

**Meeting Minutes | Wayland Human Rights, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
(HRDEIC) November 21, 2023, 6 - 8 pm**

Members present on Zoom: Yamini Ranjan (Chair), Karen Blumenfeld (Vice Chair), Mary Ann Borkowski, Mei-Ling Ellerman, Carlin Gruber, Eunjee Kang, Heather Pineault, Jessica Schendel (Clerk), Kanmani Sekhar, Yauwu Tang, Chloe Voight (taking notes)

Member absent: Janot Mendler de Suarez

1. Call to order: Yamini took a roll call and called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

2. Public comment: Amita explained the difference between the Hindu Swastik symbol and the Hakenkreuz (Nazi symbol). She explained that the word Swastik has roots in Sanskrit and means "wellbeing" and that Hindus around the world use this symbol as a mark of auspiciousness, in contrast to the Nazis who made alterations to the symbol and used it to commit heinous crimes. She explained that Hindus who use the Swastik symbol in their homes as part of their religious rituals are put at risk when other community members don't understand the difference between the Nazi symbol and the Hindu Swastik. She urged the committee to provide public education on the matter. *Chloe Voight joined the meeting at 6:10pm.*

3. Review and possible vote to approve October 17 and October 24 meeting minutes:

MOTION: to approve the minutes of the October 17 and October 24 meetings. Mary Ann proposed the motion, Heather seconded and the motion passed unanimously with Chloe abstaining.

4. Updates and discussion on:

- **HRDEIC's Israel-Gaza statement** was appreciated by the Select Board, which also issued its own statement. A copy of the HRDEIC Israel-Gaza statement can be found on our website.
- **Sudbury Foundation training grant:** A training on domestic violence and coercive control will take place on January 7, at 2:00pm at First Parish Church. The presenter will be Dr. Lisa Fontes. The training will be in person, live-streamed and recorded. The event is for the committee and will also be open to members of the community, including guidance counselors and some high school students.
- **Lauren Dunne Astley Fund grant:** Yamini will submit a proposal on behalf of the committee for funds to be used for social media and other publicity.
- **SPIRIT program:** The Select Board is willing to support funding for the program. The committee needs to prepare a specific budget to be submitted to the Select Board at their next meeting. The Select Board is also open to funding other HRDEIC projects, such as the Multicultural Festival (see below). The SPIRIT program will take place on Sunday, April 28, 2024 from 1:00-7:00pm.
- **Multicultural Festival, Wayland Cultural Council grant proposal:** Jessica reported that she has received no news yet about the grant. There were no updates on the Festival. *Kanmani Sekhar joined the meeting at 6:21pm.*
- **Equity assessment:** Dr. Eden-Reneé Hayes is developing a Request for Proposals (RFP), in collaboration with John, Yamini and Karen.

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- **HRDEIC and Schools:** Heather and Janot have met with two members of the School Committee since the occurrence of incidents in town linked to the conflict in Israel/Gaza. Heather reported that the Middle School has held two assemblies and has set up safe spaces for students.
- **Proposed HRDEIC budget:** Yamini made a presentation to the Town Manager, who will now discuss the proposal with the Finance Manager.

5. Continued discussion and possible vote on how the HRDEIC decides whether to sponsor or co-sponsor community events that may have a religious connection: It was suggested that the guidelines need not be limited to programs with a religious component. It was suggested we create a checklist with guidelines to assess the suitability of any prospective program. Jessica offered to find out if the library has such guidelines. It was suggested that the holiday policy guidelines be used as a model. Yamini and Karen will continue to work on this with Yauwu.

6. Discussion of antisemitic graffiti incidents in town, and responses to the incidents: In one incident, Nazi symbols were spray painted on Rice Road and quickly removed by the Department of Public Works. There was also an incident of a Nazi salute at the Middle School. The student committee members reported there has been misinformation circling around the high school. It was observed that on two recent occasions, conflict in town has led to graffiti. It was reported that following the antisemitic graffiti incident, gatherings had been quickly called by members of the community, including at Loker School, Temple Shir Tikva, and the Middle School, giving residents the chance to come together and stand against hate.

- **Possible vote on sponsoring or co-sponsoring community conversation(s):** Such an event would have to be carefully handled and would warrant finding a facilitator who is experienced in this kind of potentially divisive conversation. The SPIRIT program will help us address these kinds of issues but it will not take place until April.
- **Possible vote on issuing a public statement:** The committee has already passed a motion stating that for time-sensitive matters, the Chair and Vice Chair can issue a statement on behalf of the committee. It was agreed that the HRDEIC Facebook post can be put on the HRDEIC webpage.
- **Possible vote on co-sponsoring an educational program “Social Media as a Lever for Rising Extremism Today”:** The Hingham Unity Council is presenting this December 12th program and is looking for co-sponsors. The speaker, Sabine von Mering, is a Wayland resident and a Brandeis professor. MOTION: to co-sponsor the presentation with the Hingham Unity Council, featuring Sabine von Mering, about "Social media as a lever for rising extremism today." Heather proposed the motion, Jessica seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

7. Discussion of different cultures’ understanding of the swastika symbol and possible vote on sponsoring or cosponsoring a program on this topic: It was suggested that the committee provide an educational opportunity for the community to learn about the origin, meaning and symbolism of the Hindu Swastika and the Nazis’ misappropriation of this symbol. This could be done in partnership with the library. Links to educational materials could also be placed on the

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HRDEIC website. It was also suggested that the topic could include other symbols that have been misappropriated. MOTION: to sponsor or co-sponsor an educational program on different cultures' understanding of the swastika symbol and to post relevant information on our website and Facebook page. Mary Ann proposed the motion, Karen amended it, Heather seconded the amendment and the motion passed unanimously.

8. Announcements: None

9. Topics not anticipated 48 hours in advance: It was suggested that information on last year's Multicultural Festival be removed from the website but counter-suggested that the information should stay, to show the kind of work the committee is engaged in.

10. Adjourn: MOTION: A motion to adjourn was proposed by Jessica, seconded by Heather and passed unanimously.

Next meeting: December 19, 2024

Documents reviewed: Draft Guidelines for HRDEIC to Engage, Sponsor or Co-sponsor Events with a Religious Connection; HRDEIC Facebook Post; Co-sponsorship Opportunity for "Social Media as a Lever for Rising Extremism Today."