

**TOWN OF HAMDEN  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING  
MINUTES  
7:00 PM  
HAMDEN GOVERNMENT CENTER  
THIRD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM  
2750 DIXWELL AVENUE  
HAMDEN**

**COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Sean Cardwell, Chairman  
Herbert Brachman  
Michelle Ford  
Ganiyu Mimiko  
Martha Walker

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Tracey Bowens  
Peggy Craft, Acting Commission Clerk

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Cardwell called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

It was noted in paragraph 4, line 13, last sentence should read *Chairman Cardwell not Chairman Asbury*. It was also noted on the last page it should read *five or six not five of six*. **Commissioner Brachman motioned to approve the Minutes as amended. Commissioner Mimiko seconded the motion that passed unanimously.**

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Chairman Cardwell asked where correspondence mailed to the Commission at Hamden Government Center goes. Acting Clerk Craft will ask the Town Clerk to contact Chairman Cardwell regarding this question.

**UPDATE TO MAYOR CURT BALZANO LENG COMMUNICATION**

Chairman Cardwell spoke to Mayor Leng regarding the Equity and Inclusion Task Force. Mr. Cardwell said he feels that someone from this Commission should be on the Task Force. He doesn't have the names of the Task Force members yet, but will check on the members as the Task Force moves forward.

Commissioner Brachman said the Mayor had texted him asking him to serve, but Mr. Brachman was not sure what the Mayor wanted him to serve on. Mr. Brachman further reported that the Mayor had scheduled a meeting with him on February 12<sup>th</sup>, but failed to attend. Mr. Brachman went to Hamden Government Center on February 12<sup>th</sup>, and learned that Hamden Government Center is closed on February 12<sup>th</sup> in observance of Abraham Lincoln's Birthday. The Mayor texted an apology the next day.

Next, there was a discussion regarding the Task Force Meeting. Mr. Cardwell reported that it was a good meeting and well attended. Mr. Cardwell said many people came up and spoke to him. He added that the dominate words were "system flawed" and "people within the system".

Mr. Brachman said there was an article in the New Haven Independent regarding who was on the Task Force.

A discussion followed regarding the need for Police Department transparency; the need for more teachers of color in the Hamden School System; and neglect in Southern Hamden.

There was a suggestion that the Commission meet with school children. Commissioner Ford spoke with the Principal of Hamden High School. A meeting will be set up when the parties are available.

**CHRO UPDATE**

Mr. Cardwell met with a member of the Waterbury branch at their site on Wednesday at 10:00 AM. Mr. Cardwell would like to have him attend a Commission meeting. He will schedule a meeting on the afternoon of March 4<sup>th</sup>. He will send an e-mail to the Commission members regarding the details of the meeting.

Commissioner Walker said regarding having children be part of our discussions, have we discovered if there is a Human Rights Club at the High School. Ms. Ford said she has reached out to members of the High School Black and Hispanic Union. There was a discussion regarding this topic. It was felt that kids would be open and state their needs. It was noted that there are no teachers of color at the High School. Ms. Walker said the kids should be given a stage and listened to.

**TEACHING TOLERANCE**

The movie will be shown on March 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM in the Thornton Wilder Auditorium. Ms. Ford said there is a need to secure a projector. Snacks will be served. Ms. Ford also said the film is available if anyone wishes to screen it. The movie is 40 minutes long. Mr. Cardwell has created a flyer that he shared with the Commission members.

Mr. Cardwell suggested that the Commissioners think of places where we can reach out to make people aware of this event. Hamden Patch, the Town Website, The New Haven Independent, and physical spaces were suggested. Creating an event on Facebook was also suggested.

Ms. Ford said the content of the film is not overwhelming. She added that there will be a discussion period following the film.

**BY-LAWS**

Mr. Cardwell briefly discussed the West Hartford By-Laws. He contacted the Chairperson, but has not heard back. He added that they only meet four times a year.

Mr. Cardwell said this Commission should be the liaison for complaints. Ms. Walker said this Commission was never allowed to do this in the past. She said we were considered advisory. She added that we need to sit with someone and ask why.

Mr. Brachman read pertinent information from the Resolution regarding this Commission.

There was further discussion regarding this subject. The discussion included the two recent incidents in Hamden. It was noted that this gives rise to the need for having a firewall. Mr. Cardwell said we are the firewall, and having this made public may give us more punch.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Regarding the incident at West Woods School, it was noted that we all know what happened. It was felt that there needs to be a letter sent to BOE Chair Arturo Perez-Cabello. There was a discussion regarding what should be included in the letter.

It was noted that the letter to the Mayor was very good.

It was mentioned that Dr. Parker also discussed other incidents.

There was a discussion regarding the “Colonizing” information on display at Shepard Glen School. It was felt that it was inappropriate. It has been removed. It was added that Shepard Glen is the most diverse student population in Town.

Ms. Walker noted that there is no diversity in the teaching staff in Hamden Schools.

There was a discussion regarding rewriting the school curriculum. There was also a discussion regarding the hiring of teachers and the reasons more teacher of color aren’t hired. There was also a discussion regarding the Teacher Certification in the State. Ms. Walker said student of color need to be informed regarding what certifications are needed so they may obtain them.

Mr. Cardwell mentioned that regarding the West Woods School incident, there were two other teachers on that team when this incident occurred. Mr. Bowen noted that no one is demonizing the teacher. He added that the play was part of an approved curriculum. He added that someone should have said “bad idea”. He also said there is a need for better training.

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There was a discussion regarding better training and how the Commission could help to make this happen. Suggestions included bringing in community members as mentors. It was also suggested that we listen to the kids in the schools, and take what they tell us to help them flourish.

Ms. Walker noted that her granddaughter is the President of the Black and Hispanic Union at the High School.

**EARTH DAY**

There was a discussion regarding the tablecloth. Mr. Cardwell as spoken to Joe. It is necessary to hear about this by the end of the week. Registration for this event closes the first week of March. Discussion regarding this event will continue at the next meeting.

**THOUGHTS AND IDEAS**

Mr. Cardwell said there will be a Democratic Town Committee Primary on March 3, 2020. There was a discussion regarding this subject. It was felt that the Candidates' names should be posted on the Town Website.

Ms. Walker invited the Commissioners to attend the Black History Committee Celebration of Black History that will be held in March. This event will be held in the Legislative Council Chambers. Honorees at this event are: Lamond Little, Lynons Restaurant on State Street, Grace and St. Peter's Church. The Youth Award with be presented to Neil Grassley. There will be a raffle, and four \$1,000 Scholarships will be awarded. Ms. Walker will send information regarding this event to Mr. Cardwell. He will create a flyer.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There was no further business to come before the Commission, and Chairman Cardwell called for a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Brachman motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Walker seconded the motion that passed with a unanimous vote.** Chairman Cardwell adjourned the meeting at 7:56 PM.

Submitted by \_\_\_\_\_  
Peggy Craft, Acting Commission Clerk