

**Town of Hamden  
Human Rights and Relations Commission  
Minutes of a Regular Meeting  
Thursday, March 11<sup>th</sup> 2021  
7:00 pm**

**\*To view the recording, please click the following link and observe the instructions when/if prompted:**

**[https://zoom.us/rec/share/7MztCD2bOg76ib\\_7y5slReh9oLsdDMnFY3btiLmlCitKX-PfKAfE-RP-Hrh1OxeN.d1rlNohw\\_b-H\\_LRd?startTime=1615506306000](https://zoom.us/rec/share/7MztCD2bOg76ib_7y5slReh9oLsdDMnFY3btiLmlCitKX-PfKAfE-RP-Hrh1OxeN.d1rlNohw_b-H_LRd?startTime=1615506306000)**

**\*\*If prompted for a password, enter: (G84GN6^y)**

**\*\*\*If you are reviewing a print copy of these minutes and wish to view the meeting recording, please visit the Agenda Center at [www.hamden.com/AgendaCenter](http://www.hamden.com/AgendaCenter). Then, review the recording by downloading the digital version of these minutes and following the instructions above\*\*\***

### **Minutes**

- 1. Call to Order:** Chairman Cardwell called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. A quorum was not met, so an informal discussion took place until 7: 18pm.

Informal Discussion:

There was a brief discussion regarding the extension of MLK activities in Hamden, potentially a weekend full of events. Chairman Cardwell updated commissioners that a QU student had reached out last month, inquiring about how the commission and the town has supported the Black community. Ms. Walker commented that the town has slowly increased support- specifically Mayor Leng's support of the Black History Committee. She believes major areas of improvement include fundraising, special events, and support for MLK month and Black History Month. Overall, Ms. Walker acknowledged that while the atmosphere in Hamden has improved, there is still work to be done.

Mr. Bowens thought the QU student should know that Hamden is one of the few towns in CT that declares racism as a public health crisis.

Rabbi Brockman shared that October is his synagogue's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther King's visit. The synagogue is hoping to celebrate this anniversary in person, but Covid is causing logistical issues.

- 2. Attendance**

- a. In Attendance:** Sean Cardwell, Chairman; Rabbi Herbert Brockman; Martha Walker; Tracy Bowens; Judith Goldberg
- b. Also In Attendance:** Glenn Mitoma and Professor Brian Stiltner of CT Human Rights Partnership; Jay Tulin, Chairman of Farmington HRC; Liana Paglia, Commission Clerk
- c. Absent:** Wanda Harris; Weruche George; Michael Thompson; Ganiyu Mimiko

- 3. Approval of Past Minutes**

- a. Once a quorum was met, Chairman Cardwell requested a motion to approve the minutes from the February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021 regular meeting. Rabbi Brockman made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Bowens. All were in favor.

**4. Correspondence – N/A**

**5. Guest Speakers:** Mr. Glenn Mitoma and Professor Brian Stiltner of CT Human Rights Partnership

(Please note that the terms “town” and “commission” are used interchangeably when referring to the Human Rights Commissions in other towns.)

- a. Both Mr. Mitoma and Mr. Stiltner were invited to offer logistical advice regarding the upcoming forum. Mr. Stiltner gave a brief overview of his background. He is a philosophy professor at Sacred Heart University. He helped found the CHRP in 2016, which established a board of directors in 2018. The organization is entirely volunteer based, including funding efforts. The mission of the CHRP is to promote a culture of human rights in CT. They do play a hand in organizing primarily educational events.

(At 7:18pm Ms. Goldberg arrived, and a quorum was met.)

Mr Mitoma arrived at 7:21 pm. He is a faculty member at UCONN. He is the director of Dodd Human Rights outreach- the goal of which is to build a culture of human rights around campus and in the world. He recently became the chairman of the Mansfield Human Rights Commission. He is eager to continue making these connections and fostering an ongoing relationship with other HRC.

Chairman Cardwell explained that the goal of the CT Human Rights Forum is to join forces with the HRC in other towns. About 10 towns have been contacted, and the reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. Chairman Cardwell asked both Mr. Mitoma and Mr. Stiltner for advice in organizing and structuring the meetings.

Mr. Stiltner suggested having each town report pressing issues/topics prior to an initial meeting. This feedback can be used to form break out rooms- each one focusing on a key topic. He cautioned that once a group contains about eight people or more, it can be chaotic to organize.

