

**TOWN OF WENHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

Wenham Human Rights Committee

Purpose. There shall hereby be established an advisory committee to the Board of Selectmen to be known as the Wenham Human Rights Committee, hereinafter referred to as the “Committee.” The purpose of creating the Committee is to affirm that the Town of Wenham is an inclusive community that has, as one of its core values, the freedom from discrimination, disrespect, bigotry, other forms of microaggressions, macroaggressions, hatred and oppression, and to reaffirm the Town’s commitment to upholding and defending the rights of all individuals to enjoy the free and equal exercise of their rights and privileges, as secured by the Constitutions of the United States and Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

To that end, the Committee strives to ensure that all persons enjoy the equal opportunity to participate in local affairs, including with respect to housing, employment, education, public accommodation, access to Town services, insurance, credit, banking and health care, regardless of race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, disability, marital or familial status, military or veteran status, socioeconomic status, and/or ex-offender status.

Composition. The Town Administrator shall serve as an ex officio member of the Committee. The Committee shall consist of seven (7) voting members:

1. The Chief of Police or a Wenham Police Officer designated by the Chief of Police;
2. Six At-Large Community Members

The Board of Selectmen shall appoint six (6) at-large members who shall be Town residents. Appointments of the Town residents shall be representative of the demographics of the Town, including without limitation, representative of race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, disability, marital or family status, military or veteran status, socioeconomic status, and/or ex-offender status. Optimally, members should have experience or expertise on human rights matters. Appointment to the Committee, however, remains within the sole discretion of the Board of Selectmen.

The Committee may appoint a non-voting under age 18 Wenham student to join the Committee for the duration of the current school year calendar.

Term. The six (6) members who are residents of the Town shall be appointed initially as follows, and thereafter for terms of three years: two members until 30 June 2021; two members until 30 June 2022, and two members until 30 June 2023. Any at-large member may be removed with or without cause by the Board of Selectmen. Any vacancy that occurs other than by the expiration of a term shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term. The members of the Committee shall serve without compensation.

Duties. The Committee shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Board of Selectmen, and shall have the following charge and responsibilities:

1. Recommend programs and initiatives to promote diversity, inclusion, awareness and anti-discrimination in the Town;
2. Promote an understanding of the diverse cultures within the Town and surrounding areas by working with non-governmental human rights organizations such as the Hamilton-Wenham Human Rights Coalition through education, organization of community events, conferences, public speaking programs, educational panels, celebrations and other community actions;
3. Serve as a resource to the Board of Selectmen with respect to issues that challenge any individual or group's enjoyment of their basic human rights in the Town;
4. Annually, and more often as may be requested, provide a written report to the Board of Selectmen on the Committee's activities
5. As often as is desired by the Committee or requested by the Board of Selectmen, prepare written or oral reports on racial, religious, ethnic, gender, disability, age, and civic initiatives or relationships, including on police relations, to cultivate and encourage an atmosphere of mutual understanding and harmonious intergroup relationships in the Town;
6. Recommend resolutions or policy statements for adoption by the Board of Selectmen, or for the Board of Selectmen to recommend for adoption by other departments, boards, and committees within the Town;
7. Collaborate with the Town of Hamilton's Human Rights Commission, or other local human rights committees or groups, to share resources, conduct joint meetings, and make joint recommendations as appropriate on issues concerning the communities in the region;
8. Encourage citizen attendance at panels, meetings, conferences, celebrations or other educational or community events held by municipal or regional human rights committees, private or public corporations, organizations, high schools, or universities.
9. Serve as a portal for residents or visitors to make a report about concerns, complaints or questions of real or perceived discrimination or unequal treatment of individuals within the Town of Wenham, so that victims and witnesses can feel safe and town officials can investigate such reports, concerns, complaints or questions.

10. While the Committee may report and render recommendations on certain issues involving the Town, the Committee does not have the authority to formally investigate complaints, the power to subpoena witnesses or take sworn testimony, or the power to adjudicate or mediate the resolution of disputes between individuals or entities.

Procedures. The Committee shall annually select from amongst its members a chair, vice-chair, and clerk, and may decide whether to select from amongst its members a liaison to the Town of Hamilton's Human Rights Commission, if any. The clerk shall be responsible for the preparation of meeting minutes, agendas, and other administrative matters for the Committee. The Committee shall decide on a preliminary calendar of meetings for the year, supplemented as desired by meetings with the Hamilton Human Rights Commission, all of which shall be posted in accordance with the Open Meeting Law.

A majority of members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum, and a majority of those present and voting shall be sufficient for any action taken by the Committee, unless otherwise required by law. The Committee shall be subject to and governed by the requirements of the Open Meeting and Public Records Laws.

This policy may from time to time, be amended by a vote of the Board of Selectmen.

This policy was adopted on November 17, 2020, by a vote of the Board of Selectmen.

(Certified by the Town Clerk)

Signed,

Gary Cheeseman, Chair

Jack Wilhelm, 1st Vice-Chair

John Clemenzi, 2nd Vice-Chair