



WEST HARTFORD

West Hartford Human Rights Commission Meeting
Elmwood Community Center, Room # 212
1106 New Britain Ave, West Hartford, CT 06110
Wednesday, November 5, 2025 at 6:45pm

1. Call to Order

- A. Call to Order
- B. Attendance
- C. Welcome New Commissioners/Introductions
- D. Reading of Mission Statement:

The Town of West Hartford Human Rights Commission is dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of all residents. We strive to foster an inclusive and diverse community where every individual is treated respectfully and equitably, regardless of their race, ethnicity, national origin, age, spiritual or religious beliefs, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, socio-economic status, immigration status, disability, present or past history of physical or mental illnesses, including but not limited to these characteristics.

2. Guest Speaker

- A. Bill Heiden - [Levo International](#) to discuss ways to address food insecurity. (20min)

3. Public Forum

- A. Any member of the public may address the Commission about issues or concerns. (3 minutes per speaker. Note: The Commission will not respond to public comment).

4. Approval of the Minutes

- A. [WHHRC Meeting Minutes October 8, 2025](#)

5. Unfinished Business

- A. Discussion Regarding Revised [Res. on Business & Governance](#)
 - View edits and rationale for edits to-date here: [Edits & Explanations](#)
- B. Universal Declaration of Human Rights Celebration Planning.

6. New Business

- A. [2026 Annual Calendar](#), [2024 Annual Report](#) (draft), [2025 Annual Report](#) (draft)
- B.. Gmail account (brief overview)
- C.. [WHHRC New Commissioner Welcome Guide](#)

7. Reports on Hate Crimes & Hate Speech

A. Hate Crimes & Hate Speech Report

8. Reports on Social Media & Community Engagement

A. Social Media & Community Engagement Report:

- Safe Crossing for Shabbat Initiative Update (Katie)
- Know Your Rights: Immigration Panel Update (Dave)
 - Note: If you missed it, you can watch the recording [here.](#))

9. Communications

10. Open Discussion/Updates on any Strategic Plan Issue Areas

- A. Food & Housing Insecurity
- B. Immigration & Rights of Non-Citizens
- C. Addressing Hate Crimes & Hate Speech
- D. Human Rights in West Hartford School System
- E. Community Concerns & Emerging Issues

11. Set Agenda Items for Next Meeting: December 3, 2025

12. Adjournment

A. Adjourn

Public Meeting Viewing & Participation Instructions:

Members of the public can attend in-person. They may also contact the WHHRC outside of meeting times via email: WeHaHRC@gmail.com. Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program, or activity of the Town of West Hartford should contact Suzanne Oslander, at SuzanneO@WestHartfordCT.gov or 860-561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

West Hartford Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: October 8, 2025

Call to Order: 6:51 p.m.

Attendees: Alana Butler, Eric Schoenberg, Eva Jacobson, Katie Lance, David Ware, Pramod Pradhan

Guests: Martey Rhine, Deborah Shoflick, Peg Williams, Jareka Dellenbaugh-Dempsey, Samantha Sommers, Arjun Patel, Robert Karvelis, Eaman O, Melissa Cyr, Marg Smith, Padraigh, Ted Mancom

Absent: Mark Linabury

- Public Comments: 9 people spoke in support of the proposed resolution
- Approval of Minutes
 - Motioned by: Eric Schoenberg
 - Seconded by: Eva Jacobson
 - Result: Approved unanimously
- Confirmed Reappointments: Alana Butler, Mark Linabury, Eva Jacobson
- Motion to adopt the [amended strategic plan](#) for 2025-2026
 - Motioned by: Eric Schoenberg
 - Seconded by: David Ware
 - Result: All in favor
- Committee Reports
 - Social Media & Engagement Subcommittee: Immigration panel scheduled for October 21 at 5:30 pm at Noah Webster
 - Hate Crimes & Hate Speech Working Group: Meeting with Michael Bloom, Senior Director of External Affairs and Engagement and Hate Crimes Initiative of CT Coordinator, has been rescheduled to October 24
- Motion to create a working group to revise the proposed resolution [Human Rights in Business and Governance](#)
 - Motioned by: Eric Schoenberg
 - Seconded by: David Ware
 - Result: All in favor
- Nomination for Secretary: Katie Lance: Unanimous Vote
- Next Meeting: November 5, 2025
 - Proposed agenda items: Universal Declaration of Human Rights Celebration, proposed resolution [Human Rights in Business and Governance](#)
- Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM

Proposed WHHRC 2026 Calendar

The WHHRC generally meets the first Wednesday of every month at 6:45pm - 8:30pm in the Elmwood Community Center.

