

Laconia Human Relations Committee

September 12, 2022 - Meeting Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

David Stamps welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Laconia Human Relations Committee. Committee member roll call was taken, a quorum was established, and the meeting was called to order at 3:45pm.

II. ATTENDANCE

Present – Chair David Stamps, David Osman, Matt Soza, Trish Weatherbee, Janet Simmons, Rev. Judith Wright, Pat Wood and Carrie Chandler

Present via Zoom – Kate Bruchacova, Carol Pierce

Excused – Mayor Andrew Hosmer, Kay Anderson, Seifu Ragassa

III. NEW BUSINESS

Miriam Kovacs, Franklin business owner, was present to discuss the rise of Fascism in New Hampshire and her personal story of being bullied/threatened and her business targeted as a direct result of her involvement with a peaceful protest against white nationalism. An excerpt from a letter she provides is a call to action for current NH politicians, those running for political office, businesses and organizations, which reads *“we, the people, need you to take a public stand on the rise and presence of Fascism, White Nationalism and Nazism acts in NH. These groups are mobilizing, showing up, and creating fear within our state and New England. To look away and deny their presence is pure ignorance and selfishness against the people in which you choose to serve. Here in the Granite State we have an opportunity to promote a space of love and acceptance, not elitism and racism, but action is needed on your behalf and in collaboration with others in order to create the movement.”* See attachment for full letter. Miriam is working to promote community awareness and print media. She is willing to tell her story publicly to put a face to the issue. In her words, “we need to speak up against hate.” Miriam showed the committee a sticker she had made for businesses to display to hold establishments accountable to recognize and denounce hateful acts and groups and to promote a safe and welcoming space. **A motion was made by Carrie Chandler, seconded by Matt Soza, to purchase 100 small signs at \$2 each for a total of \$200 to disseminate to Laconia businesses; with no further discussion the motion passed unanimously.** The committee thanked Miriam for her presence and for sharing her experience and perspective. Pat Wood, Matt Soza, David Osman and Janet Simmons offered to give further thought for how to launch publicity, involve merchants, promote the story through media and make a public statement.

Kate Bruchacova is taking a new position with the UNH Cooperative Extension but hopes to continue her work with welcoming and supporting immigrants.

Sept 18th – PBS launches a six part series on the Holocaust.

OLD BUSINESS

Minutes Approval – **A motion was made by Trish Weatherbee, seconded by David Osman, to accept the minutes of the August 8, 2022 Laconia Human Relations Committee; with no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.**

A More Perfect Union Article Series

- Article #5 – Why is History Important in a Democracy. The article was reworked by sub-committee – with no further input from the larger committee, **Matt Soza made a motion, seconded by Pat Wood, to release the letter as written to the Daily Sun for publishing; with no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.**

Multi-Cultural Day – September 10th

- Becky Guyer submitted a letter which David Stamps read expressing a need additional support for next year's event. Trish Weatherbee and Janet Simmons will reach out to Becky to offer some ideas of support.
- Those committee members who attended and/or worked Multi-Cultural Day thought it was a tremendous success. People really enjoyed themselves.
- Our Laconia Human Relations booth and the history game received much support in thanks to Trish Weatherbee.
- The Humanities cards (property of Humanities Council) were a hit at the booth. With permission, we may want to incorporate these cards into the Daily Sun periodically. For more discussion.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was no one present for public comment.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 4:35p by Chair David Stamps.

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 11, 2022, 3:30p, City Hall Room 200A and via zoom invite.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carrie Chandler,
Recording Secretary

ATTN: URGENT! Rise in Fascism in New Hampshire

To a Fellow NH Community Member and/or Current or Running Politician,

Sept. 2022

We, the people, need you to take a public stand on the rise and presence of Fascism, White Nationalism, and Nazism acts in NH. These groups are mobilizing, showing up, and creating fear within our state and New England. To look away and deny their presence is pure ignorance and selfishness against the people in which you choose to serve. Here in the Granite State we have an opportunity to promote a space of love and acceptance, not elitism and racism, but action is needed on your behalf and in collaboration with others in order to create the movement.

