

Minutes
Town of Farmington, CT
Human Relations Commission
Online-Web Conference
September 21, 2020
6:30 pm

Attendees

Ruth Grobe
Donna Mambrino
Kay Higgins
Andrew Arboe
Zalman Nakhimovsky
Jay Tulin

Town of Farmington

Nancy Parent (Community & Rec Services)
Zack Martin (Police Dept.)
Joe Capodiferro (Town Council)

A. Call to Order

Jay Tulin called the meeting to order at 6:38 pm.

B. Public Comment

Ruth Grobe encouraged commission to support the Westerleigh crosswalk issue (being discussed under New Business). Crosswalk has been viewed as dangerous by several residents as traffic does not stop for pedestrians. Some of the residents are afraid to cross the street on that corner. DOT has indicated that they will look into installing flashing lights at the intersection. Officer Zack Martin commented that the traffic division of the police department is in support of a light there and he will add the intersection to their running list of enforcement areas for traffic officers to watch and ticket offenders if needed.

C. Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion made by Donna Mambrino and seconded by Zalman Nakhimovsky, the minutes from June 8, 2020 were approved as presented. Unanimously approved.

D. Correspondence

None.

E. Reports

1) Chair Report

- a. Welcome to Andrew Arboe – Andrew is a new member to the commission; his focus is on disability awareness and education and he is currently the Autism Transition Coordinator for Planning Across the Spectrum in Hartford.
- b. Goals include increasing visibility in Farmington for the Human Relations Commission and its mission, working closely with Racial Equality Task Force (updates will be provided at each meeting going forward), focusing on all anti-bigotry issues, including anti-Semitism and LGBTQ rights.

2) Department of Community Services

- a. Director of Community & Recreational Services, Nancy Parent, reported that staff are continuing to provide COVID-19 relief through unemployment assistance, food assistance and volunteer programs. Department was happy to help the school system provide breakfast/lunches to families in need throughout the summer. Senior Center recently opened in a limited capacity with outdoor activities. Dial-a-ride services have continued uninterrupted with new regulations.

- 3) Town Council Liaison
 - a. Joe Capodiferro reported that the town has received the grant money for the sidewalks on Main Street so the project should begin soon. They are hoping to stretch it as far as they can down Main Street if cost allows.
- 4) Police Department
 - a. Officer Zack Martin re-stated that the Westerleigh crosswalk issue would be address with police presence whenever possible.
- 5) Racial Equality Task Force Update
 - a. Nancy Parent reported that the task force has had three official meetings and is working on a timeline for accomplishing their six goals. The goals involve different town departments and functions and how the task force can make recommendations in these areas. The task force members are currently hearing presentations to learn more about each of the focus areas (public health, education, town administration, police department, economic development) before making a presentation to the town council. Kay Higgins added that the meetings have spawned a lot of discussion within the community.

F. New Business

- 1) Proposals for Anti-Semitism awareness programs
 - a. Voices of Hope – Organization that offers educational programs regarding Holocaust and genocide. There is an existing curriculum in Farmington schools, which could be an opportunity to build a relationship with the BOE in the future.
 - b. Anti-Defamation League – Walk Against Hate – October 18th – Jay Tulin proposed hosting a virtual event like the ADL’s Walk Against Hate, involving the Town Council and BOE to get the whole town involved. However, there is not a lot of time to plan. Nancy Parent proposed joining the larger organization’s movement in their virtual programming or having the HRC members walk as a virtual team in support of the ADL’s event. Nancy also suggested hosting a virtual bulletin board where community members can post “why I walk against hate.” Kay Higgins and Donna Mambrino indicated they would like to learn more about the ADL before endorsing or participating in the event as a commission. Will table the event until next year.
Jay Tulin introduced ADL’s programs - “No Place for Hate,” which is a curriculum that might be worth introducing to the BOE in the future, and “A World of Difference Institute” for future discussions.
 - c. Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford – Jay Tulin reached out to the Federation and discussed possible collaborations. He suggested co-sponsoring a webinar at the end of October about how to talk to children about hate and anti-Semitism. Nancy Parent asked whether a sponsorship involves a financial commitment. Jay Tulin said he would report back with the answer. Donna Mambrino commented that the HRC should do more research before collaborating with the organizations mentioned.
 - d. Kay Higgins suggested that the events and programming of the HRC should be more inclusive of all groups within the community, maybe choosing one or two anti-Semitism events along with those for other marginalized groups. Donna Mambrino agreed and said the anti-Semitism could be the overarching focus for the year for the HRC, while still including other efforts.
- 2) Westerleigh Crosswalk Issue
 - a. Covered in earlier discussions in the meeting.
- 3) 2020-2021 HRC Schedule
 - a. Jay Tulin suggested increasing HRC meetings to bi-monthly for a total of 5 to 6 meetings per year (versus 4 now). Andrew Arboe suggested Mondays for future meetings. Zalman Nakhimovksy motioned to approve HRC meeting the third

Monday of every month with no meetings in July or August. Kay Higgins seconded the motion, unanimously approved. The next meetings will be November 16, 2020 and January 18, 2021.

- 4) AJC Global Jewish Advocacy Letter of Support
 - a. Jay Tulin suggested having the HRC request that the Town Council issue a support letter against anti-Semitism as a statement for Farmington. This topic will be tabled for later discussion.

G. Old Business

- 1) Update on Human Rights Day, Dec. 10
 - a. Jay Tulin gave examples of events for Human Rights Day hosted by other towns with HRCs, specifically West Hartford. He asked commission members for input regarding in-person or virtual events for Farmington. Nancy Parent suggested having the Town Council read the Human Rights Day proclamation at a council meeting, in conjunction with a presentation by the HRC.

Donna Mambrino commented that this year's Human Rights Day theme is "Women Who Shaped the Universal Declaration." Nancy Parent suggested that the council presentation could include slides about influential women and a pre-recorded musical performance by high school students. Donna Mambrino motioned to create a sub-committee to plan the presentation and details for the December 8, 2020 council meeting. Zalman Nakhimovsky seconded the motion.

Donna Mambrino left the meeting.

- 2) Facebook Page
 - a. Jay Tulin introduced the idea of establishing guidelines for Facebook post content and frequency. Kay Higgins commented that racial tensions were monopolizing the page and posts were being made too close together, shadowing each other's content. Nancy Parent suggested researching what other HRCs are posting and endorsing before establishing guidelines.
- 3) Village Center ad hoc committee
 - a. Jay Tulin reviewed the HRC's involvement with the original committee and said the HRC will continue to support the new ad hoc committee's work for this project. No comment from other members.
- 4) Needs Assessment Update
 - a. Nancy Parent discussed the suggested community survey that could be housed on the town website. Commission members needed more time to review the questions included and make suggestions. Nancy Parent commented that she would like to add more topics if commission members can give their input. Jay Tulin suggested the assessment survey should go live by the end of the year. The needs assessment will be discussed at the November 18, 2020 meeting.
- 5) CC=A Update
 - a. Jay Tulin commented that the Coalition for Equal Access, specifically Ruth Grobe, has been helping UConn medical students advocate for a more comprehensive curriculum regarding the health needs of persons with disabilities.

H. Adjournment

Upon a motion made by Zalman Nakhimovsky and seconded by Kay Higgins, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Parent, Secretary