



## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

### MINUTES FOR MARCH 3, 2021

Dawn Ennis When I watched the Board of Ed last night, I saw they had closed captioning on their meeting, which I would love to have for us.

Sarah Raskin I think on Zoom, you can set it up. I don't see a way to sort of maybe the host can otherwise provides free closed captioning and we could request in advance an automatically closed captioning mode.

Pramod Pradhan I'm going to do some digging around and try to find out if we can do it for the next meeting. That's a great idea. I don't know if it's just here or we can do it to Jennifer from the YouTube. So I'm finding out.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Thank you Pramod. So we have some old business to take care of as far as Town and Compassion Awards, I haven't gotten any updates from Mayor Cantor. I know that Dawn and Sarah mentioned or suggested that we write the old candidates and we as a group need to decide what we're going to do with the old candidates and how we're going to nominate the new candidates if we're going to do that. I don't know if Sarah or Dawn has anything to say toward that or anybody else. Feel free to say your piece of what we should do so I can move forward and we can get the get it going so we can choose people, because April, late April, probably the first week of May, would be the date to do them, so we need to get out that quickly.

Sarah Raskin So my suggestion is that we decide who we're going to recommend to the council for this year. Once we do that, anyone who was previously nominated, not selected by us, I'm happy to draft some draft emails that either say, Thank you very much. You should be honored and unfortunately, blah, blah, blah. Or alternatively, thank you very much and this is a new nomination, except those no longer eligible. And I can draft slightly different emails based on what happened and run them by the commission.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yes. Now, does anybody disagree with that? Now the four topics or areas will be the four pillars of community and there will be community leader, service to others, health hero and education. Do we want to start to think of individuals that we know in those certain? Or do we want to do it here?

Sarah Raskin I think we should put a call out to the community that we know, unless you want to do it based on the nominations that we got last time. So if we want to, I guess that's where...

Adrienne Billings-Smith I would think so.

Sarah Raskin But it's different criteria. It wasn't those four pillars that were different things. So I guess I would suggest unless there's time pressure that we put it out to the community? If there is time pressure that I can share with everybody. The old list.

Adrienne Billings-Smith I don't think there's really time pressure, I think it's really on us to get it out. How long should we give individuals, give the community to do it? Thirty days have it in by April 1<sup>st</sup>?

Michael Pincus What has been the cutoff before?

Sarah Raskin There was only one time it was done before, and I think so that was very different. It was we introduced the concept and then we had probably about 30 days is OK.

Dawn Ennis A month seems right.

Adrienne Billings-Smith OK, so let's get let's get an email out to the individuals who were nominated previously. And can we say, April, what are we on April 3<sup>rd</sup>? So by our next meeting, April, I mean March 3<sup>rd</sup>, by our next meeting, April seven, everything should be and we should have some names in front of us, April 6<sup>th</sup>, and we should have names in front of us that we can review as a commission on April 7<sup>th</sup>? Does that sound good to everyone?

Sarah Raskin It does. Do we want to brainstorm how we're going to disseminate the call?

Adrienne Billings-Smith I was for me, obviously, social media through the town, Put in a call to, You know, we ha dot com, those are the places I go with.

Sarah Raskin, Pramod, can we get it out with the email Renee sends out? Does she still send to everyone who's registered with the town?

Pramod Pradhan Definitely. I mean, we can send it to Renee and also we can send it down to the library. And to me, we have a newsletter that goes out so we can put it out there and social media. I mean, I think as many places as you can you can put it out there.

Sarah Raskin, We did send it to we ha dot com but Ronni didn't run it for whatever reason. But we can send it to them.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Maybe she'll send out Renee's press release them, and then that might be easier. Anybody against that, any have any other ideas? OK. Thank you. So well, as far as Brian not being here, we can't really talk about budget if we, what we want to do.

Sarah Raskin Respectfully do we want to reach out to Brian to find out if he's OK. If he wants to continue?

Dawn Ennis Is there a rule that you have to attend a certain number of meetings to continue as a commissioner?

Sarah Raskin I don't know. And otherwise, you should reach out to Chris to see if he wants to replace him.

Ted Mancini Are there bylaws for this committee? This commission? I don't think there's anything about him having to attend if there are no bylaws. Not to say we can't make them but as of right now...

Adrienne Billings-Smith Actually I have the charter pulled up on my screen...

Sarah Raskin I suggest we start by reaching out to Brian first and make sure he's OK.

Adrienne Billings-Smith think that we should reach out to Brian to ensure that he wants to be in the commission, make sure he's OK, and also if he wants to continue the Treasury post, you know what I mean? Because I'd really like to have something about the budget and trying to get, you know, on the schedule to ensure we're going to run any time to support any thing that we do have some funds. Our last co-chair, Barry Walters, he said that we usually ask town manager and we were given the funds, but sometimes it's nice to be a part of the budget and know that you have the funds. They have to go and ask. You need something. So I will reach out to Brian and see. So, I'm going to skip to the discussion on highlighting events each month, and I'm going to couple that with our social media policy. I think that's fair. So, everyone, did you receive the draft social media policy that Sarah wrote up? And if you did, do you have any other suggestions for and I can read it aloud there, can read it aloud whoever, and we can go right from there, we can kind of check it off to see if everyone wants to adopt it is that might be launching a lot.

Sarah Raskin You want to share it on your screen or maybe we can edit it as we go along. Or I can because I'm happy for any wordsmithing, any suggestions. I just you down on paper, random thoughts that give me one second and I will get it up on my screen.

Aurora Melita I just kind of add whoever has been doing the social media for the commission, they've been doing a great job. And, you know, just from the perspective of following the regular content that's been put up on the page, that I

think aligns perfectly with the mission of the commission. So I just like whoever has been doing, has been doing a really great job with content and getting things back.

Sarah Raskin It's actually been a huge effort. Several of us have been doing it together. If other people would like to participate, we can share that. Adrienne has been doing it. Esam has been doing and I've been doing it.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Here's a link to our agenda in the chat box, and you can go try to try it again.

Dawn Ennis The link works.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Alright!

Michael Pincus So this is Michael Pincus, I just wonder about your children under the age of 18 and whether there should be any type of restrictions or limitations on children.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Can you repeat that again, Michael? I'm sorry.

Michael Pincus I was just wondering whether we should have any guidance in terms of postings on social media about children that have to be limitations or restrictions about what we're going to post pictures, names. That's all I'm asking.

Sarah Raskin Yeah, I think we are not permitted anyway legally to do that. And I think it's great to spell that out that we would never post a photo ID of someone under 18 without express written permission. I think. I think that's an absolute and we should definitely spell it out on.

Ted Mancini So we're going line item by item of what do you think?

Adrienne Billings-Smith unless you have I'm going to I am going to just go line item by line item and then we can we can talk about it and then go. I think that's the best way just to get it done.

Sarah Raskin This is just a quick question. Do we know if the town of West Hartford, the town council, the library out there, has a policy that we should also make sure we're not?

Adrienne Billings-Smith As far as I know, I think this is our social media guidelines or I would feel more of a policy for some people to come. I mean, I'm going to assume that there's always everything has to be is for you. Right? So everything that we had on the. Any type of social media has to be accounted for and we have to. So I think we're just underneath the whatever the bylaws of the town are on their regular, whatever their media may be.

Sarah Raskin I just want to know if they have a policy, there's a policy that already exists that we should know about.

Pramod Pradhan The library has a social media policy. So I can I can send you what we have to have a look at.

Sarah Raskin I think that would be super helpful because there might be things in here that we don't know then that we didn't think that we would like to adopt.

