

WEST HARTFORD HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Minutes of October 6, 2021, Meeting

FOR FUTURE REFERENCE: Public Comments welcome via phone, by dialing 408-418-9388 Access Code 173 498 0586

Meeting was called to order at 7:20 pm by Co-Chair Esam Boraey

Attendance: All currently serving Commissioners were present

Esam Boraey, Co-Chair (EB)

Dawn Ennis, Co-Chair (DE)

Aurora Melita, Secretary (AM)

Ted Mancini (TM)

Sarah Raskin (SR)

Eric Schoenberg (ES)

Kristin Sowell (KS)

Pramod Pradhan, Liaison and Facilitator (PP)

Tekisha Dwan Everette (TDE)

EB welcomed our newest member to the Commission, Tekisha Dwan Everette

Minutes: *EB made a motion to approve June minutes, SR moved, Dawn Seconded, all members voted to pass*

AGENDA ITEMS:

SR provided a summary of Town of Compassion Awards. Awards had been postponed due to the pandemic. Commission discussed how to move forward in understanding how to proceed. SR offered to reach out to Town Council to get guidelines of awards, to find out if we should still be awarding them and if they are being held in December this year or next year. ES

The Skin Deep: AM, Shared background on The Skin Deep, an organization that's mission is to cut through the digital divide through impactful and meaningful one on one conversations. AM suggested that we hold off on exploring a partnership with them until we can safely meet in person again. After discussion commission agreed to hold off further discussion. SR and DE asked for more information and a way to vet the organization. AM, said she could email information about the organization out and offer to ask the owner to attend a HRC meeting to share more about The Skin Deep directly with members.

Coaches Dispute: TM provided a recap of issue and said he had previously connected them with ES. ES shared that he had exchanged communications with them and shared potential solutions for their consideration. ES said he hasn't received an update and anticipates that things have worked out.

Commissioner Biographies: EM explained that we want members to put together videos and biographies to post to website. It was agreed that we could submit only written biographies if members were unable to send a video. Asked to submit ASAP. DE offered to help members with writing their bios.

Facebook Live Meetings: EB shared that the idea of this was discussed and previous meeting. Would be to highlight community members who focus on community rights in West Hartford. Would like to provide a 30-minute Facebook live where we can share the commission does and highlight the community members. Would like to expand our network and provide education of members that are important to the commission. EB said during the last meeting where this was discussed they asked members to email anyone that they thought would be a good individual to highlight. Planned to wait to bring this back for discussion after the summer which is why we are discussing it tonight. DE shared that she could create a shared google document where we could all add names for consideration. EB said we have a document created and can make sure everyone has access to it. EB asked for people's thoughts and if anyone wanted to participate. SR said she believes we already approved this as a commission and thinks it's a great idea. She went onto share that we have a long list of suggested individuals to highlight and thinks we should move forward. DE asked if we could have the list reshared to refresh everyone's memory. TDE, I would be happy to help interview. EB said he will share the list and start to organize the videos. EB said that he and DE will meet soon and provide a plan for next steps with the commission next meeting. EB will also share list out to members for review in the meanwhile.

Slavery Reparations: SR, What I had recommended that we recommend to the Town Council what reparations would look like to the town of West Hartford. Had included a few other towns that had done it in the past. I am not recommending that we do anything, I recommend that we ask the town to appoint a committee to explore the idea. TM, I still stand by what I said in the past I don't think it is a good idea to ask the Town Council to recommend how to distribute reparations to certain members of the community - doesn't that go against what we are trying to do. SR, what you're referring to one model and that could not be the action they think is best to take, if they think an action is best to take. KS, Having Town Council, who is separate from the Human Rights Commission, might be the best way to evaluate this because it wouldn't be under the authority of the Commission but independent to the Commission. TDE, wanted to clarify that a conversation around slavery reparations is not about the redistribution of any sort of economic or other sort of reparation based on the color of a person's skin it's in recognition of historical disadvantage that has happened in the United States based on an economic system of slavery that enslaved a certain people based on the color of their skin. A conversation around reparations needs to center on acknowledgement and how you want to acknowledge that or reconcile that fact that it happened and what you do to address that large gap in economic disadvantage. So, I am hopeful that this conversation, if we move it to the town, is very clear of what we are talking about. DE, Thank you TDE and I ask that you be involved if we move forward with this. TDE, agreed to help.

DE, made a motion to recommend to Town Council to organize a group of people to consider what slavery reparations would look like to the town, E seconded that, TM opposed, ES abstained, remaining members supported, motion passed

Let's Meet Folks: EB, Original idea was to create a speaker once a month to build connections with people from the town to discuss the work they are doing and ask some questions, share information with them and learn what they are doing. Another suggestion was to bring more community leaders, such as faith leaders we have done in the past.

ES, made a motion to reach out to other commissioners to join our monthly meetings to share what they are working on and doing. ES made the motion, DE seconded motion, remaining members supported, motion passed.

DE, asked if we could prioritize to the Police Accountably first. KS, will reach out to Ace to see if she recommends someone from the Police Accountability. PP, will organize a list of other commissioners we can invite.

Discussion on Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in December:

EB, gave summary and history of event. After discussion the commission said they would shift focus this year due to the pandemic to scale down on the event and again be a virtual event.

DE, suggested working with educators of west Hartford schools to work with students to read parts of the declaration this year.

Statewide Upcoming HR Meeting: SR, thinks it would be good for someone to go to the next one. Looking for date. EB, gave a background. EB, next meeting of the Human Rights Conference is October 28th from 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. and asked SR to email details out.

2022 HRC Meeting Schedule: ES, shared that the draft HRC 2022 meeting will be at 7:00pm on the first Wednesday of each month. The commission shared that it would work. DE and TDE mentioned that they are in graduate school and their schedules may change slightly but happy to keep the first Wednesday of each month.

Open Discussion: SR, pick back up on SRO conversation. Commission decided to add SRO to next agenda and potentially invite speakers to gain an education on topic for commissioners.

Closing Remarks: EB announced next meeting date, November 3rd 7:00pm

EB, asked for motion, TM gave motion to adjourn meeting, DE seconded motion, remaining members in agreement, motion passed