The 2026 regular meeting schedule includes the following dates. In the November 2025 meeting, we will discuss any changes that may need to be made to these regular meeting times.

Month	Day	Date	Time	Suggested Agenda Highlights
January	Wednesday	7	6:45pm - 8:30pm	2026 Strategy Session: implementation strategies for 2026 goals, review WHHRC structure, guidelines, etc. - Develop 2026 planned posts
February	Wednesday	4	6:45pm - 8:30pm	Vote on 2026 planned posts
March	Wednesday	4	6:45pm - 8:30pm	
April	Wednesday	1	6:45pm - 8:30pm	<i>Start of Passover? Move to 8th?</i>
May	Wednesday	6	6:45pm - 8:30pm	
June	Wednesday	3	6:45pm - 8:30pm	Assess progress on 2026 goals
July	Wednesday	7	6:45pm - 8:30pm	
August	Wednesday	5	6:45pm - 8:30pm	
September	Wednesday	2	6:45pm - 8:30pm	
October	Wednesday	7	6:45pm - 8:30pm	Develop 2027 Strategic Plan
November	Wednesday	4	6:45pm - 8:30pm	- Set 2027 Calendar - Vote on 2027 Strategic Plan - Share draft of Annual Report
December	Wednesday	2	6:45pm - 8:30pm	- Submit 2027 Calendar - Vote on 2026 Annual Report

West Hartford Human Rights Commission (WHHRC)

2024 Annual Report

Chair: Esam Boraey (until resignation in May 2024), succeeded by Mark Linabury

Secretary: Winnie Tantraporn (until resignation in September 2024), succeeded by Alana Butler

Treasurer: Eric Schoenberg

2024 Commissioners (as of December 2024): Kathryn (Katie) Lance, Bruno Venero, PJ Paneru.

Town Staff Liaison: Pramod Pradhan

Mission Statement

The Town of West Hartford Human Rights Commission is dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of all residents. We strive to foster an inclusive and diverse community where every individual is treated respectfully and equitably, regardless of their race, ethnicity, national origin, age, spiritual or religious beliefs, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, socio-economic status, immigration status, disability, present or past history of physical or mental illnesses, including but not limited to these characteristics (adopted December 2024).

Membership and Meetings

The Commission began 2024 with two vacancies and ended with three vacancies – experiencing several transitions throughout the year.

Resignations	Appointments	Elections
• May: Esam Boraey • Aug: Winnie Tantraporn • Sept: Kristyn Rosen-Jacobs • Dec: Cara Paiuk • Unsure: Ted Mancini	• Jan: Bruno Venero • Mar: Kathryn Lance • May: Alana Butler and Panjak “PJ” Paneru	• May: Mark Linabury as Chair; Katie Lance as Social Media Coordinator. • September: Alana Butler as Secretary.

Meetings

Meetings took place at 7pm at the Elmwood Community Center and were open to the public.

Regular Meetings	Cancelled Meetings	Special Sessions:
• January • February • May • December	• March • April • June • July • August • September • October	• September • October

Priorities, Key Accomplishments and Policy Recommendations

2024-2025 Priorities

The WHHRC's objectives as outlined in Commission's [2024-2024 strategic plan](#), included:

1. **Address intimate partner violence** in West Hartford through increased awareness and education.
2. **Tackle food insecurity** with drives, education, and awareness initiatives.
3. **Focus on addressing homelessness** through partnerships and town recommendations.
4. **Advocate for pedestrian rights**, emphasizing the right to safe mobility and the right to life.
5. **Promote a sense of safety and solidarity among community members** through awareness, outreach, and collaboration on interfaith and intercultural initiatives.

Summary of Key 2024 Votes (not including votes on minutes, social media posts, or elections)

- January: Approval to proceed with Hall High School Human Rights event (*passed - unanimous*)
- May: Vote to participate in Memorial Day Parade (*passed - unanimous*)
- October: Vote to create WHHRC Google/Gmail account: WeHaHRC@gmail.com (*passed - unanimous*)
- December:
 - Vote to change meeting time to 6:45pm for parent convenience (*passed: 3 in favor, 2 opposed*).
 - Vote to approve updated Mission and Vision statements (*passed - unanimous*)

2024 Annual Activities

- January: Co-sponsored and participated in reading of the *Declaration of Human Rights* in **Universal Declaration of Human Rights Celebration**
- May: Participated in **Memorial Day Parade** (Esam and Mark)
- June: Held booth, representing WHHRC at the **Juneteenth Celebration** (Mark and Eric)
- October: Represented WHHRC in **Park Road Parade** (Bruno, Katie, and Mark)
- Dec: Hosted **Town Equity Officer**, Adrienne Billings-Smith as guest at WHHRC meeting

Key Accomplishments

- January 2024: Co-sponsored and participated in reading of the *Declaration of Human Rights* in **Universal Declaration of Human Rights Celebration**
- October 2024: **Established a new public-facing Commission email address (WeHaHRC@gmail.com)** to improve accessibility and communication with residents

Policy Recommendations

The WHHRC did not put forth any policy recommendations during 2024.