Adrienne Billings-Smith OK, well, let's go over these and continue the conversation. I think because some of them might overlap on the library one, but we can kind of we'll kind of know where everyone wants to go with this. So for number one, we will show respect for everyone. We will never use ethnic, racial or other slurs, personal insults, obscenity or engage in any kind that conduct that would not be acceptable between respectful adults in the workplace or school settings. We will also show proper consideration for others privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable. Any objections to number one?

Ted Mancini What do you mean by what do you mean by show proper consideration for topics that may be considered objectionable? What does that entail?

Dawn Ennis I have the same question.

Sarah Raskin I stole this language from some corporate policy. It was Nike or something like that. And what they were referring to was. You know, inflammatory language, so I think it makes sense to spell that out if we want to, we can just remove that clause.

Ted Mancini Well, my issue with that part is because some things that are objectionable, some don't, what others consider objectionable. Those same people might not. I mean, this is very subjective. So now who makes the decision?

Dawn Ennis I agree Ted. Exactly right.

Sarah Raskin So let's let's scratch it. I will say that I think the intent was not to say this is OK. This isn't. But just say, yeah, if anybody might find objectionable, we shouldn't be positive about it. But let's just scratch it.

Ted Mancini I think that just that part I mean, the other part seems fine.

Adrienne Billings-Smith OK, does anyone else agree or disagree?

Dawn Ennis I agree with Ted.

Ted Mancini There you go. Now you know it's got to be good.

Dawn Ennis Oh, Ted, you made my night.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Please go back if you think about it and you go, no, I think it should be there. Please, you know, whatever. If you come up with something, we will only post accurate and truthful information. If we post something that turns out to be untrue, we will correct it immediately.

Dawn Ennis Same thing that Ted said, how do we determine what's true or not true, who who's the arbiter of truth?

Ted Mancini And that's going to be number four too about reliable sources.

Sarah Raskin I'm a scientist. Please don't tell me there's no such thing as truth. I believe that there is a difference between truthful and untruthful information.

Dawn Ennis I do, too. But there are people in this country who would, you know, stated otherwise. And I just want to respect that. My truth is not someone else's truth.

Sarah Raskin I feel very strongly about that.

Dawn Ennis I just don't know how we decide that.

Sarah Raskin I think truth can be gotten to. We can decide.

Adrienne Billings-Smith I want to speak to that, I agree with Sarah that you want to post the most accurate information that you do have, so you should always be seeking some sort of truth. If someone points out that this is absolutely incorrect, it's not right. And you go, oh, yeah, like every time they tell us someone who who dies the most, who's the karate guy who like those types of things, you want to make sure that you're not posting inaccurate, blatantly inaccurate information. And if it's brought to our attention, we have the responsibility to ensure that we're going to try to correct it. So I agree with Sarah when it comes to that. There are there are opinion pieces, of course, but there's a difference between opinion pieces. If you're if you're saying covid-19 vaccinations are at Elmwood. Right. You know, either that's true or untrue, and I think that's where that is getting at, if, you know, if there's some sort of science related or. Statistics based thing, and it's from a reliable source, yes, we can agree to disagree on what are reliable sources, but let's be adults in the moment.

Dawn Ennis Can I just offer to strike the words truthful and untruthful, untrue and just use the words accurate and inaccurate and leave it at that? Because I think that would be, unless Ted disagrees, I think that would resolve this problem.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Post accurate? that's fine, that's fine by me.

Dawn Ennis And if something turns out to be inaccurate, we will correct immediately and I'm open to anyone else's suggestions. But I just think when we get into the word truth and I'm sorry, Sarah, I don't mean to step on the scientist. I just think that it's a loaded word these days.

Adrienne Billings-Smith All right, anyone else agree or disagree on accurate and accurate?

Ted Mancini Well, let's put it right to a vote, you know, vote on this language, I'm sorry, but I don't change. If that passes, then you're good. And then if it doesn't pass, then vote on this right now where you can just move on.

Adrienne Billings-Smith All right. Do you want to do the language, Sarah?

Sarah Raskin We will only get accurate information of something that turns out to not be accurate. We were corrected immediately. Is that the language on the table Dawn?

Dawn Ennis That's the language I would recommend.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Do I go person by person?

Sarah Raskin Does anybody object?

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yes.

Dawn Ennis You said yes.

Adrienne Billings-Smith I do not, I do not object.

Sarah Raskin I'm slightly horrified by this conversation, but I do not object.

Adrienne Billings-Smith That's fair. I guess.

Ted Mancini I guess we can say it's unanimous.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yes. All right. So, number three, we will respect copyright, right? Can we do that? Number four, we will strive to use only reliable sources. If we find that we have inadvertently used an unreliable resource, we will correct it immediately. Information that may be helpful in determining reliability is here and here.

Sarah Raskin You know, the language we're going to strive to use reliable sources. We may make mistakes. We all get caught up sometimes. But I think it's very important in this day and age that we at least make an extra comment to just say

that that we want to be using reliable sources as much as. The recognition that, you know, it's hard.

Adrienne Billings-Smith I agree. Does anyone object?

Ted Mancini It said strive?

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yes.

Ted Mancini Information that may be helpful in determining reliability so that information is helpful, that that's not a guideline.

Adrienne Billings-Smith No. Those are just suggestions. Yeah.

Sarah Raskin And I'm open to I mean, if somebody wants to come up with guidelines, I think we could go over them.

Adrienne Billings-Smith I mean, so I mean, you have your students accountable. So I think that those great resource to use.

Sarah Raskin Well, just to just to kind of boil it down, basically the sources that I consider to be reliable, we do fact checking and that post corrections. So if a source like The Wall Street Journal or The New York Times routinely says, oops, we made a mistake, here's a correction, then I consider them a reliable source. They will never, ever post-production. Then they get lumped in. They're not reliable source.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Does anyone object to number four?

Ted Mancini As long as those are guidelines then No.

Adrienne Billings-Smith All right, number five, our post will focus on our mission. That is information that promotes equality among people, people or that points out when inequalities exist. And then our mission statement. Does anyone object to that? Number six, our post will focus on West Hartford in the Greater Hartford area, but there are times when national or international issues are of importance for education or information about quality. Anyone object to that?

Ted Mancini I have one objection, as opposed to a focus on West Hartford, greater Hartford, blah blah blah. International issues are important for education or information about shouldn't it be human rights?

Sarah Raskin So that's fine with me.

Adrienne Billings-Smith That's fine with me.

Dawn Ennis No objection, no objection.



Adrienne Billings-Smith Anyone object to that? Number seven, samples of posts we might make.

Sarah Raskin I was just trying to brainstorm in my own mind, like, what do we consider to be something we would post in something we wouldn't? Because it was it's a really great question for us to think about. But we don't have to have these in writing.

Adrienne Billings-Smith OK, and I want to. Who are we all going? When you're a part of human rights commissions, do you want it that everyone can post and have administrative capabilities? Do you want there to be a social media kind of committee or what's going to go through whomever to do so? So everyone's not trying to go on at the same time. What are anyone's recommendations about our social media presence?

Sarah Raskin So we have done this for other groups. And just I think we should have a small subgroup of people that are interested only because what ends up happening is we have to agree to the same post gets posted 20 times to look and see that somebody else just did it. And also you can a little bit, and especially in June, if you and your son are planning to do these things, then I would be comfortable with just the two of you being in your presence. But that's just my opinion, that too many cooks do get in the way of this particular brawl. But maybe we can switch out every year and want to do it.

Adrienne Billings-Smith So do we want to say two individuals will be, you know, nominated and voted on to be our social media subcommittee? Do we want to do that?

