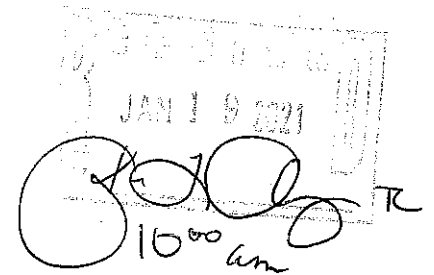


Human Relations Commission
Minutes for December 17, 2020



Attendees

Beena Pandit, Ritu Goel, Anitha Elango, Karell Rose, Christy Shaher, Linda Jeski, Carolyn Carey, Town Council liaisons Mary Justine Hockenberry, Erica Evans, Guests Damian Humphrey, Anthony Salano.

Public Input: None

Chairperson's Report: Chair Ritu Goel about how HRC has had a very successful year even during the pandemic. Around 50 yard signs showing support for BLM have been distributed to town residents and more have been ordered.

Liaison Report: M.J. Hockenberry conveyed that the HRC has been doing a phenomenal job and that they should always reach out to the TC for help and commended the HRC for staying positive and not tolerating hate. She also talked about a new group called Flip comprised of Democrats and Republicans who would like to learn more about the HRC. Councilor Erica Evans reported that the BLM subcommittee had a joint event with the library and had hoped to do an event with HRC in the fall, but with the Pandemic situation the event did not occur. She also mentioned that the SW schools were conducting an essay contest for MLK that involved Senator Murphy and that the BLM subcommittee was looking into something similar as well, with regards to MLK celebrations.

MLK Day Discussion

The chair opened the discussion on MLK day celebrations by introducing the idea of having a community conversation on why black lives matter and requested the commissioner's thoughts on this issue. Vice chair Beena Pandit suggested that the event should be uplifting and entertaining, and also suggesting inviting courant community journalist Quoron Walker. Ask residents to volunteer towards community projects for MLK and other celebratory activities like having South Windsor students submit art work on peace and what MLK day means to them. Ritu Goel mentioned that HRC had promised the BLM subcommittee of the Town Council that they would

make BLM the focus of MLK day celebrations. Guest Anthony Salano contributed his thoughts on being a new resident in town, his experiences as a black man living in a town where he has seen flying confederate flags. Karell Rose contributed her thoughts on what MLK day means to her, that MLK was a radical in his day, that so much of the issues he fought for is still relevant, and that he was not just a person who only talked about peace. Anitha Elango mentioned that she agreed with Karell and that the MLK day celebrations should focus on BLM and the fact that the community has suffered disproportionately in the pandemic and still faces the same injustices that existed in the sixties makes the focus on BLM more relevant. Carolyn Carey suggested that the community conversation should have a clear structure and theme and that she liked the idea. Christy Shaher said that she would like to hear from more members from the community and agreed with Carolyn on having a more structured event and an event that reflected the current reality with everything that has happened this year. Linda Jeski liked the idea of having a community conversation and talked about the relevance of Anthony's experiences and that the country seems to have taken a very negative turn where social justice and issues of equality were concerned and that it felt like being back in the sixties. Damian Humphrey conveyed his views that having an MLK even based on the misguided narratives about MLK ignoring his radical fight for social justice would be doing a disservice to black and brown people who are affected by racism. He felt that white Americans and their psyche are also affected by racism and how racism shapes their thoughts and beliefs in a very negative way. He felt that the conversation should also focus on the ways in which whites are also affected by racism. Damian suggested that the topic should be "how racism affects me" as this would make white people as well as other communities to be more introspective and thoughtful. This topic was agreed on and Beena agreed to make the event flyer. Ritu suggested inviting elected officials to the event and also the SWPD chief, the school Diversity Director and so on. While they will not be speaking and the focus will be on the community participants. Date was fixed as Jan 21st and Quoron Walker will be invited as well. Questions will be sent in advance to the new HRC email established for this purpose.

Meeting adjourned.