Major Challenges and Priorities for 2025

Major Challenges

The Commission faced several challenges in 2024, including multiple membership vacancies and delays in appointments, which limited continuity and capacity to advance ongoing initiatives. These transitions made it difficult to sustain momentum on planning efforts and to follow up on previously identified community priorities. Additionally, with multiple new members joining mid-year, time was needed to build familiarity with key annual activities and to reestablish a shared understanding of the Commission's mission and goals.

Priorities for 2025

The WHHRC's objectives as outlined in Commission's [2024-2024 strategic plan](#), remained:

6. **Address intimate partner violence** in West Hartford through increased awareness and education.
 7. **Tackle food insecurity** with drives, education, and awareness initiatives.
 8. **Focus on addressing homelessness** through partnerships and town recommendations.
 9. **Advocate for pedestrian rights**, emphasizing the right to safe mobility and the right to life.
 10. **Promote a sense of safety and solidarity among community members** through awareness, outreach, and collaboration on interfaith and intercultural initiatives.
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Financial Information

The WHHRC does not manage an independent budget. Event costs and outreach materials are supported through town resources and community partnerships. No tax exemptions were issued by the Commission in 2025.

Acknowledgments

The Commission thanks the **West Hartford Town Council**, **Town Manager Rick Ledwith**, **Equity Officer Adrienne Billings-Smith**, and all community members who supported human rights initiatives throughout the year. Their continued collaboration strengthens West Hartford's commitment to fairness, equity, and inclusion for all residents.

West Hartford Human Rights Commission (WHHRC) 2025 Annual Report

Co-Chairs: Mark Linabury and Alana Butler (elected September 2025)

Secretary: Katie Lance (elected October 2025)

Treasurer: Eric Schoenberg

Additional Commissioners (as of December 2025): Eva Jacobson, David Ware, Sue Collins

Town Staff Liaison: Pramod Pradhan

Mission Statement

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Membership and Meetings

The Commission began 2024 with two vacancies and ended with two vacancies, experiencing multiple transitions throughout the year.

Resignations	Appointments	Elections
- February: PJ Paneru - Sept. Bruno Venero	- Jan: Eva Jacobson and David Ware - Oct: Sue Collins	- September: Alana Butler as Co-Chair. - October: Katie Lance as Secretary.

Meetings

Meetings took place at 6:45pm* at the Elmwood Community Center and were open to the public.

**Note: Meeting time changed from 7pm at Dec. 2024 for convenience of Commissioners with children.*

Regular Meetings	Meetings Not Held in:	Special Sessions:
- January 8 - February 5 - March 5 - April 2 - June 4 - September 3 - October 8 - November 5 - December 3	- May (cancelled) - July - August	Sept. 30 (Training with Town Clerk, Leon Davidoff)

Priorities, Key Accomplishments, and Policy Recommendations

2024-2025 Priorities

The WHHRC's objectives as outlined in Commission's 2024-2024 strategic plan, included:

1. **Address intimate partner violence** in West Hartford through increased awareness and education.
2. **Tackle food insecurity** with drives, education, and awareness initiatives.
3. **Focus on addressing homelessness** through partnerships and town recommendations.
4. **Advocate for pedestrian rights**, emphasizing the right to safe mobility and the right to life.
5. **Promote a sense of safety and solidarity among community members** through awareness, outreach, and collaboration on interfaith and intercultural initiatives.

Summary of Key 2025 Votes

(Excludes routine approvals of minutes, meeting adjournments, and votes on social media posts)

- **February:**
 - Vote to submit **letter of support** for state legislation banning Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) *(passed - unanimous)*
- **September:**
 - Election for Co-Chair: Alana Butler elected.
- **October:**
 - Vote to adopt the amended **2025–2026 Strategic Plan** *(passed - unanimous)*
 - Election for Secretary: Katie Lance elected.

2025 Annual Activities

Note: Names in parentheses indicate commissioners who represented the WHHRC at each event.

