

## **AMENDED Meeting Minutes**

### **West Hartford Human Rights Commission**

**Date:** April 2, 2025

**Time:** 6:45 PM – 8:30 PM

**Location:** Elmwood Community Center

**Chairperson:** Mark Linabury

#### **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Mark Linabury at 6:50 PM.

#### **2. Roll Call / Attendance**

- Present: Mark Linabury, Alana Butler, Eric Schoenberg, Katie Lance, Eva Jacobson, David Ware
- Absent: Bruno Venero
- Guest Speaker: Rick Ledwith, West Hartford Town Manager
- 7 Guests

#### **3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the March 5, 2025, meeting were not approved. A proposed amendment to the minutes resulted in a tied vote, 3 in favor, 3 opposed (Refer to motions, page 3).

#### **4. Reports**

##### **a. Chair's Report:**

- We are awaiting action from the Town Council to fill two vacancies on the commission.
- The Chair also suggested bringing in Ashley, who spoke at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights event in January on human trafficking. Her availability will be checked.

##### **b. Guest Speaker's Report:** Town Manager, Rick Ledwith:

- In 2022, 3 incidents prompted the town to adopt Vision Zero in February 2024.
- Originating in Sweden, the initiative aims to eliminate all traffic fatalities and serious injuries.
- A Vision Zero Advisory Committee, formed in 2023, includes 15–20 members from police, public works, the Pedestrian & Bike Commission, and the community.
- The town council adopted the Vision Zero Plan in February 2024. The three-pronged approach includes engineering, enforcement, and education.
- In 115 projects were completed, including rapid flashing beacon lights & raised crosswalks. Despite these efforts, three pedestrians were killed in 2024.
- A \$900,000 grant funds a speed enforcement pilot program with 15 cameras. ○

Cameras capture vehicles exceeding the speed limit by 10 mph

- This allows police to focus on other areas without increasing staffing.
- The town also received \$4 million for a red-light camera program.
- Additional projects for 2025 include delineators and curb enhancements
- The town has distributed and is seeking signatures for the Vision Zero Safe Roads for All pledge. The Town will provide Vision Zero magnets to those who sign the pledge.
  - Pledge includes: No distracted driving, stopping at stop signs, maintaining safe distances, stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks, etc.
- The Town is also collaborating with Connecticut Children's Medical Center on safety campaigns.
- An annual report and interactive map and future plans are online.
- Shabbat Safe Pedestrian Crossings: Efforts to work with the state and a rabbi to implement automatic red-light stops during Shabbat were denied due to safety concerns. Senator Slap continues to advocate for solutions and similar safety measures at other intersections.
- Rick Ledwith suggests we provide support through letters, emails, & public statements.

#### **c. Antisemitism Report:**

- Alana presented on antisemitism and white supremacy in West Hartford in response to an inquiry about specific incidents in the area.
- She referenced data from ADL's Heat Map, which compiles reported incidents from sources such as news and media reports, police records, and victim reports.
- She noted that this data only reflects reported cases- actual number of incidents is likely much higher.
- From 2023 to 2024, 26 antisemitic incidents were recorded in West Hartford, including bomb threats, Zoom bombings, antisemitic communications, and swastikas. • The number of incidents surged following October 7th.
- Following this report, a suggestion was made to form a subcommittee to review incidents targeting minority groups (see motions below).

### **5. Public Comments**

- Guidelines:
  - Mark announces a three-minute limit for public comments
  - The council will not engage in discussion during public comments
  - There will be no direct back and forth exchanges, responses to public questions will be provided later
- A guest shared about her daughter's interest in a human rights club at her high school. ○ She discussed the importance of human rights clubs in schools and shared personal

- experiences from living in India.
  - Mark proposed discussing the issue further to set a plan of action and include it in a future agenda.
- A second speaker raised concerns about free speech and doxing, specifically for university faculty
  - There are local faculty that have been placed on a doxing website for expressing concerns about faculties of color and Palestinians
  - This has resulted in significant fear among faculty

## 6. New Business & Motions

- **Motion:** Katie made a motion to amend the March meeting minutes to remove specific details during the UN discussion and replace them with a more general summary.
  - **Discussion:** There were concerns that the notes might make the commission appear biased, because they did not accurately portray the full scope of the discussion. Specifically, the minutes included details of discussion from one commissioner and one member of the public, but completely omitted points of discussion raised by another commissioner. The commissioner recommended a more neutral and brief overview that they felt more accurately reflected the full scope of the discussion.
  - **Vote:** Motion did not pass due to a tied vote (3 in favor, 3 opposed)
- **Motion:** Eva made a motion to create a working group to address religious intolerance in West Hartford, protecting groups that are targeted due to their religion
  - **Discussion:** The group would focus on both Jewish and other religious groups targeted due to their religion. Katie and Alana volunteered for the committee.
  - **Vote:** The motion passed unanimously, 6-0
- **Motion:** Katie made a motion to create a social media subcommittee to support their outreach and engagement efforts.
  - **Discussion:** the subcommittee would help share information about events, initiatives, and volunteer opportunities. Dave expressed willingness to help.
  - **Vote:** The motion passed unanimously, 6-0

## 7. Announcements

- There is a protest, "Hands Off Hartford" this Saturday at the State Capitol on the South Lawn, from 3:00 to 6:00 PM. The protest is in response to political events that have been in the news.
- Update: The bill regarding Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has had a public hearing in the

Judiciary Committee, but no action has been taken yet. It is still pending. Mark will continue to monitor the situation and will seek further updates from Representative Gilchrist.

- West Hartford will hold a Juneteenth celebration on June 14th, which commemorates the emancipation of slaves in 1865.
  - There will be an assembly with entertainment from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. ○
  - Volunteers will be needed to assist with spreading awareness about our work. ○
  - Further details will be discussed in the May meeting.
- West Hartford's Pride Parade will be held on June 21

## **8. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM

## **9. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 7, 2025.

## **Minutes Submitted by:**

Alana Butler, April 3, 2025