



Human Rights Commission - Minutes

Date: Thursday, May 16, 2024

Time: 8:00 PM

Location: 27 Maple Street, HHS Conference Room, 2nd Floor

Conducted by Hybrid (Remote and In-Person)

1. Attend in person in the 2nd Floor HHS Conference Room at the Community Center (Senior Center), 20 Academy Street/27 Maple Street. Registration not required for in-person attendance.

2. ***Notice to the Public on meeting privacy*** To prevent abuse of video conferencing technology (i.e., Zoom Bombing), all participants, including members of the public, wishing to engage via the Zoom App must register for each meeting and will notice multi-step authentication protocols. Please allow additional time to join the meeting. Further, members of the public who wish to participate without providing their names may still do so by registering to receive the meeting info and using the dial-in telephone information provided.

On March 29, 2023, Governor Healey signed into law a supplemental budget bill that extends the temporary provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to March 31, 2025. Specifically, this extension allows public bodies to continue holding meetings remotely without a quorum of the public body being physically present at a meeting location and to provide "adequate, alternative" access to remote meetings. The language does not make any substantive changes to the Open Meeting Law other than extending the expiration date of the temporary provisions regarding remote meetings from March 31, 2023, to March 31, 2025.

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/updated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures>

Role call

Present: Co-Chairs Griffin Jones and Drake Pusey; Commissioners Kristen Bauer, Sharon Grossman, Laurie Key, Rajeev Soneja, Hira Ambreen, Scott Jones

Absent: Gary Horowitz, Crystal Beauchemin, Christine Carney, Kevin Bryant

Staff present: Jillian Harvey (DEI), Captain Flynn (APD), Sadie Ford (AHS Intern)

Guests: Lisa Hota, Nadja Rozovsky, Gabriella Eisner, Laura Handler

Minutes

1. Remote Meeting Notice and Land Acknowledgement
2. Introduction of New Commissioner Hira Ambreen
 - a. Has worked with public commissions in Pakistan
 - b. Planning on working on social policy

3. Review of April 10, 2024 Monthly Meeting Minutes
 - a. Soneja motions to approve, Grossman seconds
 - i. Vote:
 1. Approve: Bauer, Grossman, G. Jones, S. Jones, Key, Soneja
 2. Oppose: none
 3. Abstain: Ambreen
4. Review of April 24, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes
 - a. Changes made
 - b. Soneja motions to accept, Grossman seconds
 - i. Vote:
 1. Approve: Bauer, Grossman, S. Jones, G. Jones, Key, Pusey, Soneja
 2. Oppose: none
 3. Abstain: Ambreen
5. Community Input (up to 2 minutes per speaker)
 - a. None
6. DEI Updates
 - a. Budget Update
 - i. Have \$3,101 remaining for the fiscal year (a month)
 1. Doesn't include the \$500 for the AAPI event
 2. AAPI program has been shrunk to \$500 due to split with Eid celebration
 3. Some BLM banners need replacement
 4. Vigil supplies have been bought
 5. The NEAT folks were grateful for having some money from HRC - last time HRC paid just under \$500. The HRC can pay \$500 for part of the next one.
 6. National Night Out (in August) - we could pay for supplies now to make the event more interesting
 7. Juneteenth will cost around \$2500
 - a. Could cover some of the DEI's donation to the event
 - b. Split in half the \$2,500 (so DEI pays half, HRC pays other)
 - c. Mix of working with the Arts and Culture department to plan. Economic person (part of DEI) talk to them.
 - d. Going to be on Whittemore Robbins Garden/Lawn
 - e. Want to have some posters with facts about untold stories
 - f. Will be working with DEI director to make deadlines for money for Juneteenth
 8. DEI will submit for Town Day event this year
 9. Email all ideas about how budget can be spent to co-chairs
 - ii. Teresa will be the point of contact for HRC for DEI while Jill is on vacation
 - i. Teresa will handle purchasing, Tim will handle paperwork
 - iii. On June 5th the DEI is hosting a training in town hall for people working with LGBTQIA+ Youth
 - iv. Pride events start this Saturday (5/18) - on the high school lawn
 - i. 5/31 gay bingo is being held at Roasted Granola
 - ii. Rainbow Commission is coming out with a flier with all the information about the June pride events
 - v. Open Meeting Law Training Update

