

**Town of West Hartford
Human Rights Commission
Mission Statement**

"The West Hartford Human Rights Commission fosters mutual understanding and respect among people, and encourages equality of treatment of all people, regardless of race, color, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, civil union status, gender identity or expression, marital status, familial status, genetic information, age, economic status, lawful source of income, national origin or ancestry, veteran status, or present or past history of physical, mental, intellectual or learning disability including, but not limited to blindness."

DRAFT AGENDA

**Town of West Hartford
Human Rights Commission
WebEx
5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, September 9, 2020**

- **Attendance**
Sarah Raskins
Barry Walters
Adrienne Billings-Smith
Dawn Ennis
Pramod Pradhan
Krishna Adhikari
Rabbi Michael Pincus
- **5:17 PM Introduction by Sarah Raskin: Called meeting to order**
 - **Asked for Minute taker: Adrienne volunteered to take minutes**
*Approval of July 23, 2020 meeting minutes
- **Old Business**
 - **Meet Police Chief Riddick**

DELAYED DISCUSSION OF OLD BUSINESS

- **Town of Compassion calendar and awards**
- **High School Athlete agreement and Student Conduct**
- **Plaques in Town Hall**
- **Setting annual budget and fiscal requests—can we create an annual calendar for this**
- **Hackathon**

Sarah Raskins: Filling vacant positions (Introduction of Esam Boraey and Rabbi Pincus)

- **Park Road Parade scheduled for October 3, 2020**

- Pramod will contact Park Rd. Business Association
- Update Group the week of Sept. 14th to
- Group will decide plans to participate after update
- **New Business**
 - **Discuss this year's celebration of the UDHR in December**
 - Week of December 10th
 - Virtual (Commission agreed on Virtual platform)
 - pre-recorded (unanimous agreement)
 - Contact WHCTV for production help (Barry)
 - Contact West Hartford Town representative for broadcast (Sarah)
 - Keep program under an hour (Dawn)
 - Commission to Meet for reading of Declaration Blue Back Pride Flag Crossing (Adrienne)
 - **New liason to MLK Day event**
 - Adrienne Billings-Smith volunteered to be liaison
 - Sarah providing information ASAP

5:30 PM Meeting With Chief Vernon Riddick

- Chief Riddick: Introduction and Greeting
 - Open & Transparent Dialogue—Contact him for follow-ups via email or phone call
 - Sarah Raskins: Question # 1
- With the newly passed police accountability bill...

Can you tell us some of the protocols that your were able to immediately implement and what is the department's timeline on implementation of other sections that have been added to the bill?

- July 31st implementation: Implicit Bias, crowd management, recruitment of minorities, etc.
- No target date of implementation
- still a working document (timelines and language will change)
- need more guidance from legislation
- What is the current training schedule of officers in cultural humility and implicit bias and bias based profiling practice? (implementation July 31, 2020) Implicit Bias Training on Website.

Question #2

In regards to Section 17 of the Bill (police civilian review board), what is your time line with the town to create the board. I know in past meetings you have said you're reviewing multiple examples from various jurisdictions, so can you explain the possible hybrid plans you have narrowed the make-up of the board to.

- What will the make-up be?
 - Chief Riddick: Civilian Review Board (CRB) already exists
 - Heavy on the Law Enforcement

- Draft in Place: Will be announced (hopefully) at the next Safety Committee Meeting in October
- Reconstruction of CRB
 - Minimum 2 LEOs
- Looking for more of Review Board (non-binding suggestions and ability to question policy, procedures and implementation) vs. (investigative board; requires specific knowledge and resources)
- Chief Riddick, Town Manager and Mayor agree on Review over Investigative Board
- Town Plans to implement it through a Charter Provision

Adrienne Billings-Smith: Question # 3

Related to the goal of transparency and developing a report with data on use of force, performance measures, and other key (**Capt. Perruccio and implementing NexGen and Power BI to generate reports was the August 5th date met?

- Delayed because of storm
- Will be provided in October Safety Committee Meeting
- Chief mentioned LGBTQ police and pursuit policy (and other policies) to be added by end of year (2020)
- Trying to be as transparent as possible without disclosing tactics and other confidential information
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Sarah Raskins: Question # 4

What is the current procedure in the cases of:

- Wellness checks
- Mental health crises
- Domestic violence calls
- Landlord/tenant disputes

Chief: Believes that LEOs should act as a support system, LEOs are not trained to do social work but have become “jack-of-all-trades”.

Adrienne Billings-Smith: Question #5

- Some national leaders have speculated that officers in other cities are responding to the anger directed at them by scaling back their response and commitment to their communities. Could you speak to the potential for that kind of reaction here in WH? What are the steps you would take should that happen?
 - Chief Riddick: Can't deny human nature and deny the potential of this mindset
 - Reminds department daily in Roll Call that there is an Oath to uphold no matter what personal beliefs may be.
 - Further, it is leadership's responsibility to work with the legislature to create a working document that meets the needs and provides the

tools and resources for LEO and to ensure community needs are being met.