Here are some action items We, the people, demand that you take part in during elections, in your businesses and communities:

For Current NH Politicians:

- We want a loud, clear and consistent message to the public that the presence of these groups and their resurgence is not, and will not, be tolerated as White Nationalism is a threat to the safety of our state, our communities and our freedom.
- We want a meeting set in place with your offices to create a plan or start the conversation on how you will deal with a riot, attack, or overthrow when that time comes. We do not wish for you to wait for it, we wish for you to prepare and have methods and resources in place now.
- While running for reelection, we want you to SPEAK UP & OUT against these groups NSC-131, Patriot Front, Super Happy Fun America and other White Nationalists that pose a threat to the safety of our people.

For Running NH Politicians:

- We want to see you use your campaign to speak out against the current politicians who fail to set in place action plans or publicly recognize and denounce Fascism.
- We want YOU to show us who a true leader is and do those requested above from our current politicians before even entering office or immediately after taking office.

For NH Businesses & Organizations:

- Make a public statement on social media and in your establishment against Fascism, Racism and Nazism.
- Order a sticker to place on your doors that holds you accountable to recognize and denounce these hateful acts and groups while showing targeted members of our communities that you hold a safe and welcoming space for them.
- Write letters to your local politicians and call them out for not addressing the matter in the seriousness in which it deserves.
- If you have any connection to running politicians, HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE.

A threat against one of us, is a threat against all of us.

In the 5th smallest state in the United States, we should be able to work together to make sure we send a clear and concise message that NO hate is ever welcomed here. This cannot be tabled, this needs action now.

Looking forward to seeing you a part of the movement,
We, the people of New Hampshire

July 2022

Regarding recent racist/sexist attacks on local businesses in NH.

To

This letter is compiled of local social justice activists and organizations that have banded together to support one another in times of hate when our politicians and media would not show up.

We the people, a group of folx from NH PANTHER, Change for Concord, Queerlective and others, have worked tirelessly over the last week to create momentum where our leadership in the state has failed to support us. This letter is to acknowledge that for someone in your position of power, you did not act. You did not call out white supremacy and nazism. You did not support your local businesses when they were in need. You failed us and in this letter today, we ask you to revisit your lack of engagement to the matter and to stand with us in fighting against hate in our state.

From the words of the fearless leaders who have taken a public stance on nazism:

"As of last week numerous businesses, organizations, and individuals have been targeted by fascists and neo-nazi groups like NSC-131. They have been trolled online, doxed, and been threatened with physical violence and property damage. ... What has to happen before you report on it? You should be ashamed of yourselves ... for letting this hatred and racism fester."

- ***Steven Kidder, Change for Concord***

"A summer Saturday in Maine... blazing heat, blue skies, ocean waves, the smell of lobster rolls and waffle cones drifting through the air, and khaki-clad men, faces covered, holding a banner reading, "Keep New England White." That was the scene at Kittery Trading Post on July 17, 2022. ... Silence is complicity, and so far the media, the elected officials, and the institutions of New Hampshire are complicit. I implore you not to be silent, not to allow silence from your leaders, and not to fall victim to hopelessness and complacency."

- ***Elizabeth Robertson from NH PANTHER (Plymouth Area Network To Help End Racism) posting on behalf of recent NH businesses being targeted after visible support for LGBTQIA+ & BIPOC folx post the July 17th events.***

"Stay Work Play strongly condemns the recent threats to local young entrepreneurs. Businesses and owners that support New Hampshire's underrepresented communities, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and women have been under attack. If we are all to succeed in making New Hampshire a place that attracts and retains young people, we must do everything we can - including calling out hate when we see it - to make New Hampshire a welcoming and inclusive place for all."

- ***Stay Work Play, a non-profit whose mission is to attract and retain young people, publicly condoned the recent threats to young entrepreneurs in New Hampshire based on movement through social media. SWP took a stand to publicly announce their support through this statement on July 27, 2022.***

We the people, and in support of the businesses being attacked such as nommmunism Bakery and Broken Spoon, I personally would like to add:

May you revisit your inaction and stand with us,

_____ & the rest of the concerned public