

HUMAN RIGHTS & RELATIONS COMMISSION

MINUTES: The Human Rights and Relations Commission held a regular meeting on Thursday, June 11, 2020 via Zoom telecommunication technology. The following was discussed.

Members in Attendance: Sean Cardwell, Chair; Michelle Forte; Mike Thompson; Rabbi Herb Brockman; Tracey Bowens; Martha Walker; Weruche George; Ganiyu Mimiko

Also In Attendance: Rebecca Cannon-Klemenz; Shawn Burns; Natalie Barletta, Commission Clerk

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order on 7:04 p.m.

2. Approval of regular meeting minutes of December 12, 2019 and January 9, 2020

Mr. Bowens moved to approve the minutes from the January 9, 2020 meeting. Rabbi Brockman seconded, and the vote was unanimous favor. The minutes from the January 9, 2020 meeting were approved.

Chairman Cardwell pointed out two changes, which were to change Mrs. Harris to Walker on the second and third pages on the May minutes. Ms. George moved to approve the minutes as amended. It was seconded by Rabbi Brockman, and unanimous in favor. The minutes from the May meeting were approved.

3. Old Business:

1. Hamden Protest Rally Review

Chairman Cardwell said that the protests represented the Town very well, and the marches went without issue, and that the protest went down Dixwell Avenue, to the Wilbur Cross Parkway. Mr. Bowens added that it went really well, and while it was uncomfortable with heat and mask, it was incredible and served its purpose.

Chairman Cardwell suggested having the kids doing a meeting with them in October, and may be the next Zoom meeting in September. Mr. Bowens agreed. Mr. Cardwell asked Ms. Forte to reach out to the high school principal to set that up with the Hamden High School Humans Relations Club.

2. Teaching Tolerance movie

Ms. Forte said streaming is more complicated, and needs to be password protected. She added that there is no problem digitizing it as long as you have some sort of structured learning environment. Mr. Cardwell asked what her thoughts were of doing one in the summer months. Ms. Forte said that it would be good to do remotely.

3. Bylaws

Rabbi Brockman said that he did a comparison to West Hartford's Human Rights and Relations Commission's bylaws. Rabbi Brockman added that a conversation with the Town Attorney would be needed. The current bylaws are 19 years old. Rabbi Brockman went through what improvements he thought needed to be made.

Rabbi Brockman added that he was happy that the mayor and police were at the protests, because it took responsibility, which speaks well with the work that they do. Rabbi Brockman added that investigative work is what the Commission does, and the Commission has residents that come here and make comments. Rabbi Brockman added that it is important to letting the community know that there is a commission out there, which interacts with state or local groups.

Chairman Cardwell added on by saying the limitations of the commissions, and asked what needed to be changed. Rabbi Brockman said to compare what other organizations are doing. Chairman Cardwell suggested to take the summer recess to do so.

Mr. Bowens suggested forming a subcommittee. He, along with Chairman Cardwell, Mr. Mimiko, and Rabbi Brockman volunteered.

Chairman Cardwell threw out a motion to accept of the subcommittee to look into the bylaws. It was seconded by Mr. Bowens and unanimous in favor.

4. New:

1. Mental Health information

Ms. Walker said she had a lot of information for anxiety and PTSD. Ms. Walker said that the Commission needs to take a look at it to see what they need to do. Chairman Cardwell said that he will post it on Facebook. Ms. Walker said that she will put something together and send it out to the Commission for feedback.

2. Thoughts and Ideas

There are none.

5. Guest Presenter - Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

Shawn Burns of the Connecticut Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities, presented the Commission. Mr. Burns said that the mission of the agency is to discrimination through civil and human rights law enforcement and to establish equal opportunity and justice for all persons within the state through advocacy and education. The Waterbury office handles employment discrimination, and public service, which falls under age, disability, race, gender, sexual. They also handle racial discrimination cases.

Mr. Burns said that everyone who resides in the state has a right to file in the state regardless to the compliant. Mr. Burns went through the process of filing a complaint from start to finish.

Ms. Cannon-Klemenz said that it's an extensive, and a very through process. Ms. Cannon-Klemenz said that this is something that is filed by individuals. Ms. Cannon-Klemenz discussed the resources the organizations has available. Ms. Cannon-Klemenz added that they go into schools as well. There was a conversation about educating schools, and having a community presence.

Rabbi Brockman asked about the other commissions and what that relationship is like with them. Rabbi Brockman stated that the Commission is struggling with their mission, and how can they work on promoting the work that they do.

Mr. Burns said that the Norwalk Human Rights and Relations Commission refers them to the CHRO for complaints. Ms. Cannon-Klemenz added that reaching out to other commissions, and reminded the Commission to feel free to refer anyone to use.

There was a discussion about getting together with the Human Rights and Relations Commissions throughout the state. Ms. Cannon-Klemenz said that she doesn't see why they can't see why the Commission can't do that.

There was a discussion of how to make the connection happen during the pandemic, and how to get the information on which towns have a commission.

Chairman Cardwell asked about non-employer related cases. Mr. Burns said that it would depend on what case it was, but anyone can file a complaint and won't get turned away.

Ms. Forte asked about the typical outcome. Ms. Cannon-Klemenz said that there is none, as it's not consistent and there is no trend. Ms. Cannon-Klemenz reminded them that it is always confidential, and it's about whether the parties can walk away with somewhat satisfied.

Mr. Thompson asked about getting general pamphlets. Ms. Cannon-Klemenz said that there are brochures available.

Chairman Cardwell asked about the issues with a minor. Mr. Burns said that a parent, guardian, or a power of attorney can file a complaint for their child.

Ms. Forte asked if CHRO followed up with any complaints or settlements. Mr. Burns said no.

Mr. Bowens asked about the next steps for a crosstown workshop. Mr. Burns said that he will work on getting a list.

Chairman Cardwell thanked them for attending. Chairman Cardwell said that he will post the link for CHRO on the Facebook page. Ms. Walker added that she went through the process, and that it was very long and stressful.

Mr. Bowens said that he would like to see a workshop where commissions can collaborate. Chairman Cardwell said that he agreed, and will find out information on the towns.

6. Executive Session (if required).

There was none.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Bowens made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Mr. Mimiko, and unanimous in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Submitted by: Natalie Barletta, Commission Clerk