- **January:**
 - Co-sponsored **Universal Declaration of Human Rights Celebration** (Chair Linabury and Commissioner Lance both participated and spoke at the event).
- **June:**
 - **Juneteenth (June 14)** (Chair Linabury & Commissioner Butler had a booth at the event)
- **October:**
 - Safe Crossing for Shabbat pilot in collaboration with Beth David and Young Israel (Commissioner Lance developed, co-organized, and executed this initiative)
 - Know Your Rights: Immigration in collaboration with West Hartford Delegation, feat. Constanza Segovia (CT for All; Hartford Deportation Defense); Andrea Sanchez (Connecticut Students for a Dream); Attorney Dana Bucin, and Attorney Kara Hart. Recorded by WHCI: [view here](#). (Commissioners Lance and Ware developed, co-organized, and helped execute the event – including serving as moderators for the panel and Q&A.)

2025 Guest Speakers

The West Hartford Human Rights Commission hosted multiple guest speakers during their regular meetings in 2025, including:

January: Liz Buczynski, Asst. Dir. of Social Services, presented on housing and homelessness programs.

March: State Representative Jillian Gilchrest, presented on FGM legislation.

April: Town Manager Rick Ledwith, presented on **Vision Zero initiative** and pedestrian safety.

Nov.: Bill Heiden, Executive Director - Levo International, presented on ways to address food insecurity.

Key Accomplishments

- **February 2025:**
 - Submitted **letter of support** of H.B No.6596, banning female genital mutilation in Connecticut (written by Chair Linabury).
- **October 2025:**
 - **Know Your Rights Panel: Immigration** with West Hartford Delegation (Developed, co-organized, and led by Commissioners Ware and Lance)
- **Increased Public Engagement:** Overall, 2025 has seen increased civic engagement with the WHHRC. For examples, the October meeting had approximately 15 members of the public – possibly a record! Also during that meeting, the WHHRC received significant public engagement related to the draft Resolution *Affirming West Hartford's Commitment to Human Rights in Business and Governance*. Dozens of residents shared written and verbal feedback, both in support of and in opposition to the original proposal. The resolution was then edited taking all of the feedback into careful consideration. Regardless of the outcome of this particular resolution, this level of public participation reflects community interest in how human-rights principles are applied locally and underscores the importance of open dialogue and transparency in municipal decision-making.

Policy Recommendations

The WHHRC did not put forth any policy recommendations during 2025.

Major Challenges and Priorities for 2026

2025 highlighted the need for clearly defined procedures, leadership roles, and reporting structures, consistent member participation, and more transparent communication with both the Town and the public. The Commission operated with only six to seven members throughout the year, limiting its capacity to maintain quorum and move from discussion to collaborative action on proposed initiatives. As a result, the Commission made limited progress toward its 2025 priorities. Addressing these structural and participation gaps will be essential to ensure the Commission operates effectively, reflects community values, and fulfills its mandate to promote human rights and inclusion in West Hartford.

Priorities for 2026

The WHHRC identified the following priorities for 2026, as outlined in the **2026 Strategic Plan**:

1. Food & Housing Insecurity
 2. Immigration & Rights of Non-Citizens
 3. Addressing Hate Crimes & Hate Speech
 4. Human Rights in West Hartford School System
 5. Community Concerns & Emerging Issues
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Financial Information

The WHHRC does not manage an independent budget. Event costs and outreach materials are supported through town resources and community partnerships. No tax exemptions were issued by the Commission in 2025.

Acknowledgments

The Commission extends its appreciation to the **West Hartford Town Council, Town Manager Rick Ledwith, Town Clerk Leon Davidoff, Employee Development & Community Engagement Manager Adrienne Billings-Smith**, and all residents, partners, and guest speakers who supported its work throughout 2025. Their collaboration has strengthened West Hartford's shared commitment to dignity, inclusion, and the protection of human rights for all.

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

RESOLUTION AFFIRMING WEST HARTFORD'S COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN BUSINESS AND GOVERNANCE

WHEREAS, the mission and purpose of the West Hartford Human Rights Commission are grounded in the principles of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights; and

WHEREAS, established by Town Code, Chapter 5, Article IX, the Commission is mandated to foster mutual understanding and respect among residents, encourage equality of treatment, and advise the Town Council on policies and practices that uphold human rights and equity within the community; and

WHEREAS, the West Hartford Town Council has declared its commitment to protecting and advancing human rights, dignity, and equity for all people who live, work, study, or visit her by unanimously adopting a *Resolution Affirming West Hartford's Commitment to Equity and Inclusion* (2017), declaring our town a place where all residents are welcome, respected, and valued; and

WHEREAS, this present resolution builds on that commitment by recognizing that human rights must be safeguarded not only through community values but also through the conduct of businesses and municipal practices – including through the use of technology; and