Sarah Raskin Wait sorry. I'm going to stop talking, I promise. But I also want to say that we have Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. So if we wanted to split that up or people, we could consider that somebody does Twitter, somebody does Facebook, somebody now shouldn't.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Shouldn't it all be the same thing to get that same thing. Like when you hit send, it's dispersed out there and just disperse. So I don't I only post on Facebook for our Facebook and Instagram if you want to, but you don't have to.

Sarah Raskin And so sometimes it's hard not to get too complicated about this. Like sometimes you can have these jurisperent tailored to an Instagram audience was turned to the younger kids like high school college kids can have your Twitter feed curated to a Twitter audience. Your Facebook group curated to these people can sort of take that on and became good at it. But I think I'm making this way to complicated.

Dawn Ennis I'm just going to say that what Sarah is talking about is really wise in terms of you want to reach the right audience. And if you just put out the same cookie cutter copy paste statement, you're basically wasting your time because, you know, between hashtags and certain ways of reaching your audience, you're going to get a better response if you're catering to that group.

Adrienne Billings-Smith So, we'll go from here and is do we want to nominate? I know that Sarah already said Assad and myself, do we want to start with the co-chairs and then everyone vote on what they would like to go on the social media?

Michael Pincus With a question, do we want to check so that the person, whoever we choose is has a check so that they're not posting, what people don't want them to, maybe two people have to agree on it? And a unanimous vote of the subcommittee has to be in favor of it to post it onto social media or something so you can check another voice to sort of balance out our two perspectives.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Are you saying a third person? Are you saying just an unanimous vote?

Michael Pincus I'm just saying have two people agree to post it rather than having any one person who's supposed to?

Dawn Ennis Just a question, it's a good suggestion, given what happened with the Democrats.

Adrienne Billings-Smith For sure.

Aurora Melita I would advise against that only because in the sense of building social media presence and really connecting with people, you have to do it. And often, in fast pace. And I think I think it may. Not move us forward as a commission on social media, if we have to then have two people agree in order to put something up. I just think it kind of slows down a bit. I do think that if we were to make a subcommittee of a smaller group of people, however that is made up, that have the freedom and the ability to kind of come up with the strategy as a subcommittee, you know, what moves forward for our social media? It's probably the best way to move forward. And I think us as a commission, we should be able to trust each other, you know, for who we assign on this on the subcommittee to have the freedom to make the decisions, you know, for the best interests of the commission moving forward. And I think it is a really vital piece for us to be able to connect with the community, especially with the pandemic. You know, often if we're trying to engage the community, you know, people use the Facebook, a lot. You know, it really becomes a great way to connect with people. So I think it would probably, in my opinion, would be to just give the freedom to be able to post independently within a subcommittee.

Dawn Ennis I'm just going to add that as the manager of a website that has many people who can access the official account, I can't tell you how many times the

people who I trust and love misspell something, call something the wrong thing, or we have to apologize to somebody for something else we did. Everybody needs a copy editor, including me. And while I agree that Aurora's definitely got the right attitude, I always prefer to be right rather than first. And I just would offer caution as an old lady.

Sarah Raskin So I'm actually with Aurora on this one. I think that I think that it's hard enough to keep up with social media. We all have full time jobs. Were volunteers to the to then have to. When I think about my own postings on the human rights page, if I then had to first get it cleared. And then it just feels like an obstacle, but I think Dawn's right in that if we're actually creating a post, we absolutely that needs to be vetted. But if we're sharing that the library has an event tomorrow night, I don't think that needs to be vetted. So that so I'm seeing a distinction between your original post that we create, which we've actually always had the entire commission that. Versus, you know, there's a talk tomorrow night that is on inequality and people should go that I don't think needs to and I think it's time is of the essence. Yes.

Dawn Ennis Yes. Bless you, Sarah, for threading the needle.

Adrienne Billings-Smith So this is what I had just written down. First we need to vote if we want two person or subcommittee or a three person subcommittee or anything that's going to be reposted, events, articles, things of that sort. The freedom to do so. Any post that we create as a unified group dealing with human rights topics then will be vetted by the three have to be in agreement with the two or three individuals on the subcommittee so that it's vetted properly. Is that what I'm hearing?

Sarah Raskin No. So no, if it's an original post. The entire commission should see it.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Oh, yes. Like what we did for. Yes, I guess. Yeah.

Sarah Raskin But can I ask, is anybody else interested in doing something because a particular hankering for Instagram or Twitter or anything like that. Are people comfortable with it. I'm nominating Adrienne and Esam, but I also want to make sure there's open space for anybody who has a strong desire.

Dawn Ennis We should nominate Aurora.

Aurora Melita You know, I'm happy to be supportive, but and, you know, it's something that I'm very familiar with, but I really already enjoy how I've seen the Facebook and the social media come out from the commission. So, you know, I think that what you're putting forward is I'm very happy with it already because I really enjoy the Facebook page. So I wouldn't change it necessarily. But then, you know, it's been mostly, you know, our two chairs running it, then I would be happy to support that. But with that being said, I'm here. If there needs to be any more

support or somebody does want someone to bounce something off of, I'm always here and happy to be available.

Sarah Raskin And the only other thing I would say, Adrienne, is I get a lot of stuff sent to me, people asking me to post it for them because they know that I used to post. So I would suggest that any of us get information from the community that they request to be posted, feel free to forward that to Adrian. And so that so that we all have input and that the community has input through a number of different ways. So I don't have to write back to Joan Twiggs, who sent me something and say, sorry, you have to send that to Adrienne.

Adrienne Billings-Smith That's fine by me. I just want to make sure people are able to feel like they have the freedom to post whatever they feel is important to the Human Rights Commission through. You know. So, yeah, so anything. So here we are, two individuals. Will be the subcommittee. And any creation of a post will have to have be vetted by the entire commission. And then and when it's vetted by the entire commission, what moves us forward majority? To post it?

Ted Mancini Simple majority?

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yeah, is it a simple majority that moves us forward?

Ted Mancini Well, would it be a simple majority? And then would you also need a would you all you would also need a quorum doing that?

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yeah, absolutely. So these are the things that are just kind of going through my brain once we went into recreating this, because I think it is important to create and I think that we do need to have these discussions on how we're going to utilize our social media and get out to the community. So I want to make sure when we're creating a subcommittee that we have everything in order for that subcommittee. So when the next two people step in, they know what they're stepping into and they're not trying to create their own set of parameters. So is that is that what I'm the language I'm hearing that we would like to. Move for a subcommittee, a social media subcommittee. We have two individuals. Does anybody have anyone they would like to be the social media subcommittee,

Ted Mancini So that subcommittee, what would happen is any new postings, created postings would have to go to that subcommittee. Or what does what does that subcommittees, what's their function?

Adrienne Billings-Smith So we would still be doing so, we would still be doing the normal posting that you see on there right now in the subcommittee. But we would be the two people posting. The two individuals who are nominated will be the two people primary posting. Any time we create any type of West Hartford Human Rights Commission posting because of an event that happened or because we're putting something, we're going to we're going to do something within the

community together. We have something to say. Then all of us will come back and we'll have a discussion about what can be posted at that point.

Dawn Ennis We need to move then?

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yeah, I think we need to move then.

Sarah Raskin Let's vote on it first, but I'm asking how do you want us to send you stuff? Do you want a Facebook message from each of us? Do an like if I see a posting that I think you should share, how do I get it to you?

Adrienne Billings-Smith Just send it to me through Facebook? But if you're not on Facebook, then send it to me through the name and I'll post whatever you request and some will do the same. I try to keep up on Facebook if you know me, so I do my best. As far as the Instagram and Twitter account, I'm not as Good at keeping up on that, but, you know, Esam and I, if we're the ones who are nominated, can talk about how to get that done. I I personally think it should be three people, because then that gives us more cover to make sure that we're Hitting all of our social media and we're getting things done. And it also I also like uneven numbers,

Sarah Raskin I was actually saying that, three, and if it's too much to ask for help, you know, sat something. I think that's great. Let's do three.

