

Town of Guilford
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Public Meeting, June 16, 2020
6:30pm via Zoom

Members present: Jo Keogh, Chair, Donna Daniels, Andy Gottlieb, Maureen Raucci, Clarice Yasuhara

Members Absent: Jack Evans

1.Call to Order:

Jo Keogh called the meeting to order at 6:36pm.

2.Approval of Minutes:

Jo Keogh made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 19, 2020 meeting. Andy Gottlieb seconded the motion.

3. Public Forum:

Two members of the public attended the meeting.

4.Continuing Education:

Discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

5. Outstanding Items and Follow-Up:

a. Manual of Governance:

Jo Keogh reported that the Town Counsel is close to finishing its review process of the Manual and will be forwarding suggestions/recommendations to the Commission.

b. July Meeting:

Jo Keogh proposed a July 2020 GHRC meeting, and will forward dates to the Commission for consideration.

c. Defining Values:

The Commission continued its discussion of defining the beliefs and values that will inform their decisions and actions.

6. Items Issues and Actions:

a. Youth-led initiative for public school reform:

A discussion of the initiative led by current and former GHS students was held.

Clarice Yasuhara attended the June 15 BOE Meeting and reported to the Commission the concerns raised by current students and parents and recent GHS alumni about the issues of racism and equity in Guilford and the Guilford schools. Specifically, they have requested a change to the GHS mascot.

Eliza Summerlin briefed the Commission on the youth-led campaign to end systemic racism in the school system and its email campaign prior to the June 15 BOE meeting. The group has requested discontinuing the use of the current Guilford High School mascot, an audit of the K-12 curriculum, comprehensive race and anti-bias training, and more diversity in hiring within the system. She also briefed the Commission on the Real Rent campaign based in Seattle, WA.

Jo Keogh, Donna Daniels, and Clarice Yasuhara met with Dr. Paul Freeman on June 9 to discuss the mascot issue, the school system's outreach to Native groups in the state, and the implementation of anti-racist initiatives in the school system. Dr. Freeman requested that the GHRC take a position on the issue of the mascot change.

The Commission discussed its position on the mascot issue and will release a public statement, pending review by the Board of Selectmen's office, before the next Board of Ed Meeting scheduled for June 22. Jo Keogh made a motion to submit a position statement in support of the Guilford High School mascot change.

In favor: Members Daniels, Gottlieb, Keogh, Raucci, Yasuhara

Opposed: None

Abstaining: None

Jo Keogh proposed the creation of a student liaison position at GHS. The Commission discussed what the application process will entail, and will continue this discussion at its next meeting.

b. Working with the Guilford Police Dept:

Jo Keogh and Donna Daniels will meet with Guilford Deputy Chief of Police Butch Hyatt on June 19 to discuss the police department's efforts to combat racism and ways the Commission can work together with the department.

c. Working with the Guilford Foundation:

Jo Keogh and Donna Daniels will meet with Liza Petra, Director, on June 25 to discuss ways the GHRC and the Foundation can work together.

d. Bi-Annual Review Process: Jo Keogh discussed the idea of an annual or bi-annual review process in which Town leaders would meet to discuss anti-discrimination efforts undertaken and/or currently underway. Paul Freeman has agreed to participate in this process.

e. Creating a database for effective tools to combat racism:

Jo Keogh reported meeting with Marji Lipshez Shapiro of the Anti-Defamation League and her suggestions on how to set up a database as a resource for anti-racism. The Commission discussed the possibility of partnering with the Guilford Library on this initiative. Donna Daniels will contact the Library to discuss this idea.

f. Pride Month

The CT Stonewall Foundation has reached out to the GHRC about partnering with their organization. The Commission discussed inviting the group to a future meeting.

Jo Keogh reported that the Middletown Pride Parade will be streaming this year. The Commission agreed to add the event information to its Facebook page.

7. Next Actions

a. Vigil of Remembrance

The GHRC was invited to participate in the Vigil of Remembrance and Call to Action on the Guilford green on June 18th. A discussion of the Commission's participation in the event was held. The Commission agreed to post information about the Juneteenth Liberation Day event in New Haven to its Facebook page.

b. Education on Issues of Racial Discrimination in Guilford

The GHRC discussed developing educational programming around systemic racism that is specific to Guilford. The Commission discussed using the town's Zoom account for community education.

8. Adjournment:

Jo Keogh made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15pm. Maureen Raucci seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Yue
Recording Secretary