WHEREAS, businesses play an important role in shaping the well-being of our community – both through employment and their broader impacts on human rights, directly and indirectly, including effects their products, services, or investments may have beyond the borders of our town; and

WHEREAS, workplaces can become sites where human rights are threatened, including through unlawful or discriminatory practices such as unauthorized raids or acts of intimidation – especially those targeting anyone due to their national origin, race, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, gender/sexual orientation, disability, and/or other protected status; and

WHEREAS, the *United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights* (2011) affirm that governments at all levels have a duty to protect against human rights abuses within their jurisdiction, including those arising from business activities (Principle 1); and

WHEREAS, the Guiding Principles further call on public bodies to ensure that government contracts, investments, and partnerships are conducted in a manner consistent with human rights obligations (Principles 4 and 6), while also encouraging policy coherence across all departments and agencies that shape business practices, ensuring that public institutions understand and uphold their human rights responsibilities (Principles 7 and 8); and

WHEREAS, at the municipal level, such responsibilities fall within the purview of Town departments and programs, including ensuring fair and equitable treatment in housing, employment, and public services (Department of Social Services, Human Resources, and Equity Office); maintaining accessibility and inclusion for residents with disabilities (Leisure Services, Public Works, and Library Services); promoting transparency, ethical standards, and fair labor practices in Town contracts and procurement (Finance and Procurement); safeguarding residents' privacy and due process in local enforcement and data-sharing (Police Department, Information Technology, and Social Services); and mitigating environmental and public health impacts that disproportionately affect certain neighborhoods or populations (Public Works, Planning and Zoning, and Health District); and

WHEREAS, the Town has already demonstrated leadership in advancing ethical and inclusive vendor practices by adopting West Hartford Town Code, Article VII, Section 168-45, which ensures that no personally identifiable information collected by automated traffic enforcement devices is disclosed, stored, or retained by the Town or a vendor to any person or entity, including any federal law enforcement unit, except where the disclosure is made in connection with the charging, collection, and enforcement of the fines imposed pursuant to the article; and

WHEREAS, adopting these principles aligns with West Hartford’s values of fairness, inclusion, and social responsibility, and empowers businesses in our town to stand up for the dignity, rights, and safety of their workers and communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF WEST HARTFORD THAT:

1. The Town of West Hartford affirms its commitment to the protection of human rights and recognizes the *United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights* as a framework for responsible and ethical local governance.
2. The Town Manager and other relevant governmental departments shall consider the protection of human rights in the Town’s operations and procurement practices, such as exploring the creation of a Supplier Code of Conduct (encouraging ethical and inclusive vendor practices), human rights budgeting, and/or conducting impact assessments for town contracts and investments.
3. The Town Manager shall publish an annual summary of steps taken to uphold these principles across town operations, contracts, and partnerships, demonstrating West Hartford’s ongoing leadership and accountability in advancing human rights at the local level.
4. The Office of Employee Development & Community Engagement and West Hartford Human Rights Commission shall collaborate to promote education and awareness on human rights in business and governance – partnering with other relevant governmental bodies and community organizations to coordinate public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives (e.g., Fourth Amendment rights trainings for business owners; workshops on fair employment and anti-discrimination practices; human rights considerations for vendors and contractors.)
5. The Town Manager and the West Hartford Human Rights Commission shall develop ways to recognize local government agencies and employers who demonstrate leadership in advancing human rights, fairness, and inclusion (e.g., Annual Leadership in Businesses in Human Rights Award).

Adopted this ____ day of _____, 2025.

Attest: _____

Town Clerk

References:

Town of West Hartford. (2017). Resolution Affirming West Hartford, CT as a Welcoming and Inclusive Town. West Hartford, CT.

Town of West Hartford. (n.d.). Town Code, Chapter 5, Article IX: Human Rights Commission. West Hartford, CT.

Town of West Hartford. (n.d.). *Town Code, Article VII, Section 168-45: Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices*. West Hartford, CT.

United Nations General Assembly. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (A/RES/217 A (III)). Paris: United Nations.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2011). *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework* (HR/PUB/11/04). Geneva: United Nations.

Additional Information

The following materials provide additional information on how local municipalities can apply human rights frameworks to local governance.

United Nations Human Rights Council. (2024). *Local government and human rights* (A/HRC/RES/57/12). Geneva: United Nations. Adopted 10 October 2024 at the Fifty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2012). *The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights: An Interpretive Guide* (HR/PUB/12/02). Geneva: United Nations.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights & United Cities and Local Governments. (2024). *Guidance framework for creating a Human Rights City*. Geneva and Barcelona: United Nations and UCLG.