Mr. Bowens suggested each town briefly introduce themselves, explain their role, and share success stories. Rabbi Brockman emphasized the importance of knowing the authority each commission has, specifically through any ordinances. He believes it is crucial to know what the commission’s role is when presented with serious issues/complaints, such as a lack of minority teachers in a school. Chairman Cardwell commented that ordinance information could probably be easily compiled, simply by asking each town’s commission. Rabbi Brockman noted that he has already asked three towns about their ordinances. Chairman Cardwell offered to ask the remaining towns for their ordinance information. Mr. Stiltner agreed that this would be useful information for the forum. Ms. Goldberg suggested organizing forum topics for discussion based on these ordinances. She views the forum as an opportunity to network.

Mr. Tulin submitted a question regarding the forum being held in person or via Zoom. There were several comments confirming that the forum will strictly be held via Zoom, due to Covid restrictions and the relative ease from holding a virtual event.

Chairman Cardwell suggested the following break out room discussion topics: food inequalities, housing inequalities, systemic racism, and immigration laws. Mr. Stiltner questioned if this initial meeting would take place over one day or a weekend. Chairman Cardwell hopes to hold this meeting throughout one day. Mr. Mitoma cautioned that the “Zoom threshold” is typically 90 minutes. He suggested the initial meeting serve strictly as a meet and greet for the different commission members. He proposed the idea of holding workshops over several weeks- each town could rotate hosting a workshop on a key topic. He also confirmed that his HRC in Mansfield is on board with attending and organizing the forum.

There was a brief discussion regarding the networking aspect of the forum. The initial meeting has the benefit of outlining potential future topics of discussion. Mr. Stiltner suggested holding the initial meeting earlier than the proposed June. Chairman Cardwell is on board with this. Mr. Bowens suggested creating a working committee, so decisions can be freely made, and not strictly at the monthly commission meetings.

Ms. Goldberg offered to outline some of the logistics required for the initial meeting. Mr. Stiltner did caution against “over planning” the initial meetings. He noted that it can be difficult to estimate time for a meet and greet with 12 towns- 90 minutes may not be enough time. Mr. Stiltner suggested having each town send a brief prior to the meeting, in an effort to reduce time spent on introductions. Mr. Bowens noted that each break out room should have one or two moderators to keep the discussion on task.

Mr. Stiltner questioned if the Hamden commissioners were planning on participating as equal members. Chairman Cardwell confirmed that Hamden members will be participating freely. Mr. Stiltner then suggested securing volunteers to moderate.

Mr. Tulin submitted a comment about Middletown’s commission requiring something in writing before agreeing to participate in the forum.

Mr. Mitoma and Mr. Stiltner left the meeting at 8:02 pm.

## **6. Old Business**

### **a. Covid-19: Update on Vaccines**

- i. Vaccines are currently available for anyone 45+ years old.

### **b. Mask Donations**

- i. Chairman Cardwell reached out to Reverend Bob at Grace and St. Peters’ Church, but have not received a response yet. They will receive the remaining few hundred masks. As they have added a new night for their Dinner for a \$1 program, they certainly have a need for more masks.

### **c. Monthly Movie Series: Discuss April showing**

- i. Ms. George will discuss at the next meeting on 3/8/21.

**d. Connecticut Human Rights Commission Forum:** Update (see above)

**7. New Business**

**a. Commissioner Goldberg Presentation:** Strategic Partnerships

**i.** Ms. Goldberg created a strategy chart, which will be shared with commissioners, so it can be routinely updated. She discussed awareness- namely how the commission needs to be present on multiple social media platforms, but also at different community events, to reach different audiences. She emphasized a need to focus on legislation and educating residents on topics such as contacting legislators, and testifying virtually. Ultimately, Ms. Goldberg believes that the goal is for the commission to align itself with other like-minded organizations in an effort to uphold their mission.

**b. Guest Speaker:** April Selection

**i.** Chairman Cardwell suggested inviting Ms. Julie Smith and Mr. Adam Sendroff as guest speakers. He noted that it would be useful to hear how they view the role of the HRRC and how they can support the commission moving forward.

**c. Community Assistance (see above)**

**8. Thoughts and Ideas**

**9. Executive Session (If Required) – N/A**

**10. Adjournment:** At 8:15 pm, Chairman Cardwell requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bowens made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Rabbi Brockman. All were in favor.

**Submitted by: Liana Paglia, Commission Clerk**