

**TOWN OF WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT  
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING - SEPTEMBER 14th, 2022**

**WINDSOR TOWN HALL, LUDLOW ROOM**

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Washington called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.
2. **Roll Call/Attendance:** Attendance was taken by Secretary Madison. Present were: Judge Kevin Washington, Castella Copeland-Smith, James Madison, Byron Bobb, Joyce Armstrong, Lisette LaTorre, Rebecca Jacobsen, Thomas Hayes, Patrick McMahon. Unexcused absences were: Leonard Swade, Linda Massa, Pat Mack. Attendance was logged in the attendance tracker.

As a brief aside, a picture of the committee members was taken. Chairman Washington indicated the committee MAY get chosen to ring the bell at the stock market in November or December--or not! Everyone was advised to not get too excited until the time comes as getting chosen is not guaranteed. If chosen, there will be about one week's notice only.

3. **Public Communications:** George Slate of 74 Ethan Drive addressed the commission. He noted that over the past two years, this committee and the Town Council have addressed key race issues on five occasions, which he listed. He noted that another issue he would like to address is that the town seal says that Windsor is an English settlement. He finds this of concern and asked whether the commission or the Town Council might address it. He also asked what we as a town might celebrate on our upcoming 400th anniversary. He asked that a day of mourning for indigenous people be considered. Chairman Washington noted that the HRC will be conducting activities during Indigenous People's Month, and this could be considered for that. Commissioner Hayes said we should look into what Massachusetts does. Chairman Washington asked that Commissioner Hayes look into it. Liaison McMahon said he would also get information on the topic and get it to Commissioner Hayes. Commissioner Copeland-Smith noted that there are many indigenous people's aspects to Windsor. She will get more materials and send them to everyone.
4. **Approval of Minutes, June 2022:** Commissioner Armstrong moved to accept the minutes. Commissioner Jacobsen seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.
5. **Liaison Report, Mr. Patrick McMahon, Finance Report 2023 FY:** Liaison McMahon provided the budget in writing. He reported that current funds are \$3,280. He reported that Juneteenth 2022 was over \$3,000 just by itself, so we may not be on track to cover that and should focus on getting contributions from a variety of organizations, including First Church and Hartford Foundation. He noted that some DE&I funds were redirected from the Town Manager last year, but that may not be able to happen again.

The committee needs to get its events into the Winter calendar for the town. The deadline is October 18th. The Winter calendar covers January to April activities. Secretary Madison to compile these and get them to Sandra Brown and Liaison McMahon once ready.

## 6. **New Business:**

### A. **Commissioner Roundtable:**

Chairman Washington asked everyone to review their activities for the summer.

### B. **Tentative Plan for Year**

The meeting schedule as presented in the meeting materials was reviewed. Meetings will continue to be on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 in the Ludlow Room through June.

### C. **Halloween**

The HRC will drop off candy. Members are welcome to stay to distribute but don't have to.

### D. **Homelessness**

Extensive discussion was had on the question of having a homeless night out. October was agreed to be the latest month for such an event as it would be too cold after that. The use of the high school gym was discussed as this would avoid the elements and encourage more young people to attend. LP Wilson's gym was also discussed. General consensus was that the logistics get complicated, and more critically, there are liability concerns regardless of facility. The scouting groups managed to execute an event like this circa 2013, but that is some time ago.

Under the worries of all the overhead, Commissioner Armstrong mentioned the Empty Bowls event structure as an alternative. This involves getting bowls from such sources as local schools or artists, nothing fancy, filling them with food, and providing them for a donation. This has far less logistical concerns and would actually generate donations.

The commissioners seemed relieved at the evaporation of all the logistical worries. Chairman Washington asked for a motion to approve doing Empty Bowls rather than an overnight. Commissioner Armstrong made the motion. Commissioner Jacobsen seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Washington designated this an All Hands on Deck event. The commission agreed we need a date on this soon. Chairman Washington will set the date. Commissioner LaTorre will gather further information and provide it to Chairman Washington.

### E. **Education/Scholarship**

We have \$692 in the student account. Chairman Washington would like to open this to more than the high school, and instead make it open to Windsor area schools. This would not be to sub-divide the dollars in pieces, but rather allow more students to apply for it. A member of the commission did reach out to the high school in January or February of this year, but the process disconnected somewhere. Liaison McMahon has the communications and will get the process in motion again by sending the prior communications and forms to Chairman Washington who will then bring it to the commission. The criteria for the scholarship is the

student going into some type of social justice discipline. The commission needs to designate how it will be disbursed. The commission, not the schools, will determine the winner.

