

CITY OF LACONIA – HUMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

September 18, 2018 - Quarterly Meeting

City Hall Chambers

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Leonard Campbell called the meeting to order at 3:08 pm. Len welcomed all attending the Laconia Human Relations meeting. Committee member introductions were made and a quorum was established.

II. ATTENDANCE

Present - Chair Leonard Campbell, Mayor Ed Engler, Carol Pierce, David Stamps, David Osmond, Kate Bruchacova, Rev. Judith Wright, Ali Hassan, Janet Simmon, Kathy James, Carrie Chandler

Excused – Chris Adams

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by David Stamps to accept the minutes of the June 19, 2018 meeting; it was seconded by Kathy James. A vote was taken, and with no opposition, the minutes were accepted as written.

III. AGENDA

o Committee Reports:

o FINANCE

Len Campbell reported a balance of \$2,080.62 as of August 31, 2018. There was some discussion as to whether all income and expenses are currently reflected. Len will address this and provide a complete financial report.

o LACONIA MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

David Stamps reported that the September 8th festival was a success by all reports. There will be a wrap up meeting to discuss what went well and suggestions for next year. Becky Guyer did a great job organizing this event.

- It is always a challenge to find volunteers, but several were there from the committee as well as other groups, ie. hockey team, boy scouts and a few inmates from the local jail.
- Tenor of the crowd seemed different – rich in conversation

- There were some new vendors – vendors seemed happy
- There seemed to be more food options, but more would be nice
- There were other competing events happening that day – Belknap County Day and Safety Day at Gunstock, but the attendance was good – it seemed busy all day.

○ “MONUMENT” AD HOC

There have been three meetings, since our last LHRC meeting, one of which included the Mayor. After much discussion, the group would like to explore an idea, which is a take off on “Adopt A Spot,” where the community will have the opportunity to purchase a paver to be placed in the walkway or plaque of some type to be placed within in the city. These plaques would state a brief affirmation that reflects the value and mission of the LHRC. David Stamps and Carrie Chandler will be meeting with Kevin Dunleavy of Parks and Rec to discuss this concept, request suggestions and discuss potential barriers. A formal proposal will be made to the Mayor and the committee once established. The idea of doing something to preserve the Native American Sculpture is on hold as it is not likely salvageable. It is not something that the Native American community initiated, it was an artist ten years ago traveling the country with the goal to place one sculpture in every state.

Kate Bruchacova had a prior commitment and excused herself from the meeting.

○ MARTIN LUTHER KING JR CELEBRATION

Carol Pierce stated things are still in the brainstorming phase --- possibly a film, perhaps a speaker from the State Governor’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion or looking at the book “Where do we go from here” written by MLKJ. The focus should be what Martin Luther King Jr. stood for – not just his life. Carol will chair a committee to meet on Tuesday, October 9th at 3pm (place TBD) – Kathy James, Len Campbell and David Stamps volunteered to serve with Carol.

○ IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION INITIATIVE

Carol Pierce gave an update:

- Kate belongs to the State Welcoming Committee. “Welcoming Week” is the third week in September – there are various celebrations happening – ours was Multi-Cultural Day. The State is very active in looking at ways to promote diversity.
- The Governor has established a Diversity and Inclusion Council – with listening sessions throughout the state.
- NH Endowment for Health is taking on the issue of racism with a focus on young people. There will be a conference held in Manchester in October for anyone who can attend.

INTERNATIONAL FILM SERIES

Film nights, held at 6:15p on the 1st Monday of the month at the Laconia Public Library. Carol Pierce stated that the September film was “The Year of the Yao;” October’s film is “Maudie;” and November’s film is powerful and historic story “The Darkest Hour.” There was some discussion about how to get the word out about these great films. Generally attendance ranges from 18-40 people. Appreciation was offered to Carol Pierce for all her hard work. Perhaps something displayed on the library lawn to promote the films. The Mayor mentioned 2 poles that are being placed near the city entrance which can be used to display various banners. Janet Simmons offered to look into dimensions, design and cost. The films available on the international shelf at the library are taken out frequently.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

The library book club read entitled “Waking Up White” had about 20-25 participants; there was a guest moderator from Durham. There was no contribution by the Human Relations Committee.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Communication received from the Concerned Citizens Group – email along with mission statement was provided to members of the Laconia Human Relations Committee via email. Attached is the mission statement that was shared.

Concerned Citizens Group: Carol Pierce and Carrie Chandler attended the first half of a two part film entitled “Understanding the Threat.”

Carrie stated that she attended to gain a better understanding of the group’s purpose.

Carol said she wished to make a personal statement about what she saw and how she feels. Carol agrees that there is a political part of Islam that is not healthy, but she has many friends who are Muslim, and cannot stand against the religion. There are young people working hard towards peace. She needs to trust the Islamic Community – otherwise, they will become more isolated and perhaps less democratic.

David Stamps stated that political power has been used and abused throughout time. There are terrible people on all sides and he chooses to devote time looking for the best in fellow human beings.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Mark Abear of Meredith -

- Stated that he handed the recording secretary a communication (see attached) that he is choosing not to read based upon prior meeting conversation around MLKJ day and what should happen – to promote the values and principles of the man.

Ms. Margret Donnelly of Laconia -

- Attended Multi-Cultural Day - was pleased that it celebrated her heritage and made her feel included.

Mr. Hal Graham of Sanbornton -

- Agreed that MLKJ celebration should reflect the life's work of the man
- Invited LHRC members to attend the second half of the film " Understanding the Threat" at the Gilford Public Library on Sept 24th.
- Stated he has friends who are Muslim – they are not against Muslims, just those who "hate" and are part of "political Muslim"
- Want to bring to attention what they believe is happening in the U.S. (government) and the FBI
- He supports the LHRC mission 100%

Mr. Matthew Soza of Laconia -

- He appreciates the work of the Human Relations Committee and the success of the Multi-Cultural Festival

Further Conversation:

- There was conversation around what the CCG means? And why do they feel it important to attend the Laconia Human Relations Committee quarterly meetings – particularly when no one present at today's meeting lives in Laconia (one attendee works in the city)?
- Started with concern about the content of the 2017 MLKJ celebration with choice of speaker who is of the Muslim faith.
- Should this group reevaluate our mission in terms of being watchful of Laconia and calling to attention situations that are against the mission of the committee? Is there anything happening in Laconia that rises to this level of concern? Are there problems that are not being addressed? Are hate crimes under investigation? The police have called Carol or Len in the past. We have drifted away from this role; we used to offer our services to facilitate and/or assist immigrants in trouble. Further discussion about the role of the committee required.
- The religious differences within our committee help to bridge any distance together.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by David Stamps to adjourn the meeting; it was seconded by Janet Simmon. With all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 4:33p by the Chair.

Next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 18,2018 at 3p at Laconia City Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carrie Chandler,
Recording Secretary

LACONIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE MISSION

To:

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