

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
Minutes of April 04, 2023

Commissioners Present – Rabbi Keith Stern, Cindy Greene, Jane Brown, Eli Ingraham, Rakashi Chand, Tamika Olszewski, Maureen Sullivan

Commissioners Absent – None

Advisory Council Present – Lt Amanda Henrickson

Student Representatives Present – None

Guests – Katani Sumner, Hattie Kerwin-Derrick, Officer Eric Rosenbaum, Eliza Spaulding, William Dain, Meghan Murtaugh, Rhiannon Esposito, Julia Dun Rappaport

Staff to the Commission – Shemeka Hill

The meeting was called to order by Rabbi Keith Stern at 7:05 pm

1. Introductions
2. Minutes from February 07, 2023, meeting approved.
3. Youth Commission -- Meghan Murtaugh, Julia Dun Rappaport, Rhiannon Esposito
 - Discussion about events that can highlight and include youth for Pride month
 - Proposal for Celebration of Queer Culture (CQC)
4. Newton police report – Lt Henrickson, Officer Rosenbaum, Sgt
 - In Newton at Unitarian Church an event held on Zoom was taken over. Control of the Zoom was taken over and a white board with hateful messages was shared. Officer Rosenbaum is following up with Zoom to try and identify person(s) involved.
 - Three incidents at Newton North High School involving students that were friends making anti-black and antisemitic comments that were heard and reported by other students. School Resource office spoke with students and parents about the incidents.
 - One incident at Brown Middle School involving a group of students making anti-black and anti-muslim comments to each other. Youth officer spoke with parents about the incident.
5. Complaints received – Shemeka Hill
 - None received this month
6. Student reports – Ryan Chitty (Report received via email)
 - March 17th: Newton South's Social Topics on Air Podcast held a panel in the lecture hall on inequities within Women's healthcare with input from nonprofits specializing in women's health and doctor's working in the healthcare system
 - March 23rd: Various cultural performances hosted by the AAPI student groups
 - March 31st: The GSA hosted a panel of out transgender and nonbinary students and teachers in the lecture hall for the Transgender Day of Visibility to discuss gender identity and expression journey
 - Upcoming: April 27th: annual Aware Day to discuss mental health issues, which will include student panelists

7. Updates from the Mayor's Office –
 - None received this month
8. Updates from Commissioners
 - Discussion about Kulanu
 - Discussion about three goals from commissioners for upcoming year
9. Upcoming Events Announcements
 - May 9th Kulanu
10. Public Comment
 - None received this month

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm

Next meeting will be May 02, 2023, on Zoom

Respectfully submitted by Newton Health and Human Services Department

Amendment: Goals from commissioners for upcoming year attached.

Hi Keith,

Tamika, Eli and I are aligned on our combined top priorities for the HRC. We have 6 - only 2/3 of our allotment (3 per person :). Could you please circulate these to the rest of the committee, specifying we don't want comment (we know that's not allowed) but so people can see them in advance of the next meeting to be prepared to discuss. We'd love it if others wanted to share their priorities before the meeting too.

1) Role definition - a few steps

A. Best practices

In order to define our ideal mandate, we feel it critical to understand what other HRCs do, and what is working/not working. We'd like to invited chairs from other HRCs to join our meetings, perhaps two at a time so they get more best practices too.

B. Fact finding

We survey different constituents in the community and ask how the HRC is serving them and what support they would like

C. We talk to the Mayor about our role

D. We set goals for the year, and monitor how we do against them so feel accountability.

2) Receiving complaints.

We would like the commissioners to be able to hear the details of the complaints we receive and discuss them. This can be done in executive sessions.

3) Training

We would like to have training for Commissioners (of HRC but also disability, housing, etc.). Perhaps MCAD has training. Topics could include bias and engaging in difficult conversations.

4) DEI coordinator for the city of Newton

We think the HRC should advocate for a full-time DEI coordinator to be able to fully implement our city's DEI goals.

5) Process issues

-We'd love to brainstorm a new meeting format. It would be great if folks could share their reports beforehand, then the meetings could center on issues, discussion, and decisions

- We'd like to revisit how non-commissioners aren't supposed to speak until the end

- We'd like to understand student selection process and discuss ways to strengthen it

6) City audit

We'd like the HRC to apply for ARPA funds to do a study of the city in terms of DEI, examining a) workforce diversity b) policies and procedures and c) complaints

Thanks so much,

Cindy, Eli and Tamika