially this program began in the Hull schools and then expanded into the Hull community. The text for this mission statement was read to the Ad Hoc Committee verbatim by Jen. Jen also mentioned Hingham and Brookline have strong mission statements.

Hannah Yaffe read through various human rights statements. There was a listing of categories regarding people who should not be denied their rights. Some towns added categories such as marital status and veteran status to their categories. Hannah also thought a remembrance tour would be a helpful event to encourage a Human Rights Committee to organize. Towns that have a Human Right's website have mission statements.

A recommendation was made to begin small with people on the Human Rights Committee. These members must be committed to encouraging human rights for all people. The Human Rights Ad Hoc committee stated two questions:

1. What role does a Human Rights Committee play in the town?
2. How would a Human Rights Committee respond to allegations?

At the February 15, 2023 meeting, Kaycee Warren receives all human rights complaints. Kaycee then filters the allegation through to the proper channels. Chris Nolan explained that various routes to hearing and solving complaints might occur.

Some of the Deerfield human rights complaints were through third parties. Social media postings also presented difficulties for people. There was a Cumberland Farms complaint about

biased graffiti on that building. The police were notified, and the inappropriate markings were removed.

Northampton decided to not accept human rights complaints because it became frustrating and enforcement was difficult. The role of the Northampton Committee was limited. Education and advisement are their current missions for the town.

After reading several human rights documents, Deb Yaffe stated she found several different mission statements that promoted positive relationships. She also felt it would be appropriate for a Human Rights Committee to partner with other groups and resources. Certainly, partnering with the Selectboard would be productive.

Discussion about forming a subcommittee to bring a proposed mission statement to the Monday, February 27, 2023 Ad Hoc meeting was held. Chris clarified the importance for not using a shared Google.doc process for subcommittee work. Three members would be appropriate for a subcommittee to form without violating the Open Meeting Rule.

Several times, various committee members discussed the value for providing educational materials to the public. One educational area that was briefly discussed was slavery's historical significance. Shawn Durrett stated she believes in presenting an anti-slavery viewpoint. Charlene Galenski explained that it is important to distinguish between slavery in the North and slavery in the South. Throughout Deerfield's history, different groups have been targeted in negative ways. History is a complicated subject in many ways. Committee members discussed the importance of having facts on the history of slavery in our area. It was acknowledged that resources and narratives on the lives of enslaved people have changed over the years.

The committee then briefly discussed whether members on town committees can be town employees. Because David Wolfram was not present at this meeting, this point was not finalized. An Ad Hoc committee cannot appoint members to the permanent Human Rights Committee. The following points were addressed:

- How does Conflict of Interest play a role in town employees serving on committees?
- How can people feel safe to bring forth a complaint?
- Some committees in Deerfield have experienced negative interactions between some committee members and residents attending meetings.
- It may be difficult to fill town committees because of fear regarding possible allegations being made against someone with a different opinion.

The Ad Hoc Committee thought using the schools to advertise about becoming a member to the Human Rights Committee would be helpful. DIG meets with the Selectboard regularly and could discuss outreach ideas for getting people to know about the permanent Human Rights Committee. Having members on the permanent committee who are unbiased is essential. A diverse grouping of individuals would also be helpful.

Deb Yaffe and Hannah Yaffe will serve on a subcommittee to create a draft version for a mission statement. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee who wish to submit ideas to Chris Nolan should email the assistant town administrator.

Shawn Durrett will draft a criteria listing for membership onto the Deerfield Human Rights Committee.

Three important considerations for next week's meeting include the following topics: mission, composition, and recruitment. All ideas should be emailed to Chris Nolan. Deb Yaffe mentioned that committee members can agree to disagree.

The next meeting of the Human Rights Ad Hoc Committee will be on February 27, 2023 at 4:30 PM.

Deb Yaffe made a motion to adjourn, and Hannah Yaffe seconded the motion. The meeting concluded at 8:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charlene Galenski, clerk to the Human Rights Ad Hoc Committee

### **Human Rights Committee Tasks for the February 27, 2023 Meeting**

Deborah Yaffe

- Create an agenda for the February 27, 2023 meeting.
- Work on sample mission and vision statements to the membership.

Hannah Yaffe

- Work on sample mission and vision statements to the membership.

Charlene Galenski

- Send draft minutes of the February 21, 2023 meeting to Chris Nolan.

All members

- Submit ideas to Chris about mission statement content, recruitment, and composition of the Human Rights Committee.