

Agenda

Welcome and Roll Call

Review and Acceptance of February 13th, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Work Groups

- MLK Celebration Review
- Multicultural Festival

Old Business

- Welcome Stickers
- Genocide Awareness - Yom HaShoah
 - Celebration with Temple B’Nai Israel – Sat. May 6th 4pm
- Looking forward – 2023 (see attached vision & mission)

New Business

- Banners on City Hall – see attached discussion paper
- Hate Images at State School
- Other business
- Next Meeting Room 200A, Monday April 10, 2023, at 3:30pm also via Zoom

Public Comment –

The public is invited to offer their opinions. Initially, they will be limited to four minutes until all have had an opportunity to speak. Each person is constrained to their time period or to ask questions of the committee. Everyone is expected to speak respectfully.

If on Zoom, the public will be visible but muted until unmuted by the chair. Members of the public wishing to speak will use the “raise hand” option.

Note: The meeting will also be held online through Zoom and will begin at 3:30pm although people are encouraged check in early. Contact David Stamps, 387-4382 if you are having trouble connecting.

You are invited to a Zoom webinar.

Topic: Human Relations Commission

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83353178433?pwd=QlFpNHd3bEdLcllKK0hqTWkxeDhMUT09>

Passcode: 659984

Or One tap mobile :

US: +13126266799,,83353178433#,,,,*659984# or +16465588656,,83353178433#,,,,*659984#

Or Telephone:

Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 558 8656 or +1 646 931 3860 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 305 224 1968 or +1 309 205 3325 or +1 360 209 5623 or +1 386 347 5053 or +1 507 473 4847 or +1 564 217 2000 or +1 669 444 9171 or +1 669 900 9128 or +1 689 278 1000 or +1 719 359 4580 or +1 253 205 0468 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799 Webinar ID: 833 5317 8433

Passcode: 659984

International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83353178433>

LACONIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Vision & Mission

Approved 12-17-2019

Vision:

The Laconia Human Relations Committee envisions a world where everyone is treated with dignity, fairness, respect, and kindness.

Mission Statement:

The Committee shall strive to:

- a) Cultivate a community-wide climate that does not tolerate prejudice of any kind which undermines the dignity of any person.
- b) Engage every individual, group and organization in Laconia in support of our vision.
- c) Educate ourselves and our children about the presence and dehumanizing impact of any prejudicial attitudes that are currently at work in our community.
- d) Promote, in as many segments of our community life as is possible, policies and practices which encourage equal opportunity through equity and justice for all.
- e) Proactively resist and publicly condemn any practices or incidents in our community which either result from or might encourage prejudice, intolerance, harassment and discrimination.

Objectives:

The Committee shall:

- a) Educate about and establish a comfort level with the changing face of our community by working with individuals, City Council, business groups, service, health and educational institutions.
- b) Actively pursue the prevention of prejudice, intolerance, harassment and discrimination in our community through public discourse, media exposure, community action and education on these issues.
- c) Create programs and initiatives in furtherance of our vision such as the Welcoming Laconia Initiative, the Laconia Multicultural Festival and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration.

Notes from Zoom Meeting on 2.27.23

Regarding: Holocaust Program with TBI and Laconia Human Relations Committee

May 6, 2023, 4 p.m.

Present: David Stamps, Patrick Wood, David Osman, Rev. Judith Wright, Ira Keltz, Carol Pierce, Barbara Katz, Rabbi Jan Katz

Friends, please note:

1. Below reflects a free-flowing and brainstorming conversation.
2. My sincere apologies if I confused the words of the two David's on zoom. Please set the notes straight, when incorrect, and I will edit and resend asap.

David S: There is local precedent for these collaborations. David S. reminded us of his words at the MLK program that it would be good to collaborate on Yom HaShoah and my subsequent follow-up with him. "We must support all in the community who are under attack." He referred to the CNN program last Friday on antisemitism, which is a reality in New Hampshire. The "dogs of hate are at loose."

The antisemites and extremists are using all kinds of weapons including social media; it's a fight, but we cannot use their weapons. Instead, we have to recruit people with love. It's startling how many have never heard of the Holocaust. There are lots of books out – the next generation in their twenties and thirties are trying to retell the story to the rest of the community. Too many respond: "It's not our problem" and that feeds the flame.

Patrick: We need to be cognizant that now is similar to brown shirts (storm troopers who walked the streets and intimidated enemies of the Nazis in WWII Germany), and we need to counteract with how we ought to treat one another.

