

Deerfield Human Rights Ad Hoc Committee (Final Minutes)

Date: February 21, 2023

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

Absent Members: David Wolfram and Grant Bialek

Meeting Commenced: 4:32 PM using Zoom

Deborah Yaffe called the Human Rights Ad Hoc Committee meeting to order. Deborah Yaffe motioned to accept the amended February 15, 2023 minutes, and Hannah Yaffe seconded the motion. The February 15, 2023 minutes were accepted as amended. Accepting the February 21, 2023 was tabled to the next meeting.

The first order on the agenda was a discussion about the criteria for selection to the permanent Human Rights Committee. Shawn Durrett created a draft for consideration by the Human Rights Ad Hoc Committee. Advertising using the Ad Hoc's suggested mission statements, function, purpose, and the name of the committee would be stated. Potential committee members would need to be supportive of the Human Rights mission. In addition, the potential candidates would need to have an interest in anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and justice. The new group would be representative of all groupings of people. A diverse representation of people would be necessary. Candidates would need to submit a letter of interest.

The Human Rights Ad Hoc Committee discussed the value of having members with relative lived experiences. Professional training would not be the determining factor for all members. Experiences can be personal and/or professional. Also, adding marital status and veteran status would be helpful. Socioeconomic class would also be added. Shawn will amend the criteria to include this information. Chris Nolan informed the Ad Hoc Committee that the Selectboard typically do not meet with potential candidates; however, there may be times when the Selectboard would meet with future candidates.

The Ad Hoc Committee proceeded to discuss the information that would be presented to the Selectboard meeting on March 22, 2023. The following thoughts were discussed:

- How the Ad Hoc Committee selected various mission statements.
- A listing of resources including broadening our resources to groups outside of Deerfield i.e. Stavros (a group that fosters independent living for disabled individuals).
 - Hannah explained that the Stavros program promotes independent living for disabled individuals.
 - Staying in a home that is accessible to the disabled individual is important.

- Select comments from Jen's training program could be included in the resources.
- Ideas for recruitment
- Jen agreed to serve as a liaison in her role as Civil Rights Officer.

Our group decided submitting more than one example of mission statements would be helpful. We would further explain that our group decided not to include mediation as a committee mission but to remain more advisory. We agreed to submit three sample Mission Statements to the Selectboard.

Currently, the Board of Selectmen are using their anti-hate statement during meetings.

Charlene brought up the point that some residents are not comfortable attending town meetings for fear of retaliation if his/her viewpoint differs from the committee. There have been a few situations in which people have had a very negative experience with certain town committees. Civility is a very important goal for all towns to promote so that people feel safe expressing an opinion that may be contrary to a town committee. A strong facilitator usually controls meetings that become contentious. Communities should have appropriate behavioral norms. Charlene will draft language to promote civility at meetings. Committee members discussed civility in meetings and mentioned the Ad Hoc Committee as an example.

Jen mentioned that the town of Conway uses clickers for voting so that individual privacy is retained. The Town of Deerfield has discussed clickers but chose not to move forward with them. At the last Deerfield Town Meeting, a vote on the two and one-half override had no individual counting used. The moderator made the decision about a 2/3 vote. It was unclear how that process could determine an actual 2/3 vote.

The Ad Hoc Committee then briefly discussed the pros and cons for having town employees as members on town committees. The following pro was mentioned:

- Because it is sometimes difficult to get people to join town committees, more available individuals would be helpful.

The following con was mentioned:

- There can be a Conflict of Interest with Town employees serving on committees.

The decision to include or not include town workers on town committees will be at the discretion of the Selectboard. Technically, the appointing authority decides on membership to committees. The most important consideration for the membership on the Human Rights Committee is diverse representation. The Ad Hoc Committee will remind the Selectboard that diversity is important when choosing member of the permanent committee

Jen would enjoy serving as a liaison to the Human Rights Committee. She mentioned that her intensive civil rights training occurred once. There has not been any follow-up training. Because times change, it would be helpful to have continuous training in this area. Perhaps the Human Rights Committee could recommend the need for continuous civil rights training.

The next meeting of the Human Rights Ad Hoc Committee will be on Thursday March 9, 2023 at 6:30 PM.

The meeting concluded at 5:31 PM.

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

Human Rights Committee Tasks for the March 9, 2023 Meeting

Deborah Yaffe

- Create an agenda for the March 9,2023 meeting.
- Create a folder containing information to share with the Selectboard.
- Send information to the Ad Hoc Committee.

Charlene Galenski

- Send final minutes of the February 15,2023 meeting to Chris Nolan.
- Send draft minutes of the February 27,2023 meeting to Chris Nolan.
- Draft a civility statement to be reviewed by the Ad Hoc Committee.

Shawn Durrett

- Draft a complete listing of criteria to be presented to the Selectboard.

Jen Bartak

- Select portions of her Civil Rights Training packet to include in the Selectboard's packet.