

**Town of Hartford Committee on Racial Equity & Inclusion**  
**Wednesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019**  
**6pm to 7:30pm**

In Attendance: John Hall (Chair), Sara Campbell (Vice Chair), Kim Souza (Clerk), Ann Reynolds, Michelle Boleski, Allene Swienckowski, Jameson Davis (via telephone until he arrived in person at 6:45pm)

Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05pm

Ann asked to add a brief legislative update to the agenda and to add the discussion of Open Meeting Laws which was tabled at the last meeting.

Ann moved to approve the 10.16.19 minutes as presented. Allene seconded and the vote passed unanimously.

**Discussion of HCOREI Mission Statement**

The group reviewed the draft mission statement that the sub-committee proposed. Ann suggested a few minor edits. The updated version of the HCOREI Mission Statement is

All people are accorded the right to live in a just, equitable and anti-racist community. This right is only possible if we embrace collective responsibility and support shared prosperity. We advocate for actions that raise the level of awareness within our institutions and promote municipal and school policies that remediate systemic racism.

Kim moved to accept amended mission statement for HCOREI, Allene seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ann would like HCOREI to develop a simple flyer or brochure that can be handed out at various events to describe what our committee is and does. The mission statement will also be added to the HCOREI Facebook Page.

**Reactive vs. Proactive regarding Planning & Action**

Sara offered to formalize the draft 'road map' to share as a guide for our proactive goals. The committee will review our work compared to the road map on a monthly basis.

Though our aim is to maintain a proactive path, the committee remains open to upcoming issues that require a more reactive approach. There was discussion around developing a framework/process for responding to issues. If/how we respond will depend on the issue.

Michelle suggested that we need a format for documenting things that come to us. Allene has recommended an Ombudsman to receive complaints from community members.

Michelle noted that we need to consider when we are acting/responding on behalf of the Town/Committee or as individuals. Each engagement point needs to have a public committee discussion. If it fits our mission/charge, we may opt to act/respond as a committee. If it does not, we may opt to act/respond as individuals. Further discussion on 'calls to action' continues during Open Meeting section of the agenda.

Allene reported that parents from one Harford family met with Tom Debalsi (Hartford School Superintendent) to discuss incidents and issues that their children of color have encountered. Tom was unaware of some of the issues the family has been faced with.

Tom agreed that a black caucus within the Middle & High School, similar to Lebanon's program, would be an excellent idea. There are few, if any, teachers of color at Hartford. Teachers can sponsor a club without attending. Students can invite adults of color from the community to participate in the caucus.

Jameson described his experience at the Hartford High School during the Sister City visit in October. He was alarmed by some of the comments and reactions he received in the school corridors and expressed concern over an interaction with a student of color and an adult (teacher, counselor or administrator) in the hallway.

Kim shared information she received in the context of SURJ Upper Valley from a Hartford Middle School teacher who is interested in opportunities for his students to work with community groups around structural racism. Kim forwarded the email response she sent to the teacher to the HCOREI members. It includes recommendations that he reach out to the committee and the education sub-committee and consider ways which the groups can work together.

Michelle asked the student liaison on the school board if they knew anyone who would be interested in acting as a student liaison to HCOREI. She will keep the group posted on any developments.

Kim asked the Town Manager and Selectboard what the best process was for HCOREI to request funding in the 2020-21 Town Budget. Brannon suggested that he would start with the same amount as the line item from the current year which included \$15,000 for the Town's contribution to the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan may recommend additional funding amounts for training, programming, etc. The recommendations will be considered before the budget is finalized.

## **Policy Review**

John shared the Town's personnel policies, Chapter 350. He asked that the group read this section of the Administrative Rules and Regulations and that we continue to include segments of policy review in each agenda.

Kim shared her ongoing efforts to attain various police department policies. Kim had inquired at the Clerk's office to view the Police Conduct & Responsibility file that is referenced in the Town Ordinance document. Initially, it was not located. The Town Clerk secured the document from Chief Kasten and it is now available during business hours in the Clerk's office.

Kim is currently awaiting a response from the Town Manager as to whether some or all of the "established procedures" document is available for review. The established procedures are referenced multiple times in the Conduct & Responsibility document and, presumably, includes more information about Rule 23: Citizen Complaints and how those are processed and documented.

### **Open Meeting Laws**

There has still be some confusion over what can be shared via email. Jameson read the rules relating to email directly from the Vermont Secretary of State website.

We reviewed the limitations of sharing any kind of 'call to action'. If there is an action that HCOREI members are notified of as a group, and if they are to show up for the action, they will not have agreed publicly to attend as a group, and therefore violate the rule. Various other examples were shared.

### **Legislative Update**

Ann will share statutes from other states that focus on harassment. Ann suggests that the Massachusetts model may be a good template for Vermont. Jameson noted that Seattle, WA also has an excellent harassment policy/statute. HCOREI members can review the laws in place in other states and find the best version(s) to share with our State Representatives in the hope that we can achieve an improvement to the limited Hate Crime legislation that currently exists in VT.

Ann is still planning to share a list of current & pending legislation with Kim so that Kim can edit the information in to a public, sharable document.

### **Other Business**

Michelle is attending the Vermont Vision for a Multicultural Future Conference hosted by the Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity in Brattleboro this weekend.

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

Wed Nov 20

Wed Dec 4

Wed Dec 18  
Wed Jan 15

The motion to adjourn at 7:45pm was made by Allen. Seconded by Kim.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Souza, Clerk.