David O: Little conversations are great starters for a huge topic, and at some point we need to have a focus or objective. Here are some items to consider for this program:

- a. Should we have a dialogue?
- b. There are good resources from the Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene College, their outreach people are really willing to

jump in and help. Maybe they can bring resources and human beings. Rabbi Jan will follow up with the Cohen Center.

c. Remember that other groups were victimized during the Holocaust: Roma, LGBT, political dissidents, Blacks in Germany, Jehovah Witnesses, etc. Rabbi: There is a need to reach out to youth, and to invite educators to bring their students

Judith: She has been thinking about black history month and slavery and talking about that at TBI on the evening of May 4 (day before the Holocaust program) when she preaches to the TBI congregation as guest clergy, or maybe the history of UU support and standing up against the Nazis. (Rabbi Jan's note: All on zoom today and in the community are invited to join us that evening at 7:30 p.m. in person or on zoom to hear Rev. Wright's message.) That slaves were labelled by what they wore reminds Rev. Wright of the yellow stars that Jews were required to wear publicly.

Venue: David S. looked into the Colonial Theater and Belknap Mill, and neither are available. The Beane Center and Gilford Church were suggested. Ira suggested that given that the program is in two months that we keep the program small this year, focusing on a few introductions by community speakers, Bonnie's presentation (narrative of a child of survivor, PP presentation, and singing her original music and lyrics as related to her family who were killed in the Holocaust), and food. We all liked the idea of the Congregational Church in downtown Laconia as a good space for this program. Barbara offered that it is a good thing for our Jewish community to move out to a local church to show our support for the rest of the community. Patrick Wood, a member of the church, will follow up with Rev. Campbell Lovett on Wednesday to find out if we can use the church on May 5.

Publicity: Thank you, Barbara for taking the lead in this area! David S. said that Carey Chandler (spelling?) of the Human Relations Committee is their social media expert and would want to collaborate here as well. We would publicize the event in the Laconia Daily Sun, with advertising and press releases, develop an appropriate flyer, paper and digital for the area, as well as take advantage of the Friday afternoon Laconia Newsletter. Barbara offered that she has worked with Nancy Brown, who has done this newsletter for 30 years and will assuredly fit in this program.

David S.: Another appropriate audience for this program are those businesses who are displaying stickers in support of love and Miriam Kovac's Franklin restaurant, The Broken Spoon—with both Miriam and the restaurant being victims of verbal attacks on social media. The stickers read: Discrimination is not tolerated in this business.

David S. offered at this point that Laconia should stand for something more than just a city hall on the river. The stickers, and an LGBTQ flag make big statements about our city's values.

Target Population: Carol strongly urged that we ask for 3 people from different organizations to represent those organizations to this event: faith communities, the Mental Health Center, any partnerships with public health groups, and people who represent the community and the healing of the community. The Mental Health Center are working hard on hate. Moreover, the disabled were also victims of the Holocaust. Carol urged that schools be represented publicly and that we orally recognize their presence and standing up. Attendance of faculty and students should be required. Mayor is good friends with the superintendent. Judith is on board at Mental Health Center. Can the Mayor and Judith reach out to these two constituencies?

Additional Logistics:

- a. Saturday from 4 – 6 p.m. works as that time does not interfere with the afternoon or evening plans for some folk.
- b. David S. suggested that we offer resource materials, but not ask for donations. That said, we can take donations for the different organizations if attendees want to make them.
- c. John MacArthur will do the sound setup
- d. David O: We need give a heads up to Matt Canfield about the date and place and tell him that we will firm up as details are confirmed. David S. said that he has known Matt for years and his intention is to protect everyone in the community. Pat also mentioned Eric Adams from the Police Department to reach out to. Who offered to follow up here? We should wait until we have clarity on the program venue...
- e. David S: The next meeting of the Human Relations Committee is on March 13 – this program will be on the agenda. He needs a vote from them to formally participate but doesn't anticipate any issues.

- f. March 21 at 4 p.m. will be our next planning meeting. Rabbi Jan will send a link and reminder.
- g. Barbara: We need a title for the event, and content. David S. reminded the group that the focus needs to be narrow, that is, to support our Jewish friends in the here and now. Pat reiterated the need to fight antisemitism every day, and David S declared: "I don't want this to be a history lesson." Barbara will draft an informational flyer. Barbara said that she invites any and all feedback in content and format, and has no ego here. Rabbi will follow up with Bonnie also regarding title, her bio, and content of program.

Respectfully submitted,
Rabbi Jan Katz

BANNER DISPLAYS AT CITY HALL

Purpose: As the City of Laconia's center of government, City Hall is more than an administrative government building. City Hall is symbol of the City of Laconia itself and of all it represents and stands for. Because of this the display of appropriate banners at City Hall will also be seen by many as representing the values that City embraces. Both longtime residents and first time visitors will find the banners displayed at City Hall will give them an insight as to what kind of community Laconia aspires to be.