- i. Training for this Commission will probably be June or July

7. Co-Chairs Report

- a. APD Meeting with Chief Flaherty
 - i. Happened this Monday to go over incidents around people being encountered on the way to town meeting and on the way out of Select Board
 - ii. APD partnered with Middlesex Police Force to do a de-escalation training
- b. Status of Arlington Civilian Police Advisory Commission
 - i. The chair reached out to HRC to begin process about where do the two groups work together, will continue to talk
- c. Meeting with DEI Co-Chairs
 - i. Meeting was yesterday (5/15) only one representative from Rainbow and no representatives from Disability Commission
 - ii. Want to make sure to promote for all their pride events
 - iii. They have a giant spreadsheet with all the things that they need help with
- d. Tragic Human Rights Events Response Policy Posted on Website
 - i. Has been posted (with intro and link to policy)
 - ii. Plans to Review Bylaws Regarding Statements
 - 1. Sounds like the main topic for the HRC retreat, will review the bylaws together there
 - 2. The goal is to get clarity on the subject amongst ourselves
 - 3. Other goal is how do we clarify the Human Rights incidents that are in our purview
 - 4. Would be helpful to have town council's opinion on the matter before the retreat
- e. Update on Hingham Statement
 - 1. The addendum has been drafted, co-chairs approved the whole thing
 - 2. Received an open-meeting law complaint about the meeting where the vote happened, wants to repeal the statement
 - 3. There is a procedural timeframe for the town to handle the complaint, cannot release anything until it completes
 - 4. Have to wait for the Attorney General's decision, all of the documents that had said had not been provided had actually been provided
 - 5. The waiting period is over, now the attorney general can weigh in
 - 6. The complaint was a one sheet form
 - 7. The documents with the complaint and the towns response will be sent to commissioners
 - 8. The complaint is that the Hingham statement had not been provided with the agenda
 - 9. The statement had been available from the prior meeting
 - 10. According to open-meeting law there is 90 days to post the minutes. The documents don't have to legally be posted aside from the agenda and the minutes
 - 11. This complaint about the procedure will be talked about at the retreat. COVID is when the Hybrid-meeting law was started, we will double check to see what has been updated.
- f. Co-Chair Term Ending in June

- i. Advantage of the sixth months stagger approach for changing co-chairs will help with the learning curve
 - g. Review of the last few weeks
 - i. Discussed Select Board process regarding 2024 Special Town Meeting Article 5
- 8. Incidents & Complaints
 - a. Commissioner Updates
 - i. Commissioner Bryant isn't here
 - ii. In OMS a child was shown a swastika graffiti under the desk - was resolved by the principal. The schools WG discussed ways to respond and prevent future similar events
 - iii. On May 17th, there was hate speech on Arlington Centric on Facebook
 - 1. It was an Islamophobic cartoon
 - 2. The commissioners engaged with the admin of the group and told them it was Islamophobic, the post hasn't been taken down
 - iv. This past Saturday, a protester called a man a Zionist Nazi on Mass Ave., a commissioner is going to talk with them to see what is happening
 - v. At Dallin there were 2 different incidents, the principal is handling it
 - 1. Incident may have been racist
 - vi. A person's BLM sign has been stolen 7 times, they've asked for a police statement (they live in a well-traveled area, across from an elementary school)
 - b. APD Updates
 - i. On April 26, APD got a call that an Amazon truck driver was assaulted and called anti-immigrant names, HRC is trying to open up resources for them
 - 1. Victim didn't follow back up but the APD sent the information to the DA's office
 - ii. There was a car with Anti-Semitic drawing on it, was in an a apartment garage, noticed by another tenant
 - 1. Hard to find who did it, the person who owns the car is out of state, and there are no cameras in the area
 - iii. On May 1st, a town meeting member was accosted by a man who shouted hate speech slurs- the man was arrested later.
 - 1. The man had a lot going on, it was a difficult situation.
 - c. Incident Handling
 - i. April: Commissioner Griffin Jones
 - ii. May: Commissioner Kevin Bryant
 - iii. June: Commissioner Christine Carney
- 9. Working Group Updates
 - a. Schools & Education
 - i. Submitted notes, whole meeting was focused on Ottoson Middle School with OMS principal
 - 1. There isn't much focus on what kind of curriculum you can use to help instill values
 - 2. Principal is planning on having events like Civics Day toward the beginning of the year rather than the end
 - b. Outreach / Events
 - i. May 28th, co-hosting Asian Heritage event at 6:00 PM, RSVP required

