

Minutes  
Town of Farmington, CT  
Racial Equality Taskforce  
Online Webinar  
January 31, 2022  
6:30 P.M.

**Attendees**

Chris Cloud, Chair  
Joseph Capodiferro  
Edward Giannaros  
Sarah Smith  
Yahmina Penn  
Jeremy McLaurin  
Tanner Muszynski  
Nieka Thompson  
Jessica Harrison  
Nadine Canto  
Liz Fitzsimmons (BOE Chair)

**Staff**

Nancy Parent  
Kory Vincent  
Anna Savastano

**A. Call to Order.**

Chris Cloud called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM

**B. Public Comment.**

None.

**C. Review of Minutes.**

1) **To approve the attached November 29, 2021 minutes.**

Upon a motion made and seconded (McLaurin/Thomson) the motion passed unanimously.

**D. Chair Report.**

Chris Cloud greeted the group and said he was happy to see everyone and wished them all a happy and healthy New Year 2022. He said that the group should consider meeting in person sometime in the future, but the meetings will be staying on Zoom for the foreseeable future.

**E. Introduction of new liaisons.**

Rafeena Bacchus Lee introduced herself as a new liaison from the Farmington Town Council. She has lived in Farmington since 2008 and was elected to Town Council this past November. She is an attorney and has three children in the Farmington Public Schools. She was the Cochair of Comprehensive FHS, and she serves on the Greater Hartford Community fund. She told the group that she is really looking forward to her term on the Town Council and is excited about all the fantastic things happening in Farmington.

Liz Fitzsimmons shared that she was recently elected as Chair of the Board of Education. She will not be the liaison to the Taskforce, but she sits ex-officio to all Board of Education committees and will jump in when available. She told the Taskforce that she wants to remain active in this group because she feels this is an important

committee.

Nadine Canto introduced herself as the new Board of Education Liaison to the Taskforce. She was raised in Farmington and her children are enrolled in the Farmington Schools. She sits on the Farmington Community Chest. She has experience grant writing, and she is currently the Chair of Project Graduation at the High School.

**G. Update and discussion on Priority 1 Goals.**

Chris Cloud reported that he had a conversation with Nicole from the Farmington High School regarding the FHS Black Student Union. The Black Student Union has reached out to him to participate in a series of videos for Black History month. He will be participating and is looking for more people to participate in these videos. Jessica Harrison said that she would be happy to help in any way.

Chris also shared that he is working with Portia Corbett from the Farmington Historical Society on "Memories Stones" to lift up individuals of African descent and highlight them where they lived or where they worked. There was also a discussion of a Walking Trail highlighting the Amistad and Freedom Trail. Anna Savastano shared that the ExploreFarmington website had a selection of virtual walking trails available on ExploreFarmington and showed the group the webpage:  
<https://www.explorefarmington.com/walking-map>.

Rafeena asked the BOE Liaison if there are any classes in the lower grades that taught local Farmington History? They did not believe so. Nancy Parent suggested that it would be a fun course for Continuing Education to offer.

**Webpage:**

The Taskforce had a discussion on webpage - [www.diversefarmington.com](http://www.diversefarmington.com). Anna Savastano shared what has been done to date and the group provided feedback. Chris Cloud suggested a virtual community bulletin board. The group discussed the best way to get feedback and be transparent and receptive of the views and opinions of the community in a safe way.

**Community Conversation Goals:**

Nancy reported that she has been working with the RE-Center, who has led the past Community Conversations. They have a new Executive Director, and she is working with them on a three-part conversation. The format of the conversations would be interactive with a presentation followed by break out groups. She is just finalizing the new dates and as soon as that comes up, she will begin to advertise.

**Board of Education:**

Sarah Smith asked the Board of Education Liaison about the Equity & Inclusion Coordinator PreK-12 position in the Farmington Schools. She heard that the position is currently vacant and recruiting. She asked if the school intended on having parents be on the hiring panel during the recruitment of this position.

Rafeena Bacchus Lee requested that the BOE liaison advocate on the parent's behalf for a diverse hiring committee for this position. The group strongly echoed this sentiment. There was general discussion on this topic.

Liz Fitzsimmons responded that the position is currently posted, and they do have a group of panelists, however she did not believe that the administration intended on having parents on the panel. Fitzsimmons agreed that it should be a diverse panel and said she will reach out to Kim Wynne from the School System to pass along the suggestion.

Nadine Canto also stressed that she understood that the number one priority is the diverse slate of people interviewing. She is here to listen and report back to the Board of Education.

**G. Status Update/Check-in.**

Nancy Parent facilitated a brief check-in with the members of the taskforce to garner feedback on the status of the group, what they liked and didn't like, and what they wanted changed. Each member of the taskforce had the opportunity to offer their feedback and direction. Some of the takeaways from the exercise were:

- a. The group needs to clearly define their goals and to be more focused.
- b. Continue to work with the Board of Education on communication and common goals.
- c. More work with Community Policing.

Chris Cloud concluded the exercise by saying "If not us, who?" There is more work to be done and he is thankful for the commitment from the members of the Taskforce.

**H. Public Comment.** None.

**I. Adjournment.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Anna Savastano  
Management Analyst  
Clerk