

Minutes
Town of Farmington, CT
Human Relations Commission
Online-Web Conference
November 16, 2020
6:30 pm

Attendees

Jay Tulin
Services)
Donna Mambrino
Kay Higgins
Andrew Arboe
Services)
Zalman Nakhimovsky
Farmington)
Christine Mergenthaler (on speakerphone for part of meeting)
Ruth Grobe (public member)

Town of Farmington

Nancy Parent (Community & Rec
Zack Martin (Police Dept.)
Joe Capodiferro (Town Council)
Chris Montes (Community & Rec
Mike Demicco (CT State Rep.-

A. Call to Order

Jay Tulin called the meeting to order at 6:42 pm.

B. Public Comment

Mike Demicco (CT State Representative for Farmington) reached out to DOT per Ruth Grobe to inquire about signage with flashing lights at intersection near Westerleigh. DOT will be upgrading the lights and signage from the traditional 8-inch yellow flashers (currently present) to new standard Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB). However, the upgrade will not be until sometime in 2022. Mike mentioned that he would be happy to help Ruth Grobe reach out to DOT about the timeline and expedition if needed.

C. Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion made by Donna Mambrino and seconded by Kay Higgins, the minutes from September 21, 2020 were approved as presented. Unanimously approved.

D. Presentation – Color of Justice/Fun Cops

1) Color of Justice

- a. Chris Montes presented on Color of Justice, a CPTV program that highlights the disproportionate minority contact for youth of color throughout the entire juvenile justice system. Chris runs a local interagency group of professionals who work with youth from 15 local towns to have dialogues about this trend and how to become more aware of inadequacies. Nancy will send out the link to the documentary for commission members' reference.

2) Farmington-Unionville Community Officers Provide Support (FUn COPS)

- a. Program funded by grants from Farmington Community Chest. Provides opportunities for local law enforcement and at-risk youth in town to interact in relaxed, recreational settings and form positive relationships. The program has been very successful, offering activities like fishing trips, mini golf, go cart

racing, baseball games, etc. Zack Martin of the FPD commented that the program has been very beneficial in community policing.

3) Reports

1) Chair Report

- a. Chris Montes's presentation will be the first in a series of public presentations about programs relating to Human Relations that will be scheduled for the future meetings. Looking to schedule ADL (anti-defamation league) and True Colors in January and March, respectively.
- b. Jay Tulin mentioned finalizing the needs assessment as a priority for the commission.
- c. Anti-Semitism events took place in October and November. Farmington commission did not participate due to time constraints but may consider it next year. Jay would like to explore reaching out Congresswoman Jahana Hayes about her public support of efforts against Anti-Semitism and a town council public letter of support.
- d. Jay has been reaching out to other communities' Human Rights Commissions about the possibility of a consortium of commission chairs to collaborate and share ideas for programming and initiatives.
- e. HRC endorsed the Friends Program, a disability awareness initiative, at Farmington High School last year. Andrew Arboe reached out to Principal Scott Hurwitz at the high school but has not solidified a meeting to discuss the future of the program or possibilities for virtual interaction.
- f. FHS building committee update – progress still on pause due to COVID. Commission will keep checking in about ADA compliance concerns.
- g. Jay would like to schedule another commission retreat, possibly in person, once needs assessment is completed.

2) Department of Community Services

- a. Director of Community & Recreational Services, Nancy Parent, reported that staff are conducting holiday giving program, adjusted to gift cards only due to COVID. Donations are coming in but are slower than in previous years, most likely due to the nature of the program this year (not accepting presents and actual food). The Community Thanksgiving Dinner will take place grab-and-go style this year. Grocery shopping and volunteer programs are continuing to provide COVID-19 relief, and fuel and financial assistance programs are all in full swing. Dial-a-ride services have continued uninterrupted, still operating with single rider trips due to COVID regulations.

3) Town Council Liaison

- a. Joe Capodiferro left early to attend another meeting. No report.

4) Police Department

- a. Officer Zack Martin re-stated that the Westerleigh crosswalk issue has police support from the traffic division.

5) Racial Equality Task Force Update

- a. Nancy Parent reported that the task force has had meetings with different town entities to look at statistical data and town policies. Still waiting to meet with state legislators. Task force is working to solidify the six goals to present to town council. Kay Higgins added that it is invaluable to have a platform for black voices in the Farmington community through this task force. Nancy mentioned that there may be a recommendation for a requirement of minority participation on certain commissions and boards in the future.

4) New Business

- 1) Westerleigh Intersection cont'd
 - a. Christine Mergenthaler commented that there was recently a car accident at the intersection near Westerleigh that knocked down the pedestrian crosswalk button and it has not been replaced. Zack Martin stated that the CT DOT maintains those lights and would have to be notified of that. Nancy Parent said she would contact Russ Arnold with the town Highway dept. to reach out to DOT as soon as possible.

5) Old Business

- 1) Update on Human Rights Day, Dec. 10
 - a. Nancy Parent introduced final version of presentation, without voiceovers, that will be played for town council. Donna Mambrino read the proclamation that will be read by town council member at the meeting. Commission members approved presentation but Donna would like to add more historic information about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 2) Village Center ad hoc committee
 - a. Jay Tulin reported that about 30 community members attended the recent meeting. First phase will be repairing sidewalks (starting construction spring/summer 2021), second phase will be construction of new sidewalks, lighting and other enhancements. Committee recommended that decorative solar lighting be included in phase 2. HRC will continue to support the new ad hoc committee's work for this project. No comment from other members.
- 3) Needs Assessment Update
 - a. Nancy Parent presented current version of needs assessment. Commission members offered suggestions and posed questions about the content.

Kay Higgins and Nancy Parent clarified the HRC's role in resolving discrimination issues so that it is clear in the assessment survey.

Donna Mambrino questioned how the survey would be distributed electronically. Nancy Parent responded that it would be pushed out through department email lists, town website, social media, other commissions, and possibly through partnerships with Board of Ed and Library.

Jay Tulin asked what response would render the questionnaire a valid representation of the town. Nancy Parent responded that the HRC would be aiming for 30% participation (roughly 3,000 households).

Christine Mergenthaler left the meeting.

Ruth Grobe commented that the racial identity question (#5) is not inclusive enough as listed. She suggested South Asian American, Southeast Asian American, Middle Eastern American, etc. Nancy Parent offered to research the issue to be more inclusive.

Jay Tulin commented that the question about previous interaction with HRC (#6) should be more than yes or no, and whether the question about the type of programming desired (#7) is comprehensive enough. Nancy Parent said a fillable field can be added to #7 for other options. Jay Tulin also asked for a fillable field for the question about resources (#8).

Donna Mambrino suggested too many fillable fields will turn off survey participants. Simpler is better.

Kay Higgins suggested adding “Non-Binary” to the gender identity question (#4).

Donna Mambrino motioned to accept the survey with agreed upon amendments from meeting. Zalman Nakhimovsky seconded the motion. The needs assessment with amendments was approved unanimously by commission members.

4) Future Meetings

The third Monday of January is Martin Luther King Jr. Day, so the next meeting will be held on January 11th instead of the 18th.

6) Adjournment

Upon a motion made by Donna Mambrino and seconded by Kay Higgins, the meeting was adjourned at 8:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Parent, Secretary