Adrienne Billings-Smith OK, so now we need to move, Dawn.

Dawn Ennis I move that we accept this proposal for social media and that we take a vote on that, followed by a vote on who should be the committee subcommittee members.

Ted Mancini I second.

Dawn Ennis All those in favor? Is that my job is to say that, now? All those in favor?

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yes.

Dawn Ennis Yay. All those in favor please say aye.

MULTIPLE RESPONSES: Aye.

Dawn Ennis All those opposed? Hearing none, the motion passes. Adrienne do you want to decide how we do this subcommittee thing. Because I don't know what to do.

Adrienne Billings-Smith I think we if we want to, we can. Well, Sarah's nominated. Sarah does a lot of it, you guys. So I nominate Sarah as third person just because she's the senior member of the group. She's been here the longest.

Dawn Ennis I so second.

Adrienne Billings-Smith And so but I have no I don't you know. Yeah. So I always think there should be three people or an even number so that you can make sure you know, you're being held accountable and two of you don't go off and do something on your own because I don't like that.

Dawn Ennis Sarah, would you accept the nomination to be part of the subcommittee?

Sarah Raskin Sure, as long as that's OK with everybody I'm happy to do that.

Adrienne Billings-Smith If you have any anybody else, please. And we can vote it out.

Kristen Sowell I do have a question. With it being three Subcommittee members. So would one member be responsible for each social media like one would be in charge of Instagram. And that's all there are just so we know. Like if we come across something that we think should be shared on Facebook, do we send it to just that one person that's responsible for Facebook or do we send it to all three subcommittee members?

Adrienne Billings-Smith That's a great question, Adrienne Billings-Smith here. I think that that's going to be the stuff I think we can do that the subcommittee can figure that out and then we can allow the other commissioners to know, like this is how we're going to do it, just to see that that's how I see it, you know, because you know what If nobody ever sent you anything for Instagram or, you know, you know, maybe you get kicked out of Twitter, you know, if that's all right.

Dawn Ennis So can we move that? Make the subcommittee for social media Esam, Adrienne and Sarah.

Ted Mancini I'll second that.

Dawn Ennis Thank you, Ted. We're a team now. All in favor?

MULTIPLE VOICES: Aye.

Ted Mancini: Unanimous. There you go.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Unanimous. All right, so our subcommittee for 2021 will be Esam Sarah and myself. And I think we should change it up each year as we can, because I think other people should have a chance to do so. We're all here together for at least two years. So ride it out. All right. So that's great. So we got social media, just a quick thing on highlighting the events. I don't know if everyone sent at least something to a sum so he can start that. A little bio on your picture if you've done

that also. So then hopefully toward the middle of this month or whatever, as can start putting it out so we can get to know the community and get to know us and know that we're actually here and doing work and trying to have them come to us about things, issues that are all right there. And just we're just happy issues that they want her throughout the community. So I just want to make sure that we're supportive of all of our community members and we're meeting individually throughout our community in these groups. So that's what I have to say since Esam isn't here.

Sarah Raskin I want to highlight Aurora, the bar was set way too high and I just can't possibly live up to that.

Dawn Ennis Oh, I second that I agree. I was intimidated, so I haven't done mine yet.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Awesome job, Aurora. We appreciate you. Way to come in. Freshman up here, right there, guys. So on other discussions we had, we voted last year in December to have specific things highlighted that were highlighted through the human rights, the international human rights calendar, which we voted yes on. This month is Women's History Month. I don't know the calendar for next month, but we also I also wanted to suggest that not only highlighting things that are on the national calendar, international calendar, but taking our mission and Bringing it forward and highlighting what and I have things dealing with religious creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, familial status, you know, bringing those groups into our space to talk about and highlight them. I thought that would be super important so that they feel that they have a safe space and that they're being recognized in the community. I can send out an email kind of how I had it put out. This is how I this is, actually I have it right here. Well, I'm going to throw this in the chat. You guys can everyone see the chat also? OK, so I can't copy and paste it right now. So for March, I thought the issue of race and color for April religious creed May sex and sexual orientation. And I kind of just went through and put it each topic into the next month, you know, June civil union status, gender identity or expression, July, actually, civil union status could go with marital status. So June would be gender identity or expression, I guess would be genetic information age and kind of find topics and reach out to the community and say, hey, we're going to we're going to speak on this topic this month. If you'd like to come to the Human Rights Commission to get, you know, a presentation or highlight your community, we'd love to hear from you. That's an idea I had to get people more involved to know that they have, like I said, a supportive commission here for them. We can obviously talk about that more later, but that was my idea.

Sarah Raskin Can you just clarify what you were doing, take the mission, the things that you were just saying or from our statement, and you just broke it up by month, right?

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yeah.

Ted Mancini I actually, I think would be a good idea because start to bring people in and we can have talks and we can have discussions, civil discussions, where people can actually disagree, absolutely talk and bring up different points, you know, from each point of view.

Dawn Ennis And hopefully find compromise and find common ground.

Ted Mancini and hopefully find compromise or at least find the ability to agree to disagree and move on. I think this would be a great thing to do that.

Dawn Ennis And hear each other out. Absolutely. I agree with Ted.

Ted Mancini Yeah, so we're not yelling each other, swearing at each other, you know? So we're not like Congress, or the Senate?

Dawn Ennis Anything but that. Or the statehouse!

Adrienne Billings-Smith So that I'll send out another email for us to talk about it again. It just came in my mind. I was like, why not, you know, get our community, as Ted said, get us in this conversation together so we can actually have a civil conversation about stuff. On important topics that are going to have us going.

Sarah Raskin So are we so that we would just post, if you're interested in this topic, come to a meeting or we'll reach out to groups that you know are working on this issue?

Adrienne Billings-Smith Well, I think we could both right. I think you can put out a full post the community, because you might catch some people who normally wouldn't who might not be a part of those organizations. Right. But you can also always go and say, hey, this is what we're talking about this month. Do you want to come on and speak with us? I think you can do both easily. They work together and we can go and kind of to figure out timing on how it will work and dedicate some time to people, to organizations, to groups, to, you know, so that's my thought process, you know.

Dawn Ennis Did you have any thoughts about Women's History Month?

Adrienne Billings-Smith I haven't. I just posted our first post on Women's History Month honoring Women's History Month. I was going to try to go find leaders, women, female leaders in the human rights movement and try to make sure it was a diverse group of of women and what they post was speaking on. I was going to do that once or twice a week. That was my plan.

Dawn Ennis Thank you.



Adrienne Billings-Smith So if there's any other ideas, please feel free to help me. I'm like most of you sitting in computers during the day. Never, never have. If you have something that you need to say or want done, I'm pretty good at getting back to people pretty quickly. I would say. So all right, so let's move on discussion on the civilian review board ordinance, did everyone get a chance to read that? Dawn, do you want to? I can kind of bring people up to speed. So during the summer, we had a conversation with chief. He came to a meeting and they mentioned the civilian review board. It was before the Accountability Act was passed, if I'm not mistaken. And we were already in discussions about the Civil Review Board. And Kevin, actually, town manager Matt Hart had said that we could be a part of the process that didn't end up happening and we didn't get any straight answers about that. So when they presented the ordinance, we you know, we'd been told we would be a part of that process. But it goes through, you know, many things we know. And now here we sit. We have an ordinance that's been passed. We will have a civilian review board that begins July 1st and I think there's a couple of different opinions about it, and if you want to if you want to discuss it, you know, I don't know if it's you want to discuss fairness or what you want to discuss, but please feel free to start, Dawn.

