

Town of Guilford

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes Public Meeting, July 7, 2020 6:30pm via Zoom

Members Present: Jo Keogh, Chair, Donna Daniels, Jack Evans, Andy Gottlieb, Maureen Raucci, Clarice Yasuhara

Members Absent: None

1. Call to Order:

Jo Keogh called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

2. Approval of Minutes:

Jo Keogh made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 16, 2020 meeting. Clarice Yasuhara seconded the motion.

3. Public Forum:

Five 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 Town Counsel has finished its review of the manual and will be forwarding feedback/requests for changes to the Commission for review imminently.

b. Defining Values:

Discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

c. Beyond the GHS mascot change: Honoring the indigenous peoples of Guilford

Eric MacDonald was introduced at the meeting. He was raised in Guilford and is a member of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation. He shared his experience and views on the

current GHS mascot and discussed his knowledge of Native American spirit animals, and the possibility of tying this knowledge into the choice of a new mascot.

The Commission discussed its opportunity to educate the public on the choice of a new mascot. It also discussed the need to further educate themselves on the concept of spirit animals in Native American culture, as well as how to approach education around the new mascot in a way that is culturally sensitive. The Commission agreed to continue this discussion at the next meeting.

The Commission also discussed obtaining details of the BOE's search to identify a new GHS mascot and establish how it can partner or support the committee that is tasked with the search. Jo will contact the BOE to request information on the timeline to establish a new mascot before the next Commission meeting.

Discussion of Native American agricultural and conservation practices was tabled.

d. Guilford Deed of Sale:

The Commission discussed a request made by a Guilford citizen to the First Selectman's office to relocate the Deed of Sale between the Menunkatuck Tribe and the group led by Henry Whitfield out of the Town Hall to another location. By moving the document to a local museum or library, an opportunity exists for the document to be interpreted and studied in a historical and educational context. The Commission also discussed the opportunity to use this document, in addition to other resources, to centralize and document the Native American experience in Guilford.

Jack Evans shared the results of his study of the genesis and legal history of the Deed of Sale, and his knowledge of local institutions where the document or copies of it are currently archived or displayed. Jack will share the names and contact information of local historians with the Commission before the next meeting.

The Commission further discussed the Deed of Sale from the perspective of the Native American experience, and discussed the potential role it can play in educating the community about the significance of the land purchase from this point of view.

e. Indigenous Peoples Day:

The conversation about this topic was tabled until the next meeting.

- f. Creating Panels on Anti-Racism that are specific to Guilford and/or fill existing knowledge:

Eliza Summerlin, a 2009 graduate of GHS, shared with the Commission the master's thesis completed for her M. Library Science degree. She presented the Guilford Free Library Summer Sessions mock curriculum, which seeks to make libraries more equitable, inclusive and diverse. In the 8-week program designed for the library, she developed a curriculum in conjunction with a research partner to shed light on the cognitive dissonance between Guilfordians recognizing past atrocities without critically engaging in our colonial history. Each session begins with a historical perspective and connects to current social justice issues. Eliza discussed her willingness to share the project in partnership with the Commission.

The Commission discussed the possibility of using the Summer Sessions curriculum as the basis for developing an educational partnership and/or programming with the Guilford Free Library.

- g. Working with Guilford Library to create Clearinghouse for effective tools to combat discrimination:

Donna Daniels continues to work on connecting with the Guilford Free Library on this initiative.

- h. Student Liaison Position at GHS:

The Commission discussed possible candidates for the GHS Student liaison position, including characteristics that the student liaison should embody. The application and selection process was discussed along with the timing and duration of the position.

Clarice Yasuhara will draft a template application form for the Commission to review.

- i. Working with the Guilford Police Department:

This conversation was tabled until the next meeting.

- j. Working with Guilford Foundation:

Jo Keogh shared details of the Zoom meeting with Liza Petra, Executive Director of the Guilford Foundation. The Foundation has offered to be a funding source for the GHRC's educational programming, and would like to partner with GHRC in other ways. The Commission also discussed a proposal presented to them by a grassroots organization interested in seeking Town funding for the Commission. The Commission agreed that

Town funding would be premature at this point, and will establish more programming before considering the idea.

6. Items Issues and Actions:

- a. The Guilford Racial Equality Project was introduced to the Commission by the Guilford Foundation. The Commission discussed and agreed to meet with organizers to hear more about this Project and explore potential partnership opportunities.

7. Next Actions:

The Commission will continue to discuss its approach to educational programming with community partners, as well as its Mission and Values, at the next meeting.

8. Adjournment:

Jo Keogh made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:14pm. Donna Daniels seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Yue
Recording Secretary