

Pittsfield Human Rights Commission

Minutes – July 27, 2020

6:00 PM, Via ZOOM

Members Present: Peter Marchetti, Chair
Drew Herzig, Vice Chair
Jay Lopez
Marietta Rapetti Cawse
Robert Sykes
Christine Codella, Clerk

1. **Call to Order** – Peter Marchetti called the meeting to order at 6 PM. Pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30A, Section 20, all attendees are hereby notified that this meeting is being audio and video recorded.
2. **Roll Call of HRC Members** – The Chairman announced the roll call of members present.
3. **Approval of Minutes** – A motion was made by Drew Herzig to table the approval of the July 2, 2020 minutes until the next meeting. Seconded by Marietta Rapetti Cawse, approved unanimously.
4. **Public Comment** – None
5. **Unfinished Business** – None
6. **New Business**
 - a. Reverend Howe was to make a presentation but has opted not to make the presentation at a public meeting.
 - b. Drew Herzig drafted a resolution declaring racism a public health crisis in Pittsfield and asks the Mayor, City Council and the Board of Health to assess the public health impact on racial equity of all the city of Pittsfield’s future initiatives before they are adopted and implemented. A motion to approve was made by Peter Marchetti and approved unanimously.
 - c. Robert Sykes addressed the commission and called for community forums to hear from residents in order to guide the commission’s agenda.
 - d. Marietta Rapetti Cawse wrote a 2 page statement (COPY ATTACHED) condemning racial injustice that will serve as the foundation on which the Human Rights Commission will base community conversations about racism and racial injustice. She made a motion to approve this statement, approved unanimously.
7. **Reports of Commissioners**

Marietta Rapetti Cawse made a request that all go out and vote.
8. **Adjournment** – Marietta Rapetti Cawse made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Drew Herzig, approved unanimously.

RACISM is a public health crisis

July 2, 2020 / July 7, 2020

Drew suggests racism is a public health crisis worthy of treatment, assessment, financial investment to eradicate negative health impacts.

MRC:

We witnessed the video of George Floyd murdered. We must make a statement and become agents of change for a just society. It is important to condemn systemic racism as we look in ourselves to strive to uncover our own racism. We need to strive to follow Martin Luther King Jr.’’, The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

We cannot sit in silos. We cannot sit in silence.

Racism and police violence is a public health emergency. As members of the HRC we need to advocate for responsible change.

Our students and community, citizens and non -citizens need to find understanding and meaning from violence.

We need to call out to the community and name how the community handles systemic racism,

Listen, learn, give voice to experiences to our students, global majority and families’

2. We need to lean into our discomfort to examine ourselves, our personal biases and our identities.

3. We need to learn more about equity in schools and communities

4 We need to ask how to change our implicit biases

How to practice and be more responsive to multi cultures

How to understand racial trauma

How to be allies and agents of change

There is a need to fund studies to explore interventions:

1. Restorative justice
2. Fund programs that meet human needs, promote health, strong communities, reduce structural inequities, eg., economic, racial, social , employment initiatives, **educational opportunities**, affordable housing, including using resources diverted to law enforcement
3. Advance equity and justice by eliminating officer enforcement of regulations designed to oppress marginalized people, eg., substance abuse and possession, sex work, loitering, sleeping in public, minor traffic violations, targeting undocumented immigrants.
4. Engage in the review of law enforcement agencies formal and informal policies and practices to eliminate discrepancies:
Violence against specific populations like: racial and identity profiling, stop and frisk, Gang injunctions, and laws that criminalize HOUSELESSNESS.

Educators and those in medicine and social services need to commit to do our part to address our **inherent racism** that affects the well-being of every person to access education or health care. People deserve to be treated with compassion and fairly.

We cannot sit in silos. We cannot sit in silence.

To remain silent is to be complicit in the war on BLACK BODIES and those marginalized communities.

Let us meet with elected officials to include community organizers and organizations

Let us take ACTION STEPS not rhetoric.

Police brutality and COVID19

People die: COVID 19, racism, violence effects emotional, mental and physical well-being
....INTERGENERATIONAL effects of police violence, educational silence.

Racism is a disease that increases stress hormones, eg., cortisone works havoc on our bodies.

SILENCE IS COMPLICIT, Let us not be complicit.

Racism is a risk factor and a killer.

How can we interrogate racism on a daily basis?

Let us demand justice.

We need to question our institutions to transform justice:

Reduce crime

Provide food

Education

Jobs