Dawn Ennis My only question about it will be that while they are now considering who will be on the civilian review board, do we as a group want to put forward someone who would represent the Human Rights Commission as a person with, you know, sort of wearing two hats? I myself feel as if as written that this is just basically a rubber stamp, that it is not what we envisioned and it is not what either the police or the community needs, but it is what it is. I don't think we have any way to shape it or change it. So the only effect we could possibly have is by having one of us offer themselves as a participant.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Dawn, I think according to the charter, we can only be on one commission or board at a time. So I don't think that we have the capability or, you know, permission to do so.

Dawn Ennis Oh, well. Well, that was my idea.

Adrienne Billings-Smith I don't think it's a bad idea.

Sarah Raskin do you want to reach out and see if we can have a liaison, so that we're still wearing your human rights hat, serving as a liaison to that commission moved on. They may say, no, I don't know.

Dawn Ennis we could also add in that statement, since you did not allow us to be part of the promised agreement and this is what we're asking for.

Adrienne Billings-Smith A liaison, to be a part of the review board, correct? I'm putting my lawyer brain on, but I don't see that happening. Sarah do you want to flesh it out what you mean? I could see when individuals start to apply for the board, you may be able we may be able to have an appointed liaison to be a part of the

approval process if it goes on. that's where I would go. As you said all they can say is no, we can go from whatever position we want to.

Dawn Ennis I'd like to hear what other members of the commission feel about the civilian review board as it is formed now before we make any either necessary or unnecessary moves.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Absolutely.

Ted Mancini I'm reading it now.

Dawn Ennis we'll wait for you Ted.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Dawn if you share your screen again.

Ted Mancini So this is really just a review is when a complaint was filed. Right. Am I correct in saying that?

Dawn Ennis Here it is.

Adrienne Billings-Smith So other civilian review boards that usually it's complaints, but it also deals with if something comes in right, whatever they deem, and then it goes straight to the civilian board. Right.

Sarah Raskin So in case people don't have the background. There is a review board right now. It's mostly made up of current and former law enforcement officers. So this was an attempt to make it into a civilian review board instead, whether it be civilian members providing some level of oversight. So I just want to clarify. And this was obviously part of the statewide bill that passed last year.

[Adrienne Billings-Smith I know one of the hot topics of it was, there will be a background check on all individuals who applied to be on the board. And is that an intimidation factor to get people who may have come into contact with Law enforcement. Not to apply for. Membership, it doesn't count you out, you're not automatically counted out, but. Is that the tier individuals who actually confronted with enforcement? From wanting to join. You know, it's in there, it's already passed, but we want to ensure that everyone in our community has the opportunity to hold our law enforcement accountable. And you want the right people. So for me. I think what you're saying is a liaison to be a part of. They have some sort of broad set up approval board. I would rather have a liaison or try to get permission to have a liaison there for that.

Kristen Sowell I have a question actually, for Sarah. I know that there's already a board with former law enforcement in place in West Hartford, this is civilians or are they going to replace the one that they have now. Or they're going to be all part of that one.

Sarah Raskin I just said correct.

Kristen Sowell Oh, OK, cool.

Adrienne Billings-Smith So the question here, Dawn, and Sarah, is, do we want to do that, is that something that we would want to be a part of the process of choosing individuals to be on the, you know, before moving forward? And who wants to write the letter if we are going to do that?

Dawn Ennis Well, I volunteer to write the letter. This is Dawn Ennis, secretary.

Adrienne Billings-Smith You said you volunteered the letter.

Dawn Ennis Yes.

Aurora Melita I would second Dawn writing the letter because she is an amazing writer. So I think that makes sense. And also, I do agree. I think it would be, you know, worth our effort to try to see if we can gain some type of like appointment or oversight or some kind of connection, just that we can make sure that the human rights voice is represented in this. So I would agree with that. I think that it would be worth our efforts to try to do I don't know how it works out with what we're going to be able to essentially do, but I would support it.

Sarah Raskin I just want to point out not pushing the point or to point out that there are approval processes already listed in this document. So one is from the police chief to serve as a liaison one or from the town manager's office to serve as staff liaison. So it wouldn't be I would be completely outrageous to ask for a place on this commission. Again, they can say no, and that's fine, but I don't think we're out of bounds.

Adrienne Billings-Smith And I agree with you, Sarah.

Dawn Ennis I agree with both of you. This is Dawn Ennis. But I think they'll say no, I want to fully reduce expectations to them, basically telling us what to do with ourselves.

Michael Pincus Who is they?

Dawn Ennis West Hartford Town Council.

Sarah Raskin This was created by the town council and the chief of police, so I assume they would both participate in decision because we want this document. Right, if we added it.

Dawn Ennis Yeah, I was going to write it to the town council and to the police chief. That was my intention.

Sarah Raskin I just want to say how many tabs you have open, because it reflects my computer state at all times and everyone makes fun of me. So I feel a kindred spirit.

Dawn Ennis It's only 72.

Adrienne Billings-Smith and I have two different browsers open. I have chrome and safari.

Dawn Ennis Yeah, same, same. I also got Firefox. I actually have safari closed at the moment, but yes.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yeah. So I hear you. So yeah. So does anyone object to Dawn writing a letter to Town Council or and Chief Riddick to see if we can have an appointed liaison in the decision making process?

Adrienne Billings-Smith All right. Thank you, go for it.

Dawn Ennis Thank you. And I'm not going to name anyone, and I'm just going to say we are requesting a liaison because their next question may be who? But I'm not going to go there.

Adrienne Billings-Smith OK, that's fine. All right. Next, supporting the Equality Act. Dawn, you're up tonight.

Dawn Ennis G-d, I should have worn makeup. I wrote an email to you all asking if we could compose a letter. And I guess this is my second letter. I'm going to suggest writing to our senators representing our state to tell them that the West Hartford Human Rights Commission supports the Equality Act. And I think it faces a very tough battle in the Senate. It passed the House, but it is unlikely, in my opinion, to get 10 Republicans to support it. So I wanted to at least put us on record that we do support it. And the reason for us wanting to get involved is because even though we are very blessed to have laws in Connecticut that protect and guarantee equal rights for all, any Connecticut resident can go to a place in America and not be treated equally. And the laws, as they are stated, do not provide equal rights. And I'm not seeking special rights. I think that this is, for me, a matter of just fulfilling what the Constitution promised. And I would like to move that we write a letter and I don't have to be the author, but I volunteered because I'm the one suggesting it.

Michael Pincus Is there a history of the commission writing letters to our senators, asking them to support the decision, or is this a new venture going forth?

Dawn Ennis I'll defer to Sarah on that one, because this is the first time I've ever done anything like this.

Sarah Raskin in my memory, no, we've not written to officials before.

Michael Pincus Is it in our purview? I don't know if that makes sense

Dawn Ennis I think that's for us to decide and I will abide by the commission's vote.

Adrienne Billings-Smith before we take the vote, I just want to point out I've put it in the chat, I put the summary of the Equality Act, Ted actually sent us the 2019 one not the 2021. Just one came out. It was you know, but this is a summary of the 2021 Equality Act if you want to read through it. I did second that we would vote on it. But just so everyone had a chance to know what it was actually about and, you know.

