



Town of Lexington Human Rights Committee

Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, Apr 10, 2024

Conducted in remotely on Zoom

LHRC MEMBERS PRESENT

Christina Lin, Chair (CL); Stephanie Hsu, Vice-Chair (SH); Lois Bruss (LB), Larry Freeman - Lexington Public School District (LF); Lieutenant Colleen Dunbar - Town of Lexington Police (CD), Lexington Senior Staff - Dana Bickelman (DB)

Attendees: Mark Sandeen (MS, Select Board liaison), Joe Pato (JP), Hemali Shah (HS), Shaun Grady (SG)

The minutes recorded by Stephanie Ryan

1. LHRC discussion on committee charge

- a. Article 2-Discussion on possible word changes to suggest to the Select Board. Changing the word “promote” to “support”, and changing “confront” to “address”.
- b. Article 3- Function of the Committee
- c. Discussion on advocacy for individuals or community wide?
Christina- interpreted as more topical & for the community.
Joe- related to the education programs & community wide, as opposed to addressing a specific incident. Mark agrees with Joe.
Christina- public advocacy stands alone, people can forget it’s related to the mission.
C feels it’s vague. Mark thinks it’s clear in the previous sentence.
3rd sentence says town, but doesn’t include schools. Joe says we don’t have to differentiate, we have a school board member here.

LB felt bullet 3 was a stretch because committee members don’t have training in mediation. MS and JP agree and suggest removing the word “mediation”. Discussion on word possible changes- “conflict” to “issues”, and “helping” to “supporting.” LF said bullet 3- more proactive, bullet 5- more reactive. After discussion, bullet 3- Engaging, and collaborating with other organizations and consulting. SG suggests - “other organizations, town departments, and committees”.

Discussion is tabled it at 9:44am for a future meeting.

2. Discussion about LHRC response in incidents such as the School Committee public speak on February 27, 2024.
 - a. How should LHRC respond to hate incidents in public?

School Bd meeting incident was hurtful. Hate speech in US is mostly protected. Best way to respond is to speak up. Dr. Hackett responded immediately and corrected misinformation. LHRC is tied to public meetings, could call a meeting in 48 hrs

SR & LB think a quick response is important.

JP discussed having a prepared statement by the Chair based on the committee's core values. Committee agree to give our Chair, Christina, the authority to create a statement. JP rec that CL work with DB and HS to draft statements. Chair of select Bd- draws language from the public meeting, send to the group, as an action of the Chair, then it's not a violation of any open meeting laws.

3. Chair shares resources on combating hate.
Reference document: [A Community Guide for Opposing Hate](#)
Additional resource shared on [LHRC google drive Folder](#)
4. Committee updates and inputs/suggestions
 - a. Co-Sponsoring events:
2024 My American Story. *CALex is organizing the 4th "My American Story" to celebrate AAPI Heritage Month. The event is tentatively scheduled on Saturday, May 18 at Depot Square.*
 - b. Monthly Calendar of Observances and Celebrations - suggestion by LB to acknowledge diversity of cultural observances and celebrations which can be posted on the LHRC website. It would be important to use vetted resource. LB and SR will team up to work on this and HS also offered to help.
5. Unexpected Items Not Reasonably Anticipated in Advance
 - a. Jail Diversion Program Grant (CD)
- Grant would fund a full time mental health clinician to be an employee of the Police Department. It is a 3 yr grant. The FT mental health clinician will have their own office at the new Lex Police station. Right now, she does 16 hrs/wk with Lex. Lincoln, Bedford, and Lex share the person. Police dept looking for a letter of support for the grant application. Single motion- 5 in support, with Colleen abstaining
 - b. CAAL - Immigration Stories event coming in May. Please see the website: <https://caal-ma.org/immigrationstories/>. Committee votes to support sponsorship of this event.
 - c. Lex250 Celebrations on April 19th - all Town committee members are invited. Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll will be joining Lex250 for the Launch and the Unveiling of the Countdown Calendar.
 - d. National Poetry Month Reading. Sunday, April 28, 2024, 2:00 PM // Maxima Book Center – Lexington

Meeting adjourned

Addendum

DRAFT letter

The Lexington Human Rights Committee would like to address the impacts of the horrific violence in Israel and Gaza in recent days. We cannot begin to understand the devastation and grief inflicted on so many innocent people who are caught in a conflict, not of their making. This turmoil has impacts that extend beyond borders - affecting families, children, and communities globally. In Lexington, where Jewish, Israeli, Muslim and Palestinian communities bear the weight of the trauma, words cannot adequately express our deepest sorrow for their pain.