- ii. Another event that HRC is cosponsoring is at Town Hall with the Arlington Historical Society
- iii. Next Coffee Chat: Rajeev & Kevin
- c. Communications
 - i. Town IT has said the email system is now safe to use, when promoting the events we'll use those events
 - ii. Commissioner Pusey is trying to share a common calendar for the commissions to put events on
- d. Training (Commissioners Scott Jones and Griffin Jones)
 - i. Conflict Resolution Training Opportunity
 - 1. A month ago, a few commissioners tried the training, it was clearly meant for workplace conflict
 - ii. Commissioners will be informed about training opportunities
 - iii. Know Your Rights Training at Community Center was good

10. Creation of Religious Tolerance Working Group

- a. Mandate / Commitment
 - i. The team will meet regularly for at minimum the next year, will be a place where people can go if they have specific questions and ideas about how to improve the quality of dialogue about the incidents
 - ii. This working group would be tracking the incidents, collecting the data and finding ways to promote tolerance, safety and understanding
 - 1. For example the school working group doesn't respond directly to the incidents, but can respond and work with the APS more broadly on the topic of the incident
 - iii. The task to create a presentation about antisemitism is going to this working group
 - iv. Could be a place for discussion but no results, it would be good to have some actual commitments for the working group to achieve to see some positive action
 - v. Could partner with the interfaith group- AHRC hosts, and group supports
 - 1. Christine Carney could possibly help with the interfaith group, she has been working with them
 - 2. Could have individuals from different faith houses from Arlington could work with the group better than the interfaith group
 - vi. Leaders could develop a proposed plan to propose to the Commission next month
 - vii. Would be best to email the commissioners about the new working group and asking for volunteers
 - viii. Many people have reached out about wanting to interact with an organization like this
 - ix. Have gotten a lot of emails from people, mostly celebrating increasing response to complaints about religious tolerance
 - 1. Broadly expressing their wish for the action that the Commission committed to gets done
 - 2. Next meeting should respond to everyone who came to the listening session to tell them about the new working group so they have a new platform to get help from
 - 3. We need to get people to sit in the same room and talk out their different perspectives
 - a. Have at least one person telling pro-Palestinian people

that Palestinians don't matter

- b. Also got emails about why didn't we talk about certain other issues but we are talking about this

- b. Group Leads
 - i. Commissioner Scott Jones
 - ii. Commissioner Hira Ambreen
- c. Plans / Roadmap
- d. Community Involvement

11. MAHRC Update (Commissioner Soneja)

- a. Had a meeting last week
- b. Next month they are having a speaker who is experienced in conflict resolution before the group shuts down for summer
- c. Was a good discussion about Anti-Semitism
- d. Congress has approved a definition of Antisemitism, the MAHRC thought it was problematic because it includes stuff as preventing federal funding of colleges if they find students engaging in antisemitism
 - i. Some people proposed alternate definitions of antisemitism
- e. There was a recommendation of a documentary: *The Color of Fear* to help people understand each other better
- f. It is a great discussion space where people can discuss personally how human rights issues affect them, is a great way to learn from other perspectives
- g. There was a good discussion about how to handle hate and social media
 - i. They recommended that we should change the zero-tolerance policy because everyone has rights
- h. Discussed Arlington's past few months' discussion about the ceasefire statement and the amendment that was added, was passed for the statement by MAHRC as well
 - i. There is a lot of weaponization of the events
 - ii. Some commissioners have been misquoted by an Arlington news website

12. Announcements

- a. Some points described as takeaways from the past few months are not agreed on entirely by the Commission and will be discussed at the retreat
- b. Could commit to setting aside some space for this to be discussed before the next meeting
 - i. Will send out an email to discuss timing, could possibly forgo a monthly meeting to replace it with the retreat
 - ii. Retreats are still open to the public, it can be a meeting, just need to have an agenda posted, don't even need to have minutes
 - iii. Just need to note that the entire body is meeting
- c. Would be possible to have a facilitator for the retreat, or at the very least that part of the discussion

13. Adjournment

- a. Bauer motions to adjourn, Soneja seconds, unanimous agreement.

Next meeting: (Moved to Thursday to accommodate Town Meeting) Thursday, June 20, 2024, 8:00 PM