

Minutes: A meeting of the Human Rights and Relations Commission was held on Thursday, May 14, 2020 via Zoom telecommunication technology.

Attendance: Sean Cardwell, Chair; Tracey Bowens; Martha Harries; Rabbi Herb Brockman; Michael Thompson; Weruche George; Michelle Forte (arrived at 7:06 p.m.)

1. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order 7:03 p.m. by the Chair.

2. Attendance:

As noted above.

3. Approval of the minutes:

Mr. Cardwell moved, Mr. Bowens seconded, and all were in favor to table the minutes until the next meeting.

4. Chairman's report:

Chairman Cardwell would like to welcome new commission member, Mr. Thompson. Mr. Thompson told the Commission about himself.

Chairman Cardwell said the Commission partnered with the Democratic Town Committee and Hamden Black Caucus and did a fundraiser and food drive for the community. He reported many bags of food were donated and \$5,100 funds raised. Chairman Cardwell said to try to do it again. Ms. Forte agreed. Mr. Bowens said it was prompted by showing the lines of the middle school of people who are picking up food, and it serves a reminder that some of us are fortunate and others are not.

There was a brief discussion of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rabbi Brockman asked what the community is doing. There was a discussion about the larger groups of people affected, and how the community is doing.

Chairman Cardwell asked Rabbi Brockman about an event he has coming up and if he needs any assistant. Rabbi Brockman listed all of his efforts, and then said he needs help with promotion. Chairman Cardwell asked for the information and links to promote them.

5. Old Business

a. Teaching tolerance:

Chairman Cardwell reported that Teaching Tolerance is not going to happen in person and suggested showing it virtually. Ms. Forte agreed. Ms. George suggested using Facebook as an outlet. Chairman Cardwell said that they can do so, and have people do a watch party. Ms. Forte said that it wouldn't be too hard to get permission and streaming online could do so.

Chairman Cardwell reviewed their past teaching tolerance showings. Mr. Thompson said that there is a potential to reach more people through Facebook. Ms. Forte said that there is an opportunity to join us, since people are staying home and looking for things to do. Ms. George asked about engagement and suggested having someone to introduce the movie. Ms. Forte agreed, and added that it would be a good way to make it more personal to us, and that's a good point.

b. CHRO:

Mr. Bowens, Rabbi Brockman, and Chairman Cardwell spoke with Sean Burns of the Waterbury division. Chairman Cardwell said that division is who they go to whenever there is an issue and added that there is a compliant form. Furthermore, Chairman Cardwell added that if the Commission wants to be a liaison, they can. Chairman Cardwell said that the form can be filed anytime 300 days after an event happens, and it takes four weeks for it to resolve.

Ms. Harris said that she went through the process, and said that it's a very long process, and hers lasted about two years. She suggested to have someone come and speak. Chairman Cardwell replied that they were coming to their last meeting, which was cancelled due to the pandemic. Ms. Harris said that as a community meeting so people can understand what the process is. Ms. Harris added it would be something that's good for the community to know about. Mr. Bowens added that it would be good for the Commission to know about.

Chairman Cardwell said that he will invite them both to the next meeting.

c. Bylaws:

Chairman Cardwell said that it came to a standstill due to the pandemic. Chairman explained what they need to do in the bylaws and plans to ask the Town Attorney for a guideline.

6. New Business:

a. COVID-19

See above in Chairman's Report.

Ms. Harris said that she wanted to bring up her concerns of seeing an uprise of child abuse, suicide, and domestic violence. She added that it is important to be proactive. Mr. Bowens said that he thinks that it's a good point and suggested putting stories on that as a resource on the Commission's Facebook page. Rabbi Brockman added that agencies are working on trying to do that and make it accessible.

7. Thoughts and Ideas:

There was a discussion about posting frequently on Facebook, which Ms. Forte, Ms. George and Chairman Cardwell are admins of.

Ms. Harris said that the Hamden Art History Association has awarded scholarships to four college bound students.

Mr. Thompson was wondering if the Diversity Task force and asked about the West Woods incident. Chairman Cardwell said he was on that and it was a one-time meeting. Rabbi Brockman brought up the topics, but also the shooting, which is now on trial. He added that they are waiting for the state police to come up with their findings, but currently the courts aren't meeting.

There was a discussion of a commissioner that has fallen ill.

8. Adjournment

Rabbi Brockman made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bowens seconded. All were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.