Meeting called to order at 7:05pm. Chair Pedro Vazquez facilitated the meeting.

- The meeting rules were read.
- Informal check-ins with members followed.
- Minutes of the Feb 25, 2021, meeting were approved.

- **HRC Scribe Hire:** The candidate being conditionally offered the position did not complete the hiring process in time to be confirmed so the item is on hold.

- **PENDING BUSINESS/City Budget Subcommittee:** Adele, Pedro and Stephanie met and reviewed the prior year budget in order to get members familiar with the format. The plan previously determined is to have the four public/non-staff members of the subcommittee (Pedro, Adele, Erick and Jill) each take departmental sections of the City budget to review and report on to the full commission to then develop a response to the Council. Adele selected Library, Parks Rec and Waterfront, and Planning (which as a department includes Codes and Economic Development). Pedro selected Social Services, and Public Safety (Police, Fire and Dispatch/Telecommunicators). The question was raised but not answered as to who would present the findings to the Council.

- **PENDING BUSINESS/Communications Subcommittee:** A recap of the March 8 meeting that Adele, Margaret, Ravi, Stephanie and Pedro attended (a report of the meeting in the form of a draft strategy from Adele is pending) as to target audiences, key methods of communicating and developing key messaging was provided by all attendees. Pending work on the HRC Vision statement, which will be needed to develop the communications strategy, is to be undertaken by the whole commission. The Google Drive has materials members have provided on the vision archived there to consider and refer to. A reminder that Pedro may utilize software from a website that provides graphics and imagery based on key words from archived documents that may be useful in regards to developing a logo or Vision statement. Professional assistance on website development will be sought using current year funding; Ravi has a lead. Key channels that the subcommittee will pursue initially are a website and print media, as social media platforms require continual oversight and as the City policy is being revised to
address City committees’ use of social media but is not ready yet. The need for opportunities to connect with youth was noted, likely via social media, by Jade Rose. JadeRose offered to assist with the subcommittee.

- **PENDING BUSINESS/Black Student Union (BSU) Support Update:** Pedro noted School Board responses received by him to the HRC letter regarding this issue that he sent were encouraging. JadeRose noted she was connecting with the BSU regarding HRC activities.

- **PENDING BUSINESS/South Portland High School Concern Raised by Member of the Public Rani McLeod:** A lengthy discussion was held about the issue raised at the prior meeting during Public Comment by Ms McLeod in regards to her child’s teacher who reportedly used the “n word” in the classroom and apparently was then not disciplined by the school administration.

JadeRose expressed frustration, and at one point used an expletive, at the school administration’s apparent lack of holding at least this teacher accountable for this or such incidents, as well as lack of taking preventative measures. Margaret noted that Portland Public Schools had 60 students report incidents and this was nothing new and similar to South Portland schools. She noted members of the School Board were “f-ing racists” so this was not a surprise. Pedro noted this is difficult work, often done in isolation and leads to self-doubt. Ravi noted he has sent a letter to the Sentry about his concern about a Zero Tolerance Policy that is not upheld and addressing this starts with the School Board.

Pedro noted he had attended a recent School Board meeting, raising the issue of lack of transparency (possibly in regards to the Superintendent hiring) of the Board, along with 70 other members of the public and how the School Board seemed surprised by the response. Jodi noted she was speaking for the School Department and that they were glad to have many voices at the Board meeting. She noted “this work is forefront” to her as Assistant Superintendent and to the Superintendent. She added that in terms of holding staff accountable, there are hundreds of employee and there is work to be done. Student do not see it yet. The schools have hired a multicultural coordinator. The administration meets monthly with other administrators statewide to address how to make an impact so students see it. She noted the Superintendent Search is a confidential process. She added that equity and inclusion as a focus in addition to educational leadership are key aspects of the process. She also noted with school disciplinary processes, there are privacy concerns that mean students may not know the outcomes of incidents.

Pedro questioned who assembled the Superintendent search committee and why only certain people were allowed to participate. He noted he was selected as an alternate and as such was not allowed to speak during training, while a white male teacher used the n word in a classroom but was not stopped. Jodi noted the Maine School
Management Association oversees searches such as this; the School Board is committed to an inclusive process and is following MSMA process. Margaret then suggested the HRC sponsor an open forum for parents regarding racism in the classroom. Others agreed. Members thanked each other for sharing frankly and for their work. Jill noted running for office is one avenue to address concerns.

- **PENDING BUSINESS/Community Read – Ron’s Big Mission**: Pedro noted 72 books have been received. The purchase through the South Portland Public Library allowed the purchase of more books for less than cost than the original 40 planned. The story is about a black child who later became an astronaut and how as a child he overcame a policy not allowing black children to take books out of his public library. Adele noted that having a note/sticker in the books that these are a gift from the HRC would be a good opportunity to bring HRC awareness to the community. Margaret noted there is a nonprofit she is aware of that does similar services that might partner with HRC on this or on an “I’m Your Neighbor” campaign for World Refugee Day (noted as an item for future agenda). Pedro volunteered to have a stamp made for the books so this could happen sooner.

- **PUBLIC COMMENT**: John Haley of 268 Vine St, a teacher, thanked the HRC for their work and suggested the HRC logo be a project for students.

- **NEW BUSINESS**: The HRC website was mentioned. Adele noted the necessary work on the Vision and mission work needed to develop the website. Pedro reminded HRC members about the materials related to the Vision on the Google Drive as well as the info graphics website he intends to use.

   Pedro noted the Walking Tour idea regarding the history of indigenous lands we occupy that Milan had alerted the HRC about. Some discussion followed about how to go about this, including about how to do this in a manner that was sensitive to the issue of learning from the people whose lands had been taken. All expressed support.

   JadeRose noted her work on a Youth Justice Campaign regarding the $18 million in state funds used annually at the Long Creek Correctional Facility (with a population held there at very few youth) and having the HRC support this in the future. This was noted as a topic for the next meeting.

   No final reflections followed.

   Jill moved and Ravi seconded to close the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:12pm.**

**NEXT MEETING**: 3/25, 7pm, via Zoom