#### **F. Bridge Builder Recipients Service Project**

In November, an event will be held with the previous Bridge Builders volunteers to gather clothes, socks, and hygiene type of products. This may get merged with the suites for veterans event.

#### **G. Bridge Builder Awards**

Chairman Washington said there is value in moving the awards to earlier in the year, perhaps January, which would put the nominations in November, with nominations starting in October. All commissioners are allowed to nominate. Specific dates are:

- 12/1 - Close of nominations.
- 1/12 - 6:30 p.m. Award event. Liaison McMahon to confirm this date and time.

#### **H. One Book One Windsor**

All commissioners are asked to send two titles to Secretary Madison before the October meeting. Secretary Madison will compile the list and get it to Sandra. The purpose and current selections are at <https://townofwindsorct.com/commissions/one-book-one-windsor-selection/>.

#### **I. Conversation on Race**

Student engagement was discussed. Chairman Washington would like to make this a major focus and get more students involved, particularly the work of the committee and its mission.

Vice-Chair Copeland-Smith was concerned about the logistics of the students getting to events including the committee meetings. She offered the idea of having them come to the committee meeting at 7:00 p.m. since the first 30 minutes is administrative.

Chairman Washington would like to get a student partner. Vice-Chair Copeland-Smith volunteered to look into it. Commissioner LaTorre volunteered to assist.

Commissioner Bobb expressed a desire to do something in September for Hispanic Heritage Month. Discussion addressed the concern of the month being half over, but landed on replacing the Juneteenth materials in the CVS display cases with Hispanic/Latino themed items. Vice-Chair Copeland-Smith will lead the effort to break down the Juneteenth materials. Commissioner LaTorre volunteered to lead getting the new materials up. Both will send communications asking for help from the team.

Discussion addressed mental health and student issues for October. A strong focus was on having multiple avenues for students. In particular the interest in trade schools was a dominate theme.

Commissioner Bobb noted that the student and career issue is too big for a single event. Discussion indicated consensus. Chairman Washington indicated he will find a way to have multiple sessions. See notes later in the meeting for at least one such additional event.

The needs of people who are deaf or blind was discussed. A recommendation was made for finding a speaker from an organization that specializes in the issue. Commissioner Armstrong volunteered to find out further information.

Discussion about November include voting, indigenous peoples and veterans. Of particular interest were the pre- and post-election events as follows:

- 10/18 virtual event pre-election.
- 11/15 virtual event post-election.

Chairman Washington indicated a strong interest for being involved in these.

Suits for Veterans was discussed as a possibility. The organization collects suits for veterans trying to find jobs. This is done for both men and women. The idea was to do the collection at town hall on some Saturday during November.

Discussion for Christmas included the limited time often available in the month, and the issues HIV/AIDS, transgender issues, and religions around the world. It was noted that native American religions should be included.

January will include MLK and conversations on race, as well as the release of the One Book One Windsor list, which is discussed elsewhere in these minutes.

February will focus on Black History Month. Chairman Washington reminded everyone that Black Jeopardy is a lot of work, and so is Juneteenth, so perhaps we should do Black Jeopardy in February. The agreement was to keep it in June, but distribute the work. Everyone is asked to come up with a few questions/answers for the game, and even make your own category.

March will focus on disability and climate change. Chairman Washington will contact the climate group in Windsor so our groups can work together.

April is Diversity month. The committee agreed to figure this out as it approaches. Commissioner Bobb noted that we wanted to make a second student/youth event back when we were discussing October. The committee agreed that a second student event should be added to April. Vice-Chair Copeland-Smith will be reaching out to the students and ensuring there is an April event as well.

May will focus on mental health, women's health, race, feminism, and the elderly.

June will focus on Men's health and Juneteenth.

## **J. Annual Report**

The annual report will be presented at that 9/19 Town Council meeting. Chairman Washington said he will keep it brief. All commissioners are welcome to attend.

7. **Old Business: Juneteenth 2022:** Chairman Washington noted that the committee must do Juneteenth planning sooner due to the total amount of work. He also noted that we must coordinate with Bloomfield so that our events can complement rather than conflict. He noted that Juneteenth is an "All hands on deck" event. He also noted other events that are "all hands on deck" include: homelessness, Veterans Day, Bridge Builders, Phenomenal Women, and Black History Month.
8. **Items from Commissioners:** Nothing specific was raised.
9. **Adjournment/Next Meeting:** Commissioner Armstrong made a motion to adjourn, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

James Madison, Secretary