We must not allow this moment to define the very cultures and people that have brought so much beauty and richness into this world. Please approach all information with caution. We are all too aware of the potential for misinformation leading to Anti Semitism and Islamophobia that only serves to promote hate and division.^{1,2,3,4,5,6} We refuse to allow the actions of extremists to define an entire people **or religion**, nor justify further violence against innocent lives. There is no place for hate.

¹ [Israel-Palestinian war: Sorting fact from fiction flooding social media - Fast Company Middle East](#)

² [Israel-Hamas war: Fact-checking online misinformation | Reuters](#)

³ [Israel-Gaza conflict: when social media fakes are rampant, news verification is vital](#)

⁴ ['Fight' against anti-Jewish and Muslim hate 'is often one that is together,' says ADL official - ABC News](#)

⁵ [Antisemitism — Center for Countering Digital Hate | CCDH](#)

⁶ [Press release](#)

It is hardest in these moments to see that we truly have more in common than not.⁷ We cannot presume to understand the pain nor the intergenerational ripples of trauma. Ultimately, we all seek peace, love, joy, and acceptance. Please check in with your friends and neighbors.^{8,9} Our hope extends not only to our community in Lexington but also to the complex situation in the Middle East. May we all find the strength to heal, to listen with empathy, give grace and ultimately foster a spirit of peaceful coexistence in our world.

LHRC incident reporting : [Lexington Human Rights Committee Incident Reporting Form](#)

Report incidents of anti semitism at national level: [Report an Antisemitic, Bias or Discriminatory Incident | ADL](#)

Report incidents of islamophobia at national level: ??CAIR website is not working

Final Letter

Response to the Israel-Gaza Conflict

The Lexington Human Rights Committee would like to address the impacts of the horrific violence in Israel and Gaza in recent days. We cannot begin to understand the magnitude of the devastation and grief inflicted on so many innocent people who are caught in a conflict, not of their making. This turmoil has impacts that extend beyond borders - affecting families, children, and communities globally. In Lexington, where Jewish, Israeli, Muslim and Palestinian communities bear the weight of the trauma, words cannot adequately express our deepest sorrow for their pain.

⁷ [TV 2 | All That We Share](#)

⁸ [10 Ways to Have Conscientious Conversations on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | ADL](#)

⁹ [What Your Jewish And Palestinian Friends And Co-Workers Want You To Know](#)

We must not allow this moment to define cultures and people that have brought so much beauty and richness into this world. Please approach all information with caution. We are all too aware of the potential for misinformation leading to Antisemitism and Islamophobia that only serves to promote hate and division.^{10,11,12,13} We refuse to allow the actions of extremists to define an entire people or religion, nor justify further violence against innocent lives. There is no place for hate.

It is hardest in these moments to see that we truly have more in common than not.¹⁴ Let us endeavor to understand the pain and intergenerational ripples of trauma as we work towards-peace, love, joy, and acceptance for all. Please check in with your friends and neighbors.^{15,16} Our hope extends not only to our community in Lexington but also to the complex situation in the Middle East. May we find the strength to heal, to listen with empathy, give grace and ultimately foster a spirit of peaceful coexistence in our world.

We strongly encourage members of the Lexington community to **report incidents** of harm through the [LHRC incident reporting form](#) and school-based incidents in the schools through the LPS form: [Equity at LPS - Reporting Incidents](#).

Additionally, you can report incidents of Antisemitism with [ADL/NewEngland](#) and Islamophobia to [CAIR-MA](#) (Council on American-Islamic Relations-Massachusetts).

¹⁰ [Israel-Hamas war: Fact-checking online misinformation | Reuters](#)

¹¹ [Israel-Gaza conflict: when social media fakes are rampant, news verification is vital](#)

¹² ['Fight' against anti-Jewish and Muslim hate 'is often one that is together,' says ADL official - ABC News](#)

¹³ [Plainfield Township Homicide Press release](#)

¹⁴ [TV 2 | All That We Share](#)

¹⁵ [10 Ways to Have Conscientious Conversations on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | ADL](#)

¹⁶ [What Your Jewish And Palestinian Friends And Co-Workers Want You To Know](#)