Ted Mancini Hi, this is Ted, Ted Mancini. I have an issue with act as written and how it changes the definition of sex to include gender identity and actually how it affects women in sports. In any case, as the bill's written, I went through it. And just a couple of provisions. I mean, you know, if this bill was to pass, let's say this bill was to pass tomorrow, just for argument's sake, you know, I go to the gym over here at Edge fitness and I could go into the women's locker room and no one could say anything to me. I could just tell them that I identify as a woman. I have a buddy, he's got a kid, his kid's, high school age, his kid goes about six to he's 350, he's competed powerlifting, strong kid. He's won some powerlifting competitions. And I know as far as how the world states right now in the state of Connecticut, he can actually play any girl's sport. And, you know, my daughter is going to be a freshman next year and you would actually have to compete against somebody like that. And there's many instances, you know, like you can talk about the MMA fighter that identifies as a woman and he's cracked open the skull of two women so far...

Sarah Raskin So...

Dawn Ennis Sarah, I'd like to like to hear Ted finish, please.

Sarah Raskin OK,

Ted Mancini Talk about the two individuals that are from Bloomfield and Cromwell, Coventry or Cromwell. And I think before they started competing as girls, nine different girls had won state championships. And since they since they began to compete, they've won 14 different 15 different state championships and I think 40 different state events. And what that opens up, that also opens up for individuals like that. Now, there you have the ability to compete for scholarships that would only be open to women for women's athletics at the college level. So now you'd be you'd be changing what are our athletics in certain places like women's prisons, any place that are only for women? If you identify as if you identify as a woman, if you're a male and identify as a woman, you could not by themselves be discriminated against and be kept from either working in those places, going to those places, you know, competing against women. And also this bill does not allow which is the

religious exemption. It specifically it specifically states that you can no longer utilize the religious exemption against homosexuals or transgenders or anybody else that identifies.

Dawn Ennis Thank you, Ted. I'm sorry to interrupt you, Sarah. I wanted to make sure Ted had the floor and make sure he could make all his points.

Sarah Raskin Do you want to respond, Dawn?

Dawn Ennis Honestly, I would like to, thank you very much. Sir, I'd first like to address the fact that in Connecticut and in many states, there are laws on the books that prevent men from becoming peeping toms or perverted acts or do anything that would in some way violate the safety of women or children. Those laws remain on the books and the laws in Connecticut that had been on the books for 10 years now that allow women like myself to use public accommodations like restrooms and changing rooms have resulted in exactly zero arrests of or convictions of any transgender person trying to be some kind of peeping Tom. My question to you, Ted, would be, if you're a large bearded man or your friend wants to go into the women's room because he feels like a woman, as you put it, or identifies as a woman that day. My question would be, why would he do so if he's just trying to perform some kind of experiment, when in fact, I think most men want to respect women's spaces and that women who identify as trans don't want to have men in our spaces either. There have been zero problems in Connecticut in which a person like you're describing has walked into a women's room or a changing room or a bathroom and cause a scene like that. It's a great hypothetical, but it hasn't happened. Regarding you mentioned the athlete, Fallon Fox, I put up a story that we wrote at Outsports dot com where I'm the managing editor that I hope you'll read. It is specifically responding to your allegation that she broke an opponent's skull and she identifies with the pronouns 'she/her.' I happen to know, Fallon, there are a couple of myths that are addressed in that story. And I'm not going to get into it, but I'm going to just leave it for you to look at your leisure. I'll mention two other things. But because I don't want to make this entire all-night-long thing about trans stuff. But the athletes that you're referring to in Bloomfield and in Cranwell, they won races. They also lost races. The thing that happens to trans athletes is they lose races like everybody else. But the media doesn't report that. The media only reports what will sell newspapers or get clicks on TV for ratings. And those girls who I've interviewed personally and I met both, decided to not pursue sports in college. But you know what happened? The three girls who filed a federal lawsuit a year and a month ago with the help of a religious organization that is anti0LGBT? Those three girls, two of them went on to college. One of them won a scholarship. One of them even beat the two transgender girls within eight days of their filing of a lawsuit. So their claim that they can't win against trans athletes was just proven wrong by their own competition. Coaches will tell you and you're a coach, Adrienne's a coach. When scholarships are awarded and spots on teams are decided, coaches don't look at who places first, second or third. I'm a mom. I understand every mom and dad wants their kid to do well. Nobody wants to have a chat with their kid because they lost. But coaches look at personal

best and that's what wins scholarships and that's what gets people into higher schools of learning. The last point I'm going to make is about the religious exemption. I believe as a Jew that everyone, everyone should respect everyone's faith or their decision not to follow any faith whatsoever. But I don't think G-d or any higher power would think that it's OK to discriminate against someone even based on what your feelings or faith tell you. So for me, if someone believes that their faith should have them discriminate against someone or take away their rights, then that's a question for them to examine and for the law to look at whether our Constitution, guaranteeing freedom of religion, is more important than our freedom to be, and that's really a matter for the courts and for our lawmakers. I personally support the Equality Act. I believe that the opportunity here is for us to have a discussion that I can't necessarily sway anyone with, I can only explain to you my personal beliefs and the facts as I know them. I respect Ted's point of view. I respect everyone else's point of view. I don't want to give Ted the impression that I don't think you have a right to say what you have to say. I thank you very much for sharing your thoughts and listening to mine.

Ted Mancini Now, Dawn, I have one question now. I think this is one of those things that we're going to agree to disagree. And I understand everything you're saying, and, you know, like I say, I'll fight to the death for your right to say and your right to believe it.

Dawn Ennis Right back at you, Ted.

Ted Mancini Yeah, but my only question to you is everything that I just said. As for how the bill is written, what I just said, it's true, though, because they're asking you that it is true because unless I missed something in the bill, the only thing with the gender identification, it doesn't lay out any certain criteria whatsoever. So if someone wanted to do that and I'm not trying to say to people want to do that or what have you, if someone wanted to do that, there is nothing in the bill prohibiting that.

Adrienne Billings-Smith There's your state law.

Dawn Ennis The law already says that, you can't do that.

Adrienne Billings-Smith A federal law is there for this purposes, but they can't override in those cases, your state law. So...

Dawn Ennis This is an amendment to the 1964 civil rights law...

Adrienne Billings-Smith Federal law trumps things. But they can't trump Peeping Toms or those types. You get what I'm saying, those are things that are dealt with on a state level.

So and I second that I obviously support the Equality Act because it's in our mission and that's a big thing. And that's what we're here to discuss. And I just love that

discussion that just happened upon hearing everyone's point of view and having a civil conversation. And that's what we're here to do. But I also believe that our mission trumps it and we're not here to go against that mission. We support gender identity recognition, support, you know, sexual orientation differences. So I think that with for me, barring any write me off on that, I think the equality act is something that it's long overdue, because when you live a life where you're constantly looking over your shoulder, if you're going to be punished, rights taken away because it's not written in black and white, you constantly live in fear for your life. And I think that we can all agree on family on this call and how much our families mean to us. So you're not just talking about gender identity in this or this or that. We're talking about real human beings with feelings with that have the ability to love and be loved. We're talking about people have the right to live freely in their spaces in the world without being discriminated against in the next state, because that's what happens. Not knowing when you have to have, and I'm speaking from personal experience, because I am out. But when you have to adopt your own children, you have to have your will so that your spouse, the child, if you died during childbirth, you start to come to realize that things just aren't sitting. And we all have the right to have our families. And I think that all of us know and love someone who will be supported by the Equality Act. And we have to sometimes think beyond ourselves and even sometimes our beliefs and move forward of what the essence of the law may be. And I understand, Ted, because I love to read, but in between lines and I like to know what's coming because there are consequences, as we spoke about before. There are consequences because they people do. This is our society. This is how it works. And sometimes the wording isn't right. But if this passes in, the wording isn't right, then they'll still be something else that comes behind it. And that's what we have to to believe in our system. So I want to thank you both for your opinions. On the issue, so we can vote if we want to send it or not, if we support it or not, and it's supporting it as a commission, not as individuals.

