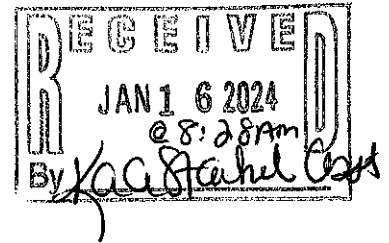


MINUTES

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RACIAL EQUITY COMMISSION



SOUTH WINDSOR TOWN HALL

Monday, January 8, 2024

MADDEN ROOM

TIME: 5:30 p.m.

1. Call meeting to order. 17:37

**2. Roll Call:**

- ◆ Chair Renu Cabot
- ◆ Vice Chair Suresh Jeyaprasad
- ◆ Commissioner Mike Ouellette
- ◆ Commissioner Steve Cordeiro
- ◆ Commissioner Janice Favreau
- ◆

**Designees Liaisons in attendance:**

- ◆ Kristian Lindstrom, Chief of Police
- ◆ Vanessa Perry, Director of Human Resources

**3. Approval of Minutes: December 11, 2023**

- a. Moved by Mike Ouellette
- b. Seconded by Steve Cordeiro
- c. Passed unanimously.

**4. Public Input:**

No public input.

**5. Chair Report:**

- a. Second speaker confirmed for Social Justice Day event – UCONN professor, Dr. Craemer who will speak on the topic of “social justice” in general.
- b. Candance Low, ADA speaker has volunteered.
- c. Chair working with Commissioner Tim Appleton to have World Social Justice Day recognized on February 22, 2024, by the South Windsor Town Council, to be brought up at the next Town Council Meeting. Chair will also work with Amanda Poma, Clerk of the Council to draft the Proclamation for the 1.16.24 Town Council Meeting. The request was first raised by Town Councilor (and Commission liaison) Steven King at the 1.2.24 meeting.

## **6. Liaison Reports:**

- a. Council Liaison (Steven King, Jr.) absent – no report
- b. Town Manager Liaison (Vanessa Perry)  
3 responses received to the posted “Climate Survey” cards in the Town Hall
- c. Board of Education Liaison (Vacant)
- d. Police Department Liaison (Chief Kristian Lindstrom)
  - 1. Police Department survey has been in use since last month – so far there has been a 60% response rate, with a 90% positive rating.  
Discussion: Surveys are sent via text within a reasonable time frame after an incident requiring a police response via text to the citizen requesting the police service.
  - 2. Police Department is at full staff.
  - 3. Dispatcher (and SJ&RJ Commissioner) Steve Cordeiro “officially retired” from the Police Dept.

## **7. Discussion Items**

### **a. Discussion on Social Justice Day Event**

- 1. Saturday, February 24, 2024, in the Friends Room of the SW Library
- 2. Time: 10:00 am. to 2:00 p.m. with first hour for attendees to walk around to vendor/exhibitor tables.
- 3. Advertising of the Social Justice Day event: Commissioner Ouellette volunteered his son to work on creating a flyer for the event, to go out on social media, perhaps some paper rooms in strategic places around town. Commission Favreau suggested to Chair to check if the Friends of the Library would agree to co-sponsor the event, since the event is taking place at the library and ask them if they send event notice to their membership list. Town Manager liaison, Vanessa Perry offered to upload the event notice to the “Subscriber Section” of the Town website.
- 4. Chair spoke to librarian, who will put out books around the library, related to the Social Justice Day Event on the day it occurs.
- 5. Chair mentioned that CT Coalition for Race Amity (the SW Chapter) will be at the Event.
- 6. The subcommittee will work on recruiting groups related to Social Justice to exhibit at the tables.
- 7. Subcommittee has lost one member, Commissioner Milord, Commissioner Favreau volunteered to replace her.
- 8. Refreshment discussion: Vanessa Perry to check on any specific town requirements to serving refreshments at the Event. Suggestion of donation/sponsorship by various exhibitors. Commissioner Favreau noting that Commission should have some basic refreshment such as water and cookies, if allowed.

9. Chair noted need for Subcommittee to meet immediately and suggested a Zoom Meeting, although Commissioner Favreau requested it be in person at Town Hall, if possible. Recruitment of exhibitors high on priority list, and Chair asked for suggestions from all members of the Commission.
10. Potential 3<sup>rd</sup> panelist to be Chair's son, who manages a charity for the Homeless in Hartford, to serve as an inspiration for town youth and how one person can make a change.
11. Discussion on length of time for panelist presentations – agreed on 15 minutes each. Q&A for all to be taken after.

**b. Discussion on South Windsor Town Hall Restroom accessibility**

1. Commissioner Favreau brought this issue up at the September 11, 2023 meeting and Town Council Liaison, Steven King, Jr. promised to look into the concerns she raised. On December 11, 2023, he sent a link to the Town of South Windsor's ADA Accessibility Report and a quote from the Town Manager which stated to the effect that according to Clay Majors the Bathrooms in the Town Hall were upgraded to meet ADA requirements back in 2019.
2. Commissioner Favreau brought her son in a wheelchair to the Town Hall last week Wednesday, (Jan. 3, 2024) to test out the South Windsor Town Hall Restrooms and in particular the basement level restroom that was cited by the Town Manager. It was her finding upon accessing all 3 levels of Town Hall and all the women's "Accessible Restrooms" on those floors, that there was considerable difficulty in entering and exiting the restroom entrance doors because of their weight and the ½ inch threshold which block the castors on her son's wheelchair. She further noted that the Women's "Accessible" Restroom located in the Town Hall lobby (which had the 'widest' amount of space in the accessible toilet compartment) had a stall door which conflicted with the opening of the entrance door to the restroom, and that this toilet compartment as was the case with all the Women's "Accessible" toilet compartments, did not have enough space between the end of the toilet and the stall door to permit the door to be closed while her son uses the toilet, as his wheelchair must face the toilet in order for him to transfer. This prevents him from having privacy while using the toilet. He would also be exposed if he were using the toilet, to anyone who might be walking by in the hallway, if the entrance door to the restroom was opened by someone wishing to enter the restroom. Additionally, there is a lack of space in all three Women's "Accessible" restrooms, between the stalls and the sinks, making it hard to turn the wheelchair around to use the sinks. Clearly, a wheelchair in the restroom, would also make it difficult for another user to be in the restroom at the same time. Further, the Women's "Accessible" Restroom in the basement, is blocked by a manual opening door in the hallway leading to this restroom, which makes it difficult for a wheelchair user to hold open the door and propel their wheelchair through. Once through that hallway door,

the wheelchair user is faced with another heavy oak door to enter the Women's "Accessible" restroom along with the same threshold issue. The space in the toilet compartment of this restroom was even smaller than the one located in the lobby. The toilet compartment located on the third floor Women's "Accessible" restroom, would not even permit the wheelchair enter. Commissioner Favreau, then came back to the South Windsor Town Hall on Thursday, January 4, 2023, using her son's wheelchair to see if it were any more manageable, as her son is a left-sided hemiplegic and has no use of his left hand and she would be using both of her hands. Commissioner Favreau also on this day went into all the Men's "Accessible" Restrooms located on all the three floors in the Town Hall found the issues to the same as the Women's "Accessible" Restrooms, located on those levels. Even with the use of two hands, Commissioner Favreau had difficulty propelling the wheelchair through the restroom entrance doors and using the toilet compartments.

3. Further, Commissioner Favreau noted that the electronic accessible basement entrance door to the Town Hall has been locked for "hardening purposes" and is only for use by Town Hall employees, although the Greater Windsor Probate Court is located on that level and would have a higher percentage of elderly and handicapped persons needing entrance on that level. Disabled users must now park on the upper parking lot, navigate the pavers, and then a ramp, and then enter the front door to the Town Hall, go through the lobby, down a hall to the elevator, only to be faced – yet again, by the same manual only opening door that leads to Probate Court and the "Accessible Restrooms". This would be difficult, if not impossible for a frail elderly person using a walker.
4. Commissioner Favreau sent a formal Complaint letter along with photos chronicling the struggles of her wheelchair bound son and herself to the Town Manager and requested a meeting on Monday, January 8, 2024. The Town Manager, and Vanessa Perry, who is both the HR Director for the Town of South Windsor, and its ADA Compliance Officer met with Commissioner Favreau and her husband, John Pelkey. Commissioner Favreau outlined the above issues to both individuals. It is the contention of both, that the Town Hall is in ADA Compliance; however, the "usability" of these rooms does not meet the "spirit of the law" because in fact, they are not usable in their current state. Commissioner Favreau stated that the ideal solution is to create a "Family Restroom" that could not only be used by wheelchair users, but also families when bringing children of the opposite gender and perhaps including a baby changing station as is prevalent in many family restrooms today. The Town Manager stated that there is no money for this. Commissioner Favreau suggested that this be idea be included in a Capital Budget Request, and that in the meantime perhaps some minor changes could be made such as electrifying the restroom entrance doors. The Town Manager remained non-committal.

5. The Commission members discussed this and supported the idea that the Commission's Town Council liaison, Steve King, bring a resolution to the Town Council to request a feasibility and engineering study regarding the creation of a "Family Restroom" in the lobby of the South Windsor Town Hall. Commissioner Favreau volunteered to reach out to him.
6. Other business: None.
7. Adjournment
  - a. Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Favreau.
  - b. Seconded by Commissioner Ouellette.
  - c. Motion approved unanimously.

Commission Members:

Timothy Appleton  
Renu Cabot  
Lauren Chung  
Steven Cordeiro  
Janice Favreau  
Suresh Jayaprasad  
Ligi-Elin Milford  
Michael Ouelette

Commission Liaisons/Designees:

Steven King, Jr., Town Council  
TBA, Board of Education  
Kristian Lindstrom, Chief of Police  
Vanessa Perry, Director of Human Resources  
TBA, SW Business Community Member