

**TOWN OF WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING - OCTOBER 13, 2021
MINUTES**

Hybrid Meeting-via Zoom and in-person at Town Hall – Ludlow Room

1. **Call to Order- Chairman Washington** Chairman Washington called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.
2. **Roll Call/Attendance** Present in person: Joyce Armstrong, Castella Copeland, Chairman Washington. Present via Zoom: Rebecca Jacobsen, Pat Pack, Linda Massa. Absent: Kereme Murrell, Byron Bobb, Leonard Swade, Josh Amaro.
3. **Public Communications:** Burke noted that no one was present in the waiting room to attend.
4. **Approval of Minutes:** Motion to approve of the minutes of September 8th, 2021 was passed 6 - 0. A motion was made by Armstrong and seconded by Copeland.

5. **Liaison Report/Treasurer Report:**

Burke reminded commissioners that the HRC will have a base amount of \$3200 to start the fiscal year. Burke also noted that the \$60 for the salsa dance instructor was approved for the event on the town green on October 9th.

Burke also reported that the Economic Development Department in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce will sponsor a job fair for Windsor on November 4th from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the community building in Wilson. This is a free event and a great opportunity for employers to meet job seekers. Companies need to register in advance in order to secure a spot.

6. **New Business:**

A. Commissioner Welcome - Commissioner Copeland - Chair Washington

Chairman Washington welcomed Commissioner Copeland by highlighting her role in previous events as a facilitator in addition to her role in the Windsor Community. Commissioner Copeland shared a few sentiments about her purpose for joining the committee.

B. Secretary Nomination

Chairman Washington nominated and made a motion for Commissioner Copeland to be Secretary and was seconded by Mack, the motion passed 6 - 0.

C. Approval of Instructors Fee for Salsa Event

Chairman Washington noted that Burke provided an update on the approval of the instructor fee. Armstrong and Massa noted that the event was very successful with at least 16 couples who attended the event. Armstrong and Copeland noted that the Chili Fest and the Craft Fair were also on the town green which helped with promoting the event and engaging the community.

D. Halloween 2021

Chairman Washington shared that the Windsor Public Library has asked us to be a part of their Trick or Treat event. All commissioners are asked to bring candy to the library or volunteer the day of the event. The event starts at 5:00 pm. All commissioners who are interested must let Judge Washington know in advance.

E. Conversation on Race - Critical Race Theory - October 24, 2021, from 5:00 -7:00 pm

Chairman Washington shared that Senator Douglass McCrory, author of the bill that passed in the State senate along with Representative Bobby Gibson, Kevin Booker Jr., and two Windsor High School Students will be on the panel for the Critical Race Theory (CRT) event. This event is virtual via Zoom and will be open to all community members. Chairman Washington and Copeland will work on the flyer and send it out for everyone to promote once it is completed.

Copeland shared that the goal of the event is to converse about how CRT can be used as a teaching tool within the classroom setting. Mack also noted that high schools in Connecticut have a curriculum mandated by the state with specific guidelines they must follow. The elementary schools have a choice in how they teach the curriculum and is often optional depending on the district. Mack also noted that half of the high school year is dedicated to an elective course in African American studies and a half for Hispanic studies. All high schools must do is offer the electives, however, the courses themselves are not mandated by the state. Copeland also noted that every district is different and there is a lot of confusion around what CRT is and how it is used.

Chairman Washington also shared that the next event is on November 14th, 2021 from 5:00 - 7:00 pm via Zoom on Colorism. This event will focus on intercultural connection and communication in how racism and white supremacy notions are upheld within subsections of racial and cultural groups. Chairman Washington shared that colorism is racism and prejudice you can feel from your own race, Copeland added that sometimes this is upheld by cultures globally through standards of beauty and ways people define who is attractive or not.

Jacobsen and Massa agreed to reach out to others on the Board of Education and other educational realms to have a diverse conversation in varying ideologies.

F. Collaborative time with other Chairs

Chairman Washington and Massa brought up the need for chairs to meet once a year to collaborate, get to know each other, and invite other committee members to participate in events. Armstrong and Massa pointed out there are duplications of events from the Senior Center. Armstrong mentioned in the past, co-sponsors were created to encourage participation making an effort for cross-communication.

Burke suggested that commissioners start to reach out and talk with other committee members. Look at the agendas before other committees meet and take action. Action is not happening because someone needs to take the first step to encourage collaboration. Chairman Washington followed up by suggesting an idea of a formal invitation for committees to be able to collaborate with others or have an avenue of direct communication with other chairs. Chairman Washington also suggested that the HRC lean into other committees they are on and find a common ground that brings committees together more.

Massa provided an example of this by sharing that on the first and third Wednesday from 10:30 am to 12:00 pm she will be volunteering at the Senior Center to help take the blood pressure of others.

7. Old Business:

A. Hispanic Heritage –Salsa Event-Commissioner Amaro

Burke shared that he and Amaro set up for the event and there was a nice turnout. There were around 16 people or so who took the instruction and danced. Burke noted that the event was well received and did not interfere with the Chili Challenge or Craft Fair but rather added to the lively atmosphere.

Chairman Washington also noted that the Windsor Historical Society was outside as well with Nikita and Rev Monique Sanders sharing out on history project.

B. Calendar addition - Indigenous People Recognition/United Nations Day

Chairman Washington noted the following additions to this year's calendar: October 24th, United Nations Day, November 1st recognizing Indigenous heritage month, November 4th Diwali Holiday, and November 11th for Veterans Day. It is also noted that December 1st is World Aids Day.

C. One Book One Windsor

Chairman Washington and Burke shared the list of books suggestions from community stakeholders. Chairman Washington asked all commissioners to choose their top three books by Friday, October 15th, 2021, and send it to him via email. Massa suggested the book Black Like Me by John Howard Griffin as another addition to the book list.

8. Items from Commissioners:

A. Potential Trips to Gain Experience

Chairman Washington brought up looking into renting a van to visit Mohegan Sun or Fox Woods and learn more about the Indigenous populations within Connecticut. Chairman Washington also suggested renting a van to visit the Human Rights Dodd Center at UConn to get to see some of the documents and artifacts. Mack suggested a potential trip to the 9/11 museum or other historical sights such as the hotel MLK was assassinated in or the Elvis museum. Mack also suggested visiting the statue of liberty and other Civil rights museums in the New York area since much has changed over the past few years. Armstrong also brought up the United Nations Day trip as another experience that could make a potential day trip.

B. Spring 2022 African American Museum at Washington D.C.

Chairman Washington suggested starting up another trip to the African American museum in the spring of 2022. Copeland suggested that the trip take place during the Windsor, Bloomfield and CREC spring break during the week of April 11th - 15th so that students, parents, and community members can attend without having to take additional time off. Chairman Washington also shared the past few times all attendees found their own transportation to the Washington D.C. area but that discounts to hotels were provided to all traveling on the trip.

C. Closing of the Animal Food Pantry

Massa and Armstrong shared that the local animal food pantry is closing and there is a need for pet food within the community. The pantry is set to close November 2021 with no current plan for what space or additional organization will come in to support those in need. .

9. Adjournment:

A motion was made for adjournment by Armstrong and seconded by Massa at 7:52 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Castella Copeland, Secretary