Sarah Raskin The only point that I was going to make earlier is that I think we're going to once again stick to the facts and again, as a scientist, stick to the science. And so I think this is a great opportunity. And maybe Dawn can share with all of us that we can all agree to learn more each on the issue of trans athletes and the comparison of trans athletes to people who have long arms or tall legs or good, you know, lung capacity and why we provide in some ways and not other ways, just from a scientific perspective. So I love, I love this as an opportunity. And I'm really thrilled to have the opportunity to support this bill.

Dawn Ennis I wanted to add that if trans athletes won every single contest, I would be the first one, I'd beat Ted to the race, I would say we should not have trans athletes competing, but they don't. If the science would say that trans athletes, all of them are superior to cisgender, meaning not transgender, athletes, I would also be opposed to trans inclusion in sports. The problem is that they haven't done science on elite trans athletes versus elite cisgender athletes. They haven't compared trans girls on puberty blockers to cisgender girls. They haven't done science except to say, well, trans women are really men. So let's compare men and women. And that's not



science, as Sarah would tell you. So right now the science is out and we need to have more research.

And I would only hope that if I could tell you a short story I wrote yesterday about a lesbian coach who knelt down in the batter's box and proposed to her wife and they got married. But the Catholic school where she taught fired her and they fired her because even though everyone knew she was gay, somebody complained because they saw that she got married. And she has no case because the Supreme Court said religious institutions can set whatever policies they want. The Equality Act would make it so that women like that couldn't be fired. And it's not a Connecticut story. But I think that I guess if you teach at a Catholic school, you ought to know you have a chance of getting fired. But, hell, I mean, shouldn't everybody have the right to be able to love who they want? And that's all I think that equality really should come down to, is love is love. People are who they say they are. And I will support whatever the commission decides.

Ted Mancini Adrienne, just one question, because with our mission and, you know, you said that you support this mission, but part of our mission is to talk about, you know, Not being discriminated against based on religion.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Absolutely.

Ted Mancini This act specifically page 21, Section 11 or seven claims the Religious Freedom Restoration Act shall not provide a claim concerning or as a debate, as a defense to claim under a covered title or provide a basis for challenging the application or enforcement of the title. So that totally disregards the freedom of the freedom of religion, the freedom of Religion Restoration Act.

Adrienne Billings-Smith I think that goes back to Dawn's point of whether you can be fired or not. Right. And that's why I brought up Congress back to Dawn's point of the reasons why you can be if you're if it's considered. I think Dawn's right, if you're at a Catholic school, you should probably know there's a chance, right? But at the same time, if you haven't breached certain employment rules of your state, then there should at least be a mechanism that the that particular coach has to stand on.

Dawn Ennis] What the Equality Act is basically saying that religious protection and religious freedom does not include a right to discriminate. Yes, discrimination is wrong. And the equality act is trying to take the Religious Freedom Act and say you have complete freedom to practice religion except you can't break the law. So if your religion is I want to burn a cross in someone's lawn. No, there's a law that says you can't do that same thing.

Ted Mancini But this actually affects religion. And so like a Catholic school in a church in the city and a synagogue, things that are actually ruled and governed by church doctrine and religious belief and foundations that these religions apply to, you know, thousands of years. And it's the government now coming in. And this is

what it should be chilling to everybody that the government can come in and on a whim just say, well, you know, I'm freedom of religion against this, on freedom of religion against this. So I'm sorry, literally, this is stating I'm sorry, sir. This is stating let's take like an Orthodox Jewish synagogue or a Roman Catholic Church that say the beliefs against homosexuality and that it's a sin. They would have to perform a homosexual wedding, which is against their doctrine. Whether you think it's right, whether you think it's wrong, it's still against their church doctrine.

Sarah Raskin So I'm just trying to understand, because I don't think I understand the law well and I'm trying to understand how this discriminates against anyone based on religion. That's what you're saying. But I'm not understanding how that's discriminated against.

Ted Mancini You can be forced to do things that are against your religious doctrine. Your church can be, your pastor can be, your rabbi, your school. In this case, like a Catholic school. Can be, you can be forced to accept things and have to actually, I'm going to say push things that aren't in line with your doctrine, for example.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Ted, what I think to that you had if you want to get married in a Catholic church, most times you have to go through the whole thing. I'm not Catholic. Homeboy, can still go, not getting married, right? So I don't think that and I could be wrong. I will check. Just so you know, we can have this conversation afterwards also. But I don't think that there's a difference between religion. Every religion, your rabbi, your priest, they don't have to marry. They can have no, nothing in their church for anyone when you're talking about civil rights, marriage of some sort. The justice of the peace, who's Catholic, cannot deny that opinion because they're under government. They're a government official, right? But your priest, who's under whatever church, can decline to marry for various reasons. It doesn't matter who you are, but when you're talking about have an employment issue and they are employer sponsored or public, then you're a danger that becomes it comes down to where that where you stand on employment law. That's how I take that particular thing. I don't think that it can force a rabbi or priest or pastor to marry anyone they ought to marry because that's in church, whatever church doctrine that they might uphold. And that doesn't matter who you are if you don't fit the criteria that the priest wants of you that they can refuse and you can't go so well, I'm going to sue you now because you won't marry me. But if you're sitting there and the priest and the Catholic school fired you because you're black, then you have every right to sue because you're protected under the civil rights law. And that's what this is.

Ted Mancini But that's not how the law reads. I'm only going by how I wish I was making stuff up about how well I am just coming from That legal standpoint, how do you know what it gets taken to the court at that point and then that's what the government's also saying. So now it's taken to the courts and they have to decide how the law. So I appreciate the conversation.

Aurora Melita Aurora here. I just wanted to jump in and share, you know, when Dawn first posed this to the group, I was really excited about it. I feel very excited to sign on to, you know, some type of letter of support. And for me, the reason that I identified with, you know, being excited about supporting this initiative is I think it's a big deal to have a national conversation regarding the Equality Act, that it passed the House, that it was sent to the Senate. You know, I think that there's been a lot of people that have felt discouraged for whatever for whatever reason over the last few years. So I think that this is a point of excitement and it's encouraging. And as a commission that is, you know, in West Hartford and we're you're meant to be a voice for pushing human rights forward, think it would be kind of a simple no brainer thing to want to, like, support, you know, and share information about a national conversation about equality. Right. You know, moving forward. So for me, that's why I am excited about it. And I think that even this conversation is proof of that, that being that the national conversation has, you know, held, you know, been able to move forward. It's been able to, you know, for us tonight to be able to have a conversation like this. This is part of the reason that, you know, we're here, and that is to try to get people off and try to get them talking and try to try to find different perspectives of understanding, because we all bring our own experiences and understandings. And I think the more that we can talk to each other, the better we'll be able to, you know, to move it forward and kind of create a venue for other people to do the same. So I still think it's a great idea. You know, I think we've gotten into the nitty gritty of the policy, which I'm not sure if it's our place to necessarily do that. I understand putting it in a formal letter. So maybe it's we frame it slightly different where we say, you know, we're very encouraged and excited to see that are, you know, Connecticut like our Congress members or our US Senate members are supporting this type of initiative or something like that? Maybe it's not a complete, you know, straightforward endorsement of the Equality Act. Maybe it's that we're showing our support for the conversation. I don't know if that would if that would help. But I'd still I'd be happy to talk about it. And I'm I think it's a great idea, Dawn.

