



**ANTI-RACISM TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT**

SPECIAL MEETING

April 24, 2023

Present: Chairman Darnell Ford, Chairwoman Sacha Armstrong-Crockett, Pat Alston, Kirt Hart, Dr. Lee Morgan, Councilman Marino, Brian Gartner, Samantha Rival, Ahmad Daniels, Precious Price, Mayor Ben Florsheim, Bobby Knoll Peterson, Staff: Cayla Jones

- 1. Call to Order** Councilman Ford called the meeting to order with Chairwoman Armstrong-Crockett at 6:14p.m.
- 2. Public Comment** No public comment
- 3. Approval of Minutes for the March 13, 2023 Anti-Racism Task Force Regular Meeting**

MOTION: Task Force Member Hart made a motion to approve the minutes for the March 13, 2023 meeting. Task Force Member Hart seconded the motion. The matter passed with one abstention from Task Force Member Precious Price.

4. New Business

A. Community Building Theme: Review of ARTF Scholarship in honor of State Rep Williams

Chairwoman Crockett started the conversation by explaining that the Q Williams Memorial Scholarship was cleared by Representative William's wife, Carrissa. She then proceeded with reading the Scholarship language. Chairwoman Crockett stated that the amount of the scholarship was a total of \$5,000.00, split in two scholarships of \$2,500.00. Member Pat Alston asked if the Scholarship was for all Middletown High School Students. Chairwoman Crockett explained that the scholarship was intended for Middletown High graduating seniors and will be handled by the MHS Guidance Department; she also confirmed that the winner will be selected by the Anti-Racism Task Force. Further conversation ensued regarding the State Representative Q Williams Memorial Scholarship.

MOTION: Member Brian Gartner made a motion to move forward with the Anti-Racism Task Force scholarship in honor of State Representative Q Williams, for the amount of \$5,000.00, split in two \$2,500.00 each offered to Middletown High School graduating seniors. Member Alston seconded the motion. Matter passed unanimously.



B. Criminal Justice Theme: Discussion on CRB Recommendation

Chairman Ford opened the discussion around the CRB Recommendation after he reminded folks that the task force has already voted on moving forward with a CRB recommendation to the Mayor's Office, and that document is now final.

Chairwoman Crockett followed up, sharing that the task force has been studying and discussing CRB's since year 2020. She indicated that the topic has been on the Anti-Racism Task Force's agenda close to 20 times, and there were 2-3 work group meetings surrounding this topic. In addition, Chairwoman Crockett mentioned that the Task Force heard from local experts, including Chief of Police Erik Costa. She reported that there were over 150 pages of Civilian Review Board documents collected, and the Police Accountability Act was studied. Lastly, she reported that the task force looked closely at the Connecticut Racial Profiling Report, which showed some deficiencies.

Chairman Ford added that the Task Force heard from the community, studied the recommendation received by the City's General Counsel and believe they have come close to what Middletown needs. He mentioned that while the CRB recommendation is being forwarded to the Mayor's Office, there would still be a presentation to the Common Council, if requested and the recommendation will also go through the General Counsel Commission and Public Safety Commission for review.

1. Discussion on racial bias screening recommendation

Chairwoman Crockett spoke to the racial bias screening recommendation. She communicated that the Connecticut Bar Association has language that recommends municipalities to implement racial bias and hostility screening. She mentioned that it was a recommendation due to the disproportionate abuse that people of color experience. Chairwoman Crockett referenced a 2017 report regarding the City's Police Department, which showed that Black people are more likely to be stopped and receive traffic tickets. She indicated that the Criminal Justice work group thought the recommendation of a racial bias screening would be the way to capture these issues.

Chairwoman Crockett posed a query regarding Police Department data collection and reporting. Chairman Ford shared that the data collection system adopted by the Police Department has not been cooperating, and cannot provide updated reports. He explained that the Police Department has been working diligently to make the data available to the public. Further discussion continued on this topic.



MOTION: Task Force Member Hart made a motion to vote on a CRB Recommendation. Task Force Member Gartner seconded the motioned. Matter passed with one abstention from Councilman Marino.

MOTION: Task Force Member Hart made a motion to send the drafted CRB language to the Mayor's Office for review and all other committees that it needs to go through. Task Force Member Gartner seconded the motion. The matter passed unanimously.

C. Housing Segregation Theme: Discussion on Fair Rent Commission Workshop

Chairwoman Crockett discussed the recent Common Council's Fair Rent Commission Workshop. She indicated that she provided feedback to the Common Council on behalf of the Anti-Racism Task Force. The recommendation was that the Commission held seats for BIPOC individuals, and offered them compensation. Task Force Member Alston asked if the language in the drafted Fair Rent Ordinance came from the Anti-Racism Task Force. Chairwoman Crockett explained that the task force did not draft the language, as it was drafted by the City's General Counsel's Office.

Chairman Ford said he thought the drafted ordinance was too general and did not specify for the racial injustice experienced through renters and, it was requested that General Counsel's Office explore how to change the language to protect folks impacted by unfair rent/housing. He also indicated that the next step in the process is have another workshop that offers the community an opportunity for additional feedback; then based on that feedback, the General Counsel will make updates and present the final Fair Rent Ordinance to the Common Council.

Task Force Member Precious Price shared how she felt the Fair Rent Commission Workshop was very dismissive, and nothing like what she's experienced in other workshops. She expressed how she was hoping for a more interactive discussion, where she can ask questions, and they be answered. She indicated that this is one reason why Black folks don't show up. Lastly, she expressed how she is open to having a forum that feels more like a workshop through the MRJC, for voices that were missing. Chairwoman Crockett responded to Task Member Price's statement and expressed the importance of having Black folks show up to spaces such as the Fair Rent Commission Workshop. She stated that the biggest predictor of future behavior is the past, and referenced the May 2022 Affordable Housing Plan. She indicated that it had no racial demographics; she suggested that the Fair Rent Commission will look similar if Black people don't acknowledge that maybe the City doesn't have the capacity to create meaningful engagement, and find a way to assist in that. The conversation continued with further discussion.



D. Community Building Theme: BLM Crosswalk update

Chairwoman Crockett started by sharing an update of there being no final design or a final artist for this project. Then shared that the Crosswalk will be located at the Beman Triangle, which is possibly Connecticut's first Black Freed Subdivision. She continued by stating that the Beman Triangle has not been given the recognition it deserved, and the City's Anti-Racism Task Force is working to fix that. She then asked task force members to forward names and contact information of recommended artists, who have a portfolio in street art to staff person, Cayla Jones. She expressed that it would be nice to have the BLM Crosswalk done by Juneteenth.

E. NCCJ Report

1. Plan for making recommendation for Housing Segregation and Labor Equity Themes.

Chairwoman Crockett briefly reviewed the Housing Segregation Theme. She also informed folks that Director Faith Jackson would be attending the May Regular Anti-Racism Task Force Meeting to review the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action reports. She asked task force members to submit their questions for Director Jackson to Cayla prior to the May 8, 2023 meeting.

5. Adjournment.

MOTION: Member Hart made a motion to adjourn, Member Price seconded. Meeting ended at 7:36 PM.