

***Town of Hamden Human Rights and Relations Commission
Minutes of the Meeting of
October 8, 2020***

Attendance: Tracey Bowens; Rabbi Herb Brockman; Sean Cardwell, Chair; Ganiyu S. Mimiko; Mike Thompson; and Martha Walker; Absent: Weruche George.

Also in Attendance: Lamond Battle, Chair/Club Counselor (Leader) of the HHS (African American) Black and Hispanic Club; students from the Hamden High School B/H Club: Kevin Sakyi-Sanquah Mensah, Imani Gatison, Ryleigh Drye, Ciarra Collins, Keyana Richards, Pauline Abugi, Maiya Campbell, Nazaria Asbery, and Tatianna Richards.

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Cardwell called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.
2. **Approval of minutes of the meeting of September 10, 2020:** Chairman Cardwell entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the September meeting. Mr. Thompson motioned to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2020 meeting as presented. Mr. Bowens seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
3. **Correspondence:** Nothing presented at this time.
4. **Old Business:**
 - a. *COVID#19* – Rabbi Brockman said he contacted Fire Chief Merwede regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and requested an update on the data and how the pandemic affected our town. Fire Chief Merwede is also director of the emergency management and safety for Hamden, and he provided some numbers and noted the information came from the department of public health. Through the number of emergencies, the fire department can track the number of COVID cases and those areas in the town that carried a higher population of cases. As of April 15, there were 1,075 confirmed cases, and held an average of 1.5% of positive cases in Hamden, which is very good considering several counties that carried a higher percentage.

Through Fire Chief Merwede, Rabbi Brockman said he learned about SYD, a committee that is a think-tank, is looking to enhance community engagement. Hamden will be meeting with the program coordinators to receive information regarding the SYD's model. HRRC is interested in learning more about the program and attend the future meeting.
 - b. **Mask Donation** – Mr. Cardwell said there are only 75 masks available and anyone who knows of a group in the town who needs the masks, to please contact him.

- c. Teaching Tolerance – Mr. Cardwell noted he is looking for the link to include on the HRRC’s webpage. He would like to add to the HRRC’s webpage a link that will connect our audience regarding the importance of voting. He will look for the short film that we should have on file about the “Bridge to Selma.”
- d. Future Guest Speakers – We would like to schedule guest speakers to attend future meetings. A recommendation is to invite the community leader of the food pantry and Ms. Walker recommended inviting the leader of the organization who leads the “buy-back guns” program. A student present recommended her relative who is a professor at Yale College and she is an advocate for black citizens.
- e. Mental Health and Wellness – Ms. Walker has reached out to a few directors at the town regarding posting flyers and handouts. The information is to provide residents in our town support for mental health and wellness services. With the pandemic and restrictions, several residents are struggling. She will continue to reach out to a number of organizations and Julie Smith at the town.
- f. Connecticut Human Rights Commissions – Mr. Cardwell has discovered that there are six towns that hold human rights commissions. The commission agreed to pursue contacting the other towns and hold a joint meeting. The purpose is to compare notes and exchange ideas regarding services. The goal is to hold a meeting March 2021. The commissioners agreed to send out a letter as a group to the towns (Norwalk, West Hartford, New Haven, Hartford, Waterbury, and Milford).
- g. Voting Assistance – Mr. Cardwell reached out to voter registration at the town hall and has not received a response. They offered their time to the Town Clerk’s office and so far the department has everything under control. To-date, the office has 9,700 absentee mail-in applications issued and thus far received 1,800 voting ballots for voter registration to process.
- h. Charter Commission – Mr. Bowens noted the Charter Commission will be working until June/July 2021. HRRC is an ordinance, and the HRRC should make a request to be moved to its own commission. Mr. Battle provided the email address (crc2021@hamden.com) and to address any request to the commission’s chair, Mr. Frank Dixon. Further review of this subject will be addressed at the next meeting.

5. New Business:

- a. Upcoming Strengthening Police and Community Partnership Program (SPCP) – There will be a meeting and this information can be provided through the town’s police department. Mr. Cardwell encouraged anyone to feel free to attend and join this program. Mr. Bowens noted that the program will be looking for two leaders to represent each district in the town and to work and carryout the program and work on

the upcoming event. Mr. Bowens said he will forward information about the event to everyone via email.

6. Discussion with Hamden High School (African American) Black and Hispanic Student

Union: Mr. Battle thanked the commission for inviting him and the student union to this evening's meeting. He then introduced the students to the commissioners and provided the club's mission and goals. The students in this union offer their time and support to their fellow students, especially during the pandemic and more recently helping the freshmen adjust to the virtual learning while there is a lack of interaction with the teachers and cohorts. They also work to get their name out there in the community, gaining public awareness about their club, and they offer support to the community organizations, i.e., church groups, food pantry, etc. Another topic that the club has addressed is there is a lack of minorities working for the schools in Hamden. They are puzzled why not many applicants are of diversity or of color holding teaching position. Students look for mentors at the schools who may have some connection or common background to the student(s). A further discussion was held regarding this subject and in the past, the HRRC also inquired about this same subject with the superintendent of schools and was told at times it is due to the timing of the application process. Educators will apply and find other opportunities at school systems in large cities. At the end of the discussion, the commissioners thanked the members of the club for coming this evening (via Zoom) and commended them for being so active and available to the community.

7. Thoughts and Ideas: Nothing to discuss.

8. Executive Session (if required)

9. Adjournment: At 8:21 p.m. Mr. Bowen motioned to adjourn, seconded by Rabbi Brockman. The motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting will be Thursday, November 12, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

Recorded by,

s/Patrice A. LeMoine

Patrice A. LeMoine
Substitute Clerk