Dawn Ennis Thank you. I just wanted to point the last comment. I found this myth, in fact, about the First Amendment and LGBTQ people and religion. And I hope that, Ted, if you have a chance to read it, it basically says that the Equality Act is not going to change the First Amendment rights of religious organizations. It's simply going to ensure that when employers, businesses, other serving the public are operating for non-religious or commercial purposes, they can't turn an LGBTQ person away simply because of who they are. And that's why they've got 100 faith leaders who are in support of it. But I understand how it can be interpreted to possibly not be that way. I just wanted to assure you that that's not its intent. And I am open to Aurora's idea of perhaps writing a statement of support for human rights instead of an endorsement of the Equality Act. That may be a way that we can all get on board this.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Anyone else have anything they'd like to say? So do we want to move to write a letter in support of the essence of the Equality Act?

Sarah Raskin I would like to just support the Equality Act.

Kristen Sowell Same here, I'm all for it and support. I say we just I mean, you know, based on everybody else. But I'm all for it.

Ted Mancini just asking Dawn, what's the motion? You brought up the motion.

Dawn Ennis Ted, the motion is that a member of the commission will write a letter to Connecticut's senatorial delegation urging their continued support for the Equality Act for its expression of human rights both in Connecticut and across the nation, as it would protect Connecticut residents of West Hartford residents throughout the United States and asking them to work hard to effect its passage. That would be the essence of a letter I propose to write, and I'm open to revisions.

Aurora Melita Aurora here, I second.

Adrienne Billings-Smith All in favor?

MULTIPLE VOICES: Aye.

Ted Mancini No.

Sarah Raskin Any abstentions?

Ted Mancini Now, that's the way a discussion should happen.

Dawn Ennis And Ted, I want you to I want you to be reassured, I don't think any less of you because of your vote. And I hope you don't think any less of me because of my vote.

Ted Mancini No. Like I said, we're going to have things we agree to disagree. That's just going to be the way it is.

Adrienne Billings-Smith All right. So, Dawn, did you want to write that letter and then we can go over it together?

Dawn Ennis Yes. I'll get it to you before the week's out.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Awesome. Thank you, guys. That was a great conversation. Next topic, update on the Stateway statewide HRC meeting. There's nobody on the line, correct? Is there anyone on the line?

Pramod Pradhan No, there's no one on the line.

Adrienne Billings-Smith OK, Jay Tulan *[sp?]* was going to show up, but he ended up having to go to another meeting. I didn't I just didn't want to if he actually made it not to let him June 1st or early June. And they're proposing that representatives from each of the towns that have human rights commissions get together and have a forum. He has had it in my notes. Sean Krab. Well, right. And it should be getting emails out to all of us. And once we get those emails and all share and obviously to the commission. So like I said, it's going to be a representative, probably the co-chairs. But I want to make sure you guys are fully involved. And our voice is heard in West Hartford Human Rights Commission and what we support and what we want to do to support other human rights commissions that are in our state, but also ones that are trying to form because they're not in every single town in our in our state.

Dawn Ennis when is that meeting supposed to be?

Adrienne Billings-Smith June 1st, early June? He was supposed to kind of he was actually supposed to write something up, he said, but he didn't send me anything. He was going to write something up for us, but he didn't send me anything anyway. So June 1st or early June, if you want to put that.

Sarah Raskin So I just want to make the point that we are the leader really in the state where the commission than all the other commissions are sort of looking to. We've been around the longest and seemed to be the most active. So I think that's really important for us to be at this meeting.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Very cool. Fun fact. Thank you. I like that. So future topics, not sustainable, Connecticut funding deadline passed, deadline passed, so get out of the way. Have you heard anything, Sarah, about the female genital mutilation policy proposal?

Sarah Raskin Yes. So she's on a human rights commission in Guilford. And she had come to us a year ago to ask for our support in this legislation. We ended up not supporting the legislation because there were some women's groups who are actually opposed to it. It turned out to be a sort of more contentious issue than we thought. And so she brought it up to me again. This year, she's proposing legislation against this legislation to ban all mutilation in. And I had to come to our meetings and talk to us about it again. And that's the last I heard.

Dawn Ennis I have a question. Do you know where the objections related to the LGBT community or is it some other.

Sarah Raskin Correct. Yes,

Dawn Ennis that's what I thought.

Adrienne Billings-Smith All right. Also, we have the Clean Energy Plan, any update on that, Sarah?

Sarah Raskin No. All right, thank you.

Adrienne Billings-Smith OK, and something that's not on the agenda, but because it was sent to us late, the one community meeting that's with the district, we're partnered with the district promoting equity education and making sure that we're supporting other community organizations that's held through our equity and diversity, equity and diversity. Advancement leader Roseanna Haskins, Dr. Haskins. And it's on March 15th from six to seven thirty p.m. and we would like a representative from each organization to be there to discuss future events, partnerships and things that are going on. And we have a lot of stuff coming down the pike in June, MLK Memorial, Juneteenth, unity, green advancement that we're going to have to discuss and see if we want to be a part of, also that we can discuss in the next meeting. But I want to know if there is someone who would like to volunteer to be a representative at the meeting. Don't all speak at once. I am I representing another organization.

Sarah Raskin do you want me to swear that people have a sense of what the facts.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Absolutely, if you could do that, I would say so. I cannot be the representative for us. I had already played our part.

Sarah Raskin OK, so let's see. Well, it doesn't actually say anything, it just has the date and the time and a list of organizations.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Well, I can send an email that kind of explain to me any mission that we can get somebody to volunteer before the 15th.

Sarah Raskin So, yeah. So the list of organizations, just to give you a sense, open choice program. Great by a YMC, say hello, West Hartford, the border guard, the parent teacher organization. So I've been attending on our behalf, but it is you know, she's amazing and in the schools and we focused on youth issues and my kids are grown. So I was just going to sort of give up my spot if somebody has younger children for boys.

Adrienne Billings-Smith All right, I'll send out an email, then someone can volunteer. All right. Right now, our next meeting is Wednesday, April 7th. 2021. And let me see what our one of our topics. April: religious creed.

Ted Mancini All right!

Dawn Ennis Adrienne, can I bring up a coming event I'd like the commission to consider supporting?

Adrienne Billings-Smith Absolutely.

Dawn Ennis In the notes. You will see that on March 18th, as I alluded to in an email, our Adrian Smith will be speaking at University of Hartford on an important topic. And when I say at University of Hartford, I met, she'll be sitting right where she is now. And I hope that if you have time to attend this lecture, I will certainly be listening. And I wanted to encourage everyone to support her.

Adrienne Billings-Smith It won't be so much of a lecture. Just be me babbling on and on. But thank you. Thank you, Dawn, for that. No, honestly, I would love it if you if you guys choose to attend. I appreciate the support. So I think we made it through. I, I think we made it through. So this anyone want to motion that we adjourn the meeting? Unless someone has something else to say or if I'm missing something, please let me know.

Ted Mancini Well, just a quick note. I have some coaches that had approached me. They wanted me to bring something to Human Rights Council because they're under under about a two year suspension right now and they feel that it's at least partially racially motivated. So I've gathered a bunch of information on it. I'm still passing through it all. And, you know, I'll send you guys some emails and everything on it. But I just want to let you know that someone had come to me and I'm working on that right now.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Thank you. Thank you, Ted. Yeah. Keep us posted and let us know. And they're welcome to attend.

Ted Mancini I told them that they can come to a meeting that week, all of that. So we go through all the information, you know, talk with them a lot this month and maybe at next month's meeting or if we can solve it amicably, maybe that'll be an easy way to go. So we'll see.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Yeah. Yeah, I agree. I agree. All right. Thank you, Ted. I appreciate that. So here's your homework. All right. There we go. Is there a motion to adjourn?

Ted Mancini I move to adjourn.

Dawn Ennis I second the motion.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Dawn seconds it. It is 8:50 p.m. Thank you all, it was a really great meeting.

MEETING ADJOURNED.