Adrienne Billings-Smith: Question # 6

- In regards to hiring, have you thought of more creative avenues to entice women and minorities to join the force? Have you thought about recruiting individuals who are majoring in social work or other mental health programs? Have you had a discussion with the various universities to discuss a dual-major in criminal justice and social that could potentially get them directly hired in the department? Further, you stated that you recognize that you (officers) are acting as mental health surrogates which is not what you are trained to do—therefore what are you going to do when looking at your budget for the next year to two years to make sure you are hiring more individuals who have a social work background?
 - Chief: Opinion the two don't mix
 - College Academy is available: Diverse educational backgrounds who can explore law enforcement
 - Does want a diverse group of individuals serving in PD (leads to better community policing and leadership to tackle societal issues)
- What is being done to strengthen the partnership between the police and social service agencies?
- In the past DCF was a part of that partnership (COVID and Budget interfered)
 - Mobile Crisis also available
 - reiterated knowing your professional lane

Barry Walters: Question # 7

In regards to the national discussion on SROs and armed officers on school campuses—what is your personal and professional take on the conversation?

- Chief: Vital Component of Law Enforcement and Education
 - misconception of responsibilities
 - rigorous interviewing process by PD and Schools
 - SROs here to facilitate community convo not arrest
 - Disagrees with movement to eliminate SROs
 - Disagrees with SRO programs that are used for disciplinary authority
 - Should be a holistic policing philosophy
 - SROs are Law Enforcement Officers and should be seen as such
 - Agrees they should be armed (school shootings)

Sarah Raskins: What proof is there that SROs and other forms of security are beneficial? What are we doing to measure the success?

- Chief: No metrics
- No comment on Security Guards (speak to Board of Education)
- SROs= deterrent to possible dangers in schools
- Intel providers
- Develop relationships with students

Adrienne Billings-Smith: Follow up-question: Black and Brown students dealing with Trauma from armed officers...

- Acknowledged the reality
- asked for stats and information in regards to mental health, learning, armed officers

Sarah Raskins: Suggested Parent/Student/Teacher surveys to measure success and educational experiences

Chief Riddick: Personal response:

- Not trying to paint a broad blanket on law enforcement because of personal experiences of bias and discrimination.
- Empathizes with communities protesting (not all methods)
- Gets his position of walking a fine line (duality)
- Thinks it helps him as a leader and helps his officers humanize the situation

Dawn: Question #8

- I am a journalist who was in Sandy Hook within minutes of the news breaking about the massacre. I'm also a single mom with a high school freshman who, on that horrible day, was a first grader. So I remember very well the fear, the anger, the justified response throughout the nation to put armed officers in schools. I objected then and object now to arming teachers. However, I'm white, and so are my children. It's a fact that we will never, ever be treated the same way my neighbors who are Black and brown are treated by officers, even in our town. How can you possibly assure us that school children who are not white will be treated with the same respect and lack of suspicion as my own?
- Chief: Community conversations, meaningful and intentional leadership when dealing with training on implicit bias or cultural sensitivity
- the difficult conversations have to be had in order to change...

Adrienne: Conard High School Students and Hartford PD incident—asks chief to acknowledge the situation

- Chief: Crossing lines is not the issues
- using a professional service for personal issues = Wrong
- praised the action HPD Chief took
- Police departments must support each other and he is not going to sever his relationship
- acknowledged the situation and pointed out his support and commitment to West Hartford Community

Sarah Raskins: Requests information:

- a. Traffic stops by race
- b. Use of force by race
- c. Weapon drawn by race
- d. Interaction with youth by race and gender
- e. Efficacy data of police in schools
- f. Disciplinary history

g. Release all Policies and Procedures to the Public annually

Chief: Yes will be provided to HRC, publicly and during Public Safety Meeting

Barry Walters:

- Will you be involving other local commissions and leadership, such as the HRC and when starting the process?
- Chief: Will talk to Mayor and Town Manager—doesn't see an issue
 - Preferably only a select few from the Commission.

6:30 PM (Approx) END MEETING WITH CHIEF RIDDICK

Sarah Raskins:

- **Next Meeting currently scheduled for Tuesday, October 6, 2020**
- **Next Meeting: Superintendent Moore, et al.**

Adrienne: Went over tasks for commissioners

Dawn Ennis: Volunteered for Secretary position

Barry Walters: To inform Brian of possible position changes

Dawn Ennis motioned to Adjourn meeting

Barry Walters 2nd Adjournment

- **Meeting Adjourned**

ANY INDIVIDUAL WITH A DISABILITY WHO NEEDS SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN A MEETING OR PUBLIC HEARING SHOULD CONTACT SUZANNE OSLANDER, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES, 860-561-7580 SEVEN DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING OR PUBLIC HEARING.