

**MINUTES
LGBTQIA+ COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MARCH 16, 2021**

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MIDDLETOWN, CT

Present: Commissioners Sal Uccello, Philip Pessina, Dolly Haddad, Anthony Mangiafico, Beth Shapiro, Christine Santacroce, Steven Kovach, Sandy Aldieri, Cayes Jarda, and Laura Timmons (arrived at 5:40 p.m.) Staff: Assistant General Counsel Christopher Forte

Members of the Public: Benjamin Florsheim, Jennifer Billingsley, Kaya Cook, and Kitty Guo.

1. Call to Order By Staff

Meeting was called to order by Staff at 5:38 p.m.

- 2. Mayoral Address.** Mayor Benjamin Florsheim addressed the Commission, congratulating them on being the first LGBTQIA Commission in City history, and sharing why the work of this Commission is needed.
- 3. Virtual Swearing In of Commission Members.** Mayor Benjamin Florsheim swore in the Commissioners of the LGBTQIA Commission.
- 4. Approval of the Minutes for the February 16, 2021 Regular Meeting of the LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee.**

MOTION: Commissioner Santacroce made a motion to approve the minutes for the January 19, 2021 Regular Meeting of the LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee. Commissioner Pessina seconded the motion. The motion was approved at 5:46 p.m. by a vote of nine in favor and none in opposition. Commissioner Kovach abstained from the vote.

5. Public Session on Agenda Items. None.

6. New Business.

A. Freedom of Information/Ethics Training. Assistant General Counsel Forte provided a workshop to the Commission on the basis of the Freedom of Information Act and the City of Middletown's Ethics rules, and answered various questions from the Commissioners on these topics.

B. Election of Chair. Commissioner Mangiafico was nominated to be the Chair of the Commission, and informed the Commission of his qualifications.

MOTION: Commissioner Kovach made a motion to elect Commissioner Mangiafico as Chair of the LGBTQIA Commission. Commissioner Pessina seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously at 6:21 p.m.

C. Vote to Approve Meeting Dates and Times. Assistant General Counsel Forte informed the Commission that they needed to adopt the dates and times for the regularly scheduled meetings of the LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee, as the dates and times for the new LGBTQIA Commission. The schedule of dates would continue to be the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m., and will be held in Room 208 at City Hall.

MOTION: Commissioner Kovach made a motion to adopt the dates, times and locations of the regular meetings of the LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee as regular meetings of the LGBTQIA Commission. Commissioner Timmons seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously at 6:23 p.m.

D. Establishment of Agenda Items. Assistant General Counsel Forte informed the Commission that this item is the time for Commissioners to discuss what their goals are for the Commission, and what priorities they will have in the next year. No action was taken.

E. Establishment of Subcommittees. Assistant General Counsel Forte advised the Commission that the LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee had three subcommittees, the Entertainment Subcommittee, the Sponsorship Subcommittee, and the Digital and Virtual Outreach Subcommittee. Forte recommended that the Commission not create subcommittees at this time, since the Commission was so new and should have time to establish their priorities for the coming year, but that the Commission could create subcommittees at any time by majority vote should the need arise. No action was taken.

F. Middletown Pride 2021.

1. Grand Marshal Nominations. Discussion was had regarding the nominations for Grand Marshal for Pride 2021. Assistant General Counsel Forte informed the Commissioners that two grand marshals are typically selected, and that the intent for this year was to ask the grand marshals who were chosen for Pride 2020, which was cancelled, to be grand marshals for Pride 2021. One of the grand marshals from last year was unable to commit to pride this year, leaving a vacancy. Assistant General Counsel Forte asked the then Committee Members of the LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee to make nominations for grand marshal by the end of February. Three nominations were received, and their names and bios were distributed to the members of the Commission for their consideration. It was requested that the Commissioners rank their choices in order that outreach to the Grand Marshal nominees should be made.

Commissioner Pessina stated that his preference for a first choice was for Mel Cordner. Commissioners Aldieri and Shapiro agreed. Commissioner Shapiro then stated that her order of preference was for

Mel Cordner, then Ala Ochumare, then Kamora Herrington.

Commissioner Timmons stated that her rankings were Kamora Herrington, then Mel Cordner, then Ala Ochumare. Commissioners Jarda, Kovach, and Santacroce agreed.

Jennifer Billingsley informed the Commission that people who are not selected this year for Grand Marshal, can of course be re-nominated for next year's pride.

MOTION: Commissioner Timmons made a motion to that staff offer the vacant role of grand marshal for Pride 2021 first to Kamora Herrington, then to Mel Cordner, and then to Ala Ochumare. Commissioner Shapiro seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously at 6:40 p.m.

2. **Update from Staff.** Assistant General Counsel Forte updated the Commission on the many updates regarding Pride 2021 since last month's meeting, including the decision to go from a purely virtual event, to a hybrid model. Announcements were made on Monday, March 15 regarding the events of Middletown Pride 2021, which now include both virtual and in-person events. Assistant General Counsel Forte informed the Commission that all COVID-19 precautions will be taken and considered by the City in planning these events, and the Middletown Health Department will be on-site for all in-person events to ensure compliance. Assistant General Counsel Forte answered questions from the Commissioners regarding Pride 2021.
3. **Update from the Russell Library.** Jennifer Billingsley updated the Commission on the many virtual events that will be occurring during Pride 2021, as well as the drag queen story hour which will be in-person and at Crystal Lake.
4. **Update from Wesleyan University.** Not present, no updates.
5. **Update from the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce.** Not present, no updates.
6. **Update from the Middletown High School Gay Straight Alliance.** Kaya Cook and Kitty Guo were present to represent the Middletown High School Gay Straight Alliance, and updated the Commission on the activism that they have been performing. The GSA finished the video that will be shared during Middletown Pride on terminology and how to be a good ally, and that they are working on their parade video to be shown during the Virtual Middletown Pride parade. The GSA has also submitted a survey to students and faculty and the schools regarding the LGBTQIA community experience, are working to create gender neutral

bathrooms at Middletown High, and that they have secured permission to have lavender cords for the GSA members for graduation.

G. New Agenda Items. No action taken.

7. Old Business. None.

8. Adjournment.

MOTION: Commissioner Santacroce made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Haddad seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m.