

FINAL

CITY OF LEBANON
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION COMMISSION
March 5, 2024— 6:00pm
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL or
Remote Via Microsoft Teams: LebanonNH.gov/LIVE

MEMBERS PRESENT: Richard Ford Burley (Secretary); Karen Liot Hill (City Council Representative); Kathy McCarty (Public Representative); Keiselim Montas (Public Representative); Alisha Robinson (Chair) (via telepresence); Emily Walton (Public Representative); Bise Wood Saint Eugene (Vice-Chair) (via telepresence); Devin Wilkie (City Council Representative); Tia Winter (Public Representative)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Simone Whitecloud (Public Representative Alternate); Karen Zook (City Council Alternate)

STAFF PRESENT: Shaun Mulholland (City Manager)

1. CALL TO ORDER

The March 5, 2024 special meeting of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission (DEI) Meeting was called to order by Secretary Richard Ford Burley, acting as Chair, at 6:00pm.

2. NEW BUSINESS

A. Scheduling Matters

Richard Ford Burley discussed scheduling of the March and April meetings of the DEI Commission. The March 19, 2024 meeting will begin at 5:30pm to allow extra time for work on the Citywide Equity Plan. The April 16, 2024 meeting will require rescheduling as there is a conflict with the City's mandated Implicit Bias Training.

B. Consideration of the Citizen Request for Ceasefire Resolution

Richard Ford Burley opened the discussion with thoughts on the structure of the meeting, including what the Commission's options were. Members of the Commission discussed the purview of the Commission and the way it related to the matter of the Ceasefire resolution. Discussion also focused on the limitations of the powers of the City Council, the potential implications of the various options, and the potential content of an alternate resolution. The session was then opened for public comment.

Lori Siegel, resident of Hanover, spoke against the resolution, concerned that singling out Israel for mention felt antisemitic.

Jeremy Katz, resident of Lebanon Ward 3, spoke against the resolution, and submitted photographs of Nazi memorabilia discovered by police in a Lebanon apartment, as well as a photograph of an advertisement for a local gym.

Izaiah Siegel, 13-year-old resident of Hanover, spoke about his fear of rising antisemitism.

Sergei Kan, resident of Lebanon Ward 2, spoke against the resolution, calling it biased, and reiterated previous speakers' concerns about passing a resolution about Israel without passing resolutions about other conflicts.

Richard Abel, resident of Lebanon Ward 1, spoke against the resolution, worried that it could act as an invitation to others to act on their antisemitism. Richard Abel also read sections of a letter by Hanover resident Deborah Hoffer, a physician at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, submitted and attached to these minutes.

Robert Greene, resident of Lebanon Ward 3, spoke against the resolution, claiming the resolution falsely accuses Israel of genocide when, in the commenter's beliefs, it is Hamas committing genocide.

Ellen Rockmore, resident of Hanover, spoke against the resolution, saying it made her feel unwelcome in Lebanon.

Laurel Stavis, resident of Lebanon Ward 1, spoke against the resolution, noting that her husband's grave was defaced in an act of antisemitic hate, and that the resolution made her feel unsafe.

Nancy Graham, resident of Lebanon Ward 1, spoke against the resolution, calling it polarizing, saying it would lead to more antisemitic feelings, and explaining that she already felt unsafe in Lebanon.

Roberta Berner, resident of Lebanon Ward 1, spoke against the resolution, saying her Jewish congregation feels unsafe and that the resolution is not in line with the DEI Commission's goals. Roberta Berner also submitted a letter from Nancy Sievers, resident of Lebanon Ward 1, submitted and attached to these minutes.

Carolyn Cole, resident of Cornish, spoke against the resolution, saying that she felt it vilified Jews.

Laila Volle, resident of Lebanon Ward 2, spoke in support of the resolution, saying that community silence on the issue, when compared to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, made her feel unwelcome in Lebanon.

Sabiya Ahamed, resident of Lebanon Ward 2, spoke in support of the resolution, saying that antisemitism and anti-Zionism are different things, and describing a recent incidence of Islamophobic violence in Hanover.

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75 Maria Solis Kennedy, resident of Lebanon Ward 2, spoke in support of the resolution, speaking
76 out against the use of public funds in the conflict and stating that the resolution is a call for
77 peace.

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79 Laura Harris-Hirsch, resident of Lebanon Ward 3, spoke against the resolution, suggesting the
80 City focus its efforts on whatever it can do to reduce harm in the community stemming from the
81 conflict.

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83 Ed Hirsch, resident of Lebanon Ward 3, spoke against the resolution, worried that it could be
84 misunderstood and used as an excuse for antisemitic actions.

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86 Ben Spero, resident of Lebanon Ward 1, spoke against the resolution as one-sided, saying that
87 calling for a ceasefire is a politically correct way to call for violence against Jews.

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89 Ahlam Abuawad, resident of Lebanon Ward 2, spoke in support of the resolution and, as a
90 Palestinian-American, about her family's experiences.

91
92 Graham Edwards, resident of Lebanon Ward 2, spoke in support of the resolution, expressing
93 concern as a taxpayer about complicity in the ongoing violence.

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95 Corey Siegel, resident of Hanover, spoke against the resolution, arguing that while it will not
96 stop the fighting, it will cause divisiveness in the community.

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98 Rachael Kent, resident of Lebanon Ward 3 and co-author of the resolution, spoke in support of
99 the resolution, saying that the resolution asserts human rights for all, but admitting the possibility
100 that the wording may need changes.

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102 Jenna Spero, resident of Lebanon Ward 1, spoke against the resolution, saying that it makes Jews
103 feel singled-out and unsafe, and that it is difficult to be Jewish in Lebanon, citing among other
104 things a scarcity of kosher foods.

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106 Aleks Austin, resident of Lebanon Ward 2, spoke in support of the resolution, citing the scale of
107 the violence and the need to support the involved communities.

108
109 Monica Nachemja-Bunton, resident of Hanover, spoke in support of the resolution and of the
110 danger inherent in claiming any criticism of Israel is antisemitic.

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112 Daisy Goodman, who works in Lebanon at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, spoke in
113 support of the resolution, expressing her feeling as a Jewish person that the continuation of the
114 conflict makes Jews less safe, and that calling for an end to it is not antisemitic.

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116 Lucie Thalia Rathgeb, resident of Norwich and soon-to-be resident of Lebanon, spoke in support
117 of the resolution, and reiterated previous commenters' concerns about complicity in violence.
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Seeing no more commenters, Richard Ford Burley called the public comment to a close, followed by a five minute recess.

The members of the DEI Commission discussed the resolution and their options in the light of the public comments, in particular Councilor Devin Wilkie pointed out the ways in which the intentions behind the resolution may not line up with the way it was perceived in the community. The members of the Commission agreed that while they should recommend the City Council pass something regarding the conflict and/or its effect on the people of Lebanon, the present resolution was not something they could recommend adopting.

A MOTION by Richard Ford Burley that the DEI Commission not recommend the passing of the resolution as it currently stands.

****The Motion is approved unanimously by roll-call vote.***

Members of the DEI Commission agreed to craft a resolution that it can recommend. Richard Ford Burley agreed to work with others to create a draft for inclusion in the next DEI Commission meeting agenda packet, for workshopping and discussion at the next meeting of the DEI Commission.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Secretary Richard Ford Burley, acting as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 8:22pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Ford Burley, DEI Commission Secretary