Banners can be of many different types:

Affirmational: Some banners will celebrate and affirm basic human rights such as the Gay Pride Banner.

Awareness: Some banners such as Alzheimer's and Cancer Awareness draw attention to the ongoing need to support medical research to find a cure for these terrible diseases.

Celebratory: Some banners will recognize the heroes who walk among us such as our Law Enforcement Officers, Fire Service Officers and those in our community serving in the Armed Forces.

Promotion: Some banners will promote community wide events such as Multi-Cultural Day and Pumpkin Fest.

Religious and/or politically themed banners are not appropriate and will not be allowed.

Management and Review:

The City Council at all times retains approval authority of what is displayed at City Hall.

The Laconia Human Relations Committee will have the responsibility of reviewing all applications to display banners and make a recommendation to the City Council for their approval. The committee will also develop a formal set of rules and guidelines for banner display that will be presented to the City Council for their review and approval.

March 15, 2023

Dear Committee & Friends,

On March 7th, 2023, I was contacted by Lois Kessin about certain hate drawings she heard about at the State School. She visited the property with Matt Soza and met with several people at the State School property and received copies of images. Some of these images dated back to last July, others more recent (late December and possible March).

Upon receiving copies of the images from Lois, I initiated contact with Chief Canfield of LPD as well as the NH State Attorney General John Formella. Their responses along with the contact sheet of the images are attached.

I received an email from the Director of the Civil Rights Unit Sean Locke. I also received contact from Chief Canfield as well as Detective Carsen who was assigned to the case.

I don't have any more information yet.

David Stamps
Chair

Attorney General John Formella:

Attached is a contact sheet of eight photos taken since last July on the so-called "State School" property and we wanted to bring them to your attention.

This property contains various buildings including the 911 Call Center, LR Mutual Aid, former prison buildings etc.

It is adjacent to Ahern Park, a popular year-round recreating place.

The local police say they are aware of the images but have said that the property is NH's concern and not theirs.

Apparently the earliest images were made even prior to the appearance of the hate and anti-Semitic symbols at Laconia Library and in Opechee Park last August.

This is concerning because it seems Laconia has a bigger problem than we as citizens knew.

Was this on your radar? If so why haven't we heard anything?

After attending US Attorney's last February in Manchester, I thought this was something that would be of interest especially as it on State School Property.

We contacted the Laconia Daily Sun so they are interested in your answer as well as others.

Portsmouth certainly seems to have received a lot of attention; why not this?

regards,

David

David Stamps

Chair

Laconia Human Relations Committee

From: Locke, Sean <Sean.R.Locke@doj.nh.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 12:50 PM
To: dbstamps@dbstamps.com;
Cc: Myrdek, Kylie <Kylie.a.Myrdek@doj.nh.gov>
Subject: RE: Hate symbols & slogans

Good Morning David,

The Attorney General routed your email to me to review. I am the director of the Civil Rights Unit here at the Attorney General's Office.

I have reviewed the images you have attached and your outreach is the first time that this office has been made aware of the graffiti depicted in these photos. Thank you for bringing them to our attention. As we discussed at the Hate Crimes Forum last month, the only way to address these incidents is if they are reported to law enforcement.

Because the Laconia State School property is in the process of being sold and, for the portions being used, has mixed use as state-owned land with portions used by the city and local residents for recreational purposes, the question of who has jurisdiction over is not always clear. I have spoken with Chief Camfield who has informed me that the Laconia Police Department will take a report and investigate the graffiti that you have documented. I have also spoken with staff at the Department of Administrative Services, which currently manages the property, to inform them that should future graffiti be discovered, it should be reported to the Laconia Police Department for investigation. My understanding is that Administrative Services will clean up vandalism as they are able to when it is discovered. The Attorney General's Office has also offered support to the Laconia Police Department should they need any assistance from us during the course of this investigation. Similar to the recent incidents in Portsmouth, however, the Laconia Police Department will be the primary agency investigating the graffiti.

We have also referred the incidents to the FBI's agent for civil rights here in New Hampshire and she will work with the Laconia Police Department to provide whatever assistance and support the FBI can bring to bear on this matter. This office will work with the Laconia Police Department and the FBI as the graffiti is investigated and is prepared to take action should the investigation enable us to do so. If and when we are able to take action, we make sure the public is aware of our actions with the exception of situations where the suspect is a juvenile, in which case we would not be able to disclose information about the case or our actions.

As the Attorney General has said, "This type of hateful and threatening criminal activity, motivated by racial or religious intolerance, particularly at places of worship, has no place in New Hampshire and will not be tolerated." Thank you again for bringing this to our attention. If you or anyone else have additional information or questions, please let me know. If anyone comes forward with additional information, please let me know, but please also direct them to the Laconia Police Department.

Respectfully,

Sean

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