

Town of Hartford Committee on Racial Equity & Inclusion
Wednesday, July 17th, 2019
6pm to 7:30pm
Amended 09.04.19

In Attendance: John Hall (Chair), Kim Souza (Clerk), Ann Reynolds, Michelle Boleski, Jameson Davis, Community Members, Kevin 'Coach' Christie, Dalia, Asma, Ramon, Peggy

Sara Campbell (Vice Chair) arrived at 6:30pm

Chair called the meeting to order at 6:10pm

Ann moved to accept the 06.27.19 minutes as presented. Jameson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. **(NOTE: Minutes from June 19 meeting have not yet been approved. Need to add that to the 08.07 meeting.)**

Discussion of Proposed Amendments to the Fair & Impartial Policing Policy

Community members were invited to share their experience of the 07.16 Selectboard meeting.

Ramon described the meeting as a 'rough ride'. Upon arrival, Ramon and others were harassed in the parking lot. Racial slurs were used toward them and they were asked about being a taxpayer in the town.

Dalia's experience included being followed around the building by someone (possibly a Town employee) taking away the photo posters that they brought to display. She said the meeting space did not feel safe; people were being dehumanized; non-residents of Hartford were not allowed to speak until the end. They showed support by snapping fingers but did not escalate the situation.

Asma reported being accosted upon arrival by a person in a yellow shirt. Some of the Dartmouth students who attended told Asma that 'this was the first time they'd seen racism right in front of their face': Comments shouted at them included, 'What are you doing here?' 'Where do you live?' and 'Leave the Selectboard alone.'

Asma was worried for the people who risked being there. Asma observed that in the same room where it was stated, 'There is no racism in our town', there was plenty of racism visible.

John noted that the 07.30 Selectboard meeting will probably have even greater attendance. He wants to be sure that the Selectboard will make it a safe space.

It was recommended that there be some kind of trained marshals or Legal Observers present as visible 'peacekeepers'.

Michelle noted that if Town employees are on site as community members, they should not be controlling the space. If they are there acting as Town employees, they should be wearing name badges/Town ID. John will share that request with the Town Manager.

Coach Christie noted that everything around meeting process should be developed in advance and shared with the school as well, in the event that the meeting takes place in one of the public schools. Jameson suggested that a list of 'conduct' / expectations be established and shared publicly with the 07.30 agenda when it is warned.

Coach also suggested that the Town consider using the format that the State legislature uses during public hearings. Attendees sign up on 2 lists. One list for Hartford residents and one for non-residents. Each person indicates if they want to speak in favor or against the proposed amendment. Moderator (?) calls residents first and calls from each 'side' alternately. It was noted that people do not have to list their real name on the clipboard.

Michelle asked if there is any kind of statute that says non-residents can't participate? No. There is a 'practice' per coach. Hartford has been really open to other voices, formulated in a way that helps people feel safe.

Kim made a motion that the Chair contact town & school leaders including Town Manager, School Superintendent and Selectboard Chair, regarding procedural guidelines for July 30 meeting. Jameson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Jameson moved that guidelines be posted as a part of the warned agenda. Kim Seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

John will ask Simon to request that the Town Manager discuss the guidelines with Town staff in person, as a group (not in a written memo).

Content of the FIPP was discussed. State policy has wording that allows for state & local agencies to act, racially profile, specifically relating to immigration status.

Ann noted that SB was invited to start with the FIPP amendment. Jameson said that the working group did start with the Winooski policy. Entire conversation has been about the amendments. Detailed Section 12A about collaboration with federal immigration officials. Jameson also pointed out that the SB can pass anything we want, but what good is it if Hartford PD won't enforce it? The Town Manager did say that if it is passed, he will implement it. Next step will be how to we remedy the lack of enforcement.

Coach made the observation that accountability as a state has not been put into the State's FIPP. We don't even know if FIPP is being enforced in Winooski. He reported that an amendment in the works to 518 that says the Governor or SB or Town Manager could call for a 3rd party investigation. i.e. Human Rights commission. Could put that into our Hartford policy?

John pointed out that, going into next meeting, we're not talking about law. We're talking about policy which is communication going from the Town to the TM to the HPD. 'This is what we expect of you...' No communication with ICE with these very few specific exceptions.

Ann & Michelle will connect with Asma prior to July 30th meeting to find out ways they can help attendees feel more safe entering and within the meeting.

Other business

Ann reported that Amanda Garces sent an email indicating that the Vermont Coalition for Ethnic & Social Equity in Schools is considering putting HCOREI on the commission. They will be back in touch with Ann to discuss further.

Coach shared that a legislative Ethnic Caucus is being established for the first time in Vermont. This will help increase access for their group.

Upcoming meeting dates (**beginning at 6pm**) are:

Wed Aug 7
Wed Aug 21
Wed Sept 4
Wed Sept 18
Wed Oct 2
Wed Oct 16
Wed Nov 6
Wed Nov 20
Wed Dec 4
Wed Dec 18
Wed Jan 15

The motion to adjourn at 8:02pm was made by Sara. Seconded by Michelle.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Souza, Clerk.

Amended at 09.04.19 Meeting