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Minutes of July 7, 2021, Meeting of Commission on Holocaust and Genocide Education

I. Attendance

Name	Contact Information	Present	Absent
Senator Jay Kahn, Chair	Kahnjay03@gmail.com 603-352-2903 603-271-3077/work	x	
Brian Balke	Brian.balke@sau19.org 603-497-4818		X
Dina Michael Chaitowitz, Esq.	dmichaelchaitowitz@gmail.com 603-235-0258/cell	X	
Evan Roy Czyzowski	evanczNH@gmail.com 603-502-3233	x	
Marna Ducharme	mducharme@londonderry.org 603-540-0043		X
Representative Arthur Ellison	Highland242@gmail.com 603-224-7425	X	
Dr. Yves Pacifique Gakunde	ygakunde@ci.keene.nh.us 603-357-9800		X
Ashley Harbel	aeharbel@gmail.com 860-908-9995	X	
Reverend Zachary Harmon	vicarstchristophers@gmail.com 603-329-4674		X
Bishop Peter Libasci	lleduc@rcbm.org 603-663-0129		X
Kathy Preston, Vice-Chair	katispeaks@gmail.com jennabisbee@comcast.net (assistant)	X	
Rabbi Jon Spira-Savett	rabbijon@tbanashua.org 603-809-9736		X
Robert Trestan	rtrestan@adl.org 617-406-6360		X
Dr. James Waller	jwaller@keene.edu 603-358-2011		X
Tom White	twhite@keene.edu 603-358-2746	X	
Representative Dan Wolf	dan@hodan.com 603-763-5176 603-526-6997/work	X	

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II. Motions

Motion	Failed	Passed	Abstain
1. Motion to accept minutes from June 2021 Meeting		X	

A quorum of Commission members was present at the meeting, and we convened at 1:16 p.m. Dr. Gakunde and Rabbi Spira-Savett listened electronically.

- I. June minutes accepted.** Mr. White moved to accept the minutes of the June 2021 meeting; Ashley Harbel seconded. The minutes were accepted. There was one abstention.

II. Proposed Standards.

The State Board of Education's meeting is on July 8. Ms. Harbel is registered for the meeting. Folks have to register for the meeting if they want to attend: Here is the link to register for the meeting: <https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/state-board-of-education/state-board-meetings-and-minutes/2021-state-board-meetings>. You will get a confirmation from Angela Adams.

Evan Czyzowski reviewed what he understood to be the Board's concerns at its last meeting: (1) the age-appropriateness of Holocaust and genocide education (and how comprehensive the education would be at younger ages); and (2) the location of the course of study. One State Board member expressed concern that if the studies are placed in literature classes, the result might be simply a reading of a book. Please see the minutes of the June 2021 Commission meeting for a further discussion of this State Board meeting.

Senator Kahn reported that the Board (1) considered the issues it discussed at its prior meeting and took a stab at redrafting the standards we had sent to it; (2) will discuss its new draft at the July meeting, and (3) will perhaps vote at its August meeting (probably mid-August).

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The draft we sent to the Board is attached as Appendix A; the Board's redraft, dated April 8, 2021, is attached as Appendix B.

1. Definition of genocide.

We discussed the significance of the Board's new provision 306.49(a)(1)(b). Does this new provision, by linking the definition of genocide to genocides identified by lawfully constituted courts, preclude teaching about genocides not identified by lawfully constituted courts, for example, the genocide of Native Americans, and the Myanmar and Uyghur genocides? Tom White expressed concern that the Holocaust would not fit within the definition set out in (a)(1)(b).

We concluded that because 306.49(a)(1)(b) is prefaced in 306.49(1)(a) by the word "including," genocide remains as defined in 193-E:3-a. Nonetheless, we concluded, we should raise our concern at the July 8 State Board hearing.

We propose to ask the State Board whether any events (and, if so, what events) were intended to be excluded by 306.49(a)(1)(b), and explain the basis for our concern.

2. Grade issues.

We discussed the changes to the grade(s) by which the education must be implemented. Our draft provided that education must start "not later than 6th grade." The Board's April 2021 draft refers variously to "not earlier than 6th grade and continuing through grade 8," "not earlier than 6th grade and continuing through grade 12," and, in section 306.49(a), "not later than grade 9."

Accepting the change from "not later than" to "not earlier than," we nonetheless think the language should be "not earlier than 6th grade and continuing to grade 12," and that the language should be consistent throughout the standard to avoid confusion.

3. "Across the curriculum as appropriate."

The State Board scratched the term "and across the curriculum as appropriate." Evan Czyzowski expressed concern that this deletion precludes teaching Holocaust and genocide studies in other subject areas, and, if so, believes this is problematic. The teachers in the group noted that good and meaningful

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Holocaust and genocide education can happen partly in courses outside of English and Social Studies, for example, in theatre arts or science. We concluded that we should ask the State Board what its concern is, and also share our concern that by omitting this language, schools may be prohibited from teaching the topic partially in other courses.

We decided to raise these three questions and explain the reasons for our position if the State Board indicates that it intended to change our intention.

III. New Legislation

We spoke about the “Right to Freedom From Discrimination in Public Workplaces and Education” act recently enacted with the budget. See legislation on pages 145-149 at

http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/LBA/Budget/operating_budgets/2022-2023/C_of_C/HB_2-2021-2040CofC.pdf,

The educators in our group shared that there has been much concern expressed by the educational community at large that this statute will interfere with teaching about important topics like the origins of genocide, slavery, and racism in America, and the treatment of Native Americans.

In light of our concerns of how this new legislation could interfere with classroom instruction, we are going to keep a close eye on the guidance that the Department of Education provides to educators.

IV. Miscellaneous

1. One Commission member noted that there were 4 antisemitic incidents at a local school in the last few weeks of school, as well other hate incidents.
2. Tom White will be talking about the Holocaust and Genocide Education Act to the Mayor’s Committee on Human Rights in Laconia on July 21st. Please email him at twhite@keene.edu if you wish to attend.
3. **Our next meeting will be on August 6th, in person, at 1:00 pm.** Stay tuned for more information on the location.
4. At 3:50 pm, Mr. White moved to adjourn; Kati Preston seconded; motion accepted unanimously.