Outlook

Revision 5: Summary Minutes: 9/19 7p CRC meeting @ 205 Claremont

From Civilrights Commission <civilrightscommission@montclairnjusa.org>

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To Kevin Pierre <kevinpierre@protonmail.com>; Nelson Campbell <nelscamp@hotmail.com>; lesliekbrown2017@gmail.com <lesliekbrown2017@gmail.com>; Joni Cohen <joni.cohen16@gmail.com>; carvajalmatilda@gmail.com <carvajalmatilda@gmail.com>; Jennifer Otero <jenspeech30@yahoo.com>; Reubena Spence <spence@inkcurves.com>; Kevin Allen <kadel2@yahoo.com>; Madeline Gale <gale.madeline@gmail.com>

Commissioners-Attended:	**Commissioners-Not in Attendance**	**Other Parties in Attendance:**
Srinivasan, Ravi, Chair	Campbell, Nelson (dialed in via phone)	Renee Baskerville - Mayor
Allen, Kevin, Vice Chair		Eileen Birmingham - Town Council
Brown, Leslie, Treasurer		Tyrone Williams, Lt (Police)
Otero, Jennifer, Secretary		Yvonne Bouknight– BOE
Carvajal, Matilda		
Gale, Madeline		**Guests:**
Pierre, Kevin		Lani Sommer-Padilla
Spence, Reubena		Lauren Berman
Cohen, Joni		Josh Katz
		Nicole Farjani
		Elise Hammond
		Liz George, Montclair Local

Meeting notice was provided on Meeting Dates Township of Montclair, NJ (montclairnjusa.org) as well as filed with the Township Clerk.

Meeting Dates

The Civil Rights Commission (CRC) meets at 205 Claremont Avenue on the 3rd Thursday of every month. These meetings will have an allocated slot open to the public for public comment on issues pertaining to civil rights in Montclair. This section will typically begin at 7 p.m...

www.montclairnjusa.org

Civil Rights Commission activities also listed in Montclair Local (Internet only news site) with link to Township site for meeting dates: [Montclair Civil Rights Commission: Come Be Part of Change - Montclair Local]



Montclair Civil Rights Commission: Come Be Part of Change

For 2024, Montclair Civil Rights Commission has a new chair, several new members, and is actively recruiting more residents to join.

montclairlocal.news

1. **Meeting Overview and Attendance**: per table above

2. **Media Inquiry and School Discrimination**: The commission discusses a news article that highlights discrimination within the township's school system, including instances of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. The chair notes that the media has requested comments on the issue, but emphasizes the need for thoughtful, well-coordinated responses. The commission is concerned about the public perception and ensuring transparency without rushing into media engagements. We discussed how the commission should respond to incidents of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in schools, and what steps can be taken to engage with school officials and the public on these issues. The commission also wants to ensure that any communication with the media is done with transparency to all CRC commissioners to avoid misrepresentation

3. Public Comment Topic 1 (Lani Sommer Padilla, Lauren Berman, Josh Katz): Summary of the points made by these 3 commenting parties:

- *Anti-semitic comments were made by Mr Kevin Dawud Amin, chaplain affiliated with the Montclair Police Department during the 9/10 town council meeting.*
- *The comment invoked the anti-Semitic trope about Jewish control of the media, which deeply alarmed members of the community. Despite this, the town council members present at the meeting failed to immediately address or condemn the statement. This concerned the commenting parties.*
- *After the incident, a meeting was organized between the chaplain, a concerned community member, and a local rabbi. In that meeting, the chaplain denied that his comments were anti-Semitic. He repeated similar remarks during the conversation, further concerning those involved. There has been no official action taken or statement issued by the town council.*
- *In addition to anti-Semitic comments, the chaplain's social media posts also included anti-LGBTQ+ content. The commenters raised additional concerns about the chaplain's appropriateness for his public position*
- *Lani would like the Town Council to evaluate, issue a statement and for Mr Amin's position with the police to be reëvaluated*

The CRC played an extract from the YouTube video from the 9/10 Town Council meeting referencing Mr. Amin's comments. The CRC had also prior shared a written transcript of the YouTube video of the Town Council meeting. CRC follow-up: The CRC will investigate, obtain Mr. Amin's point of view, and advise the

Town Council accordingly. Follow-up correspondence from Lauren Berman requested to not have any more community meetings.

Lt Tyrone Williams confirmed that chaplains are unpaid positions and there are chaplains for all major religious denominations in Montclair. Mr Gonzalez is a prominent chaplain.

4. Public Comment Topic 2 (Elise): Summary of the points made by Elise Hammond:

- *Michael, who is in the early stages of transitioning and presents as a trans woman, went to ARC Salon for a waxing appointment. Upon arrival, the salon technician made a visibly disgusted face when Michael stood up in response to being called. The technician then refused to provide service, citing a policy of not waxing men below the waist, despite Michael not identifying as male.*
- *Michael's partner, Elise Hammond, explained the situation to the technician, emphasizing that Michael is not a man, but the technician insisted on denying service. When they tried to clarify the salon's policy with the receptionist, the receptionist confirmed that the salon does wax trans women but left the decision to the technician, who still refused.*
- *This incident left Michael feeling humiliated, and they have since been reluctant to seek similar services elsewhere.*
- *Elise is bringig this matter to the CRC not only to represent Michael but also to raise awareness about the broader issue of how transgender individuals are treated in public spaces.*
- *She acknowledged that cultural norms might have influenced the technician's decision, as many of the staff appeared to be of Southeast Asian descent. However, Elise emphasized that trans women should not be denied service based on gender identity.*
- *Elise sought guidance from the CRC on how to proceed and whether there was a way to educate local businesses on transgender rights.*

CRC follow-up: The commissioners discussed the potential involvement of the Business Improvement District (BID), which has previously conducted training for Montclair businesses on issues like racism. They considered whether similar training could be provided to address LGBTQ+ inclusivity and sensitivity. The CRC will investigate and advise the Town Council on findings.

5. **Engagement with Montclair Schools**: The CRC is actively working on improving its relationship with the Montclair school district, particularly Montclair High School. The goal is to appoint a student liaison to the commission to facilitate better communication and action on civil rights issues within schools. However, the process has been stalled due to legal hurdles, including the need for a formal legal agreement between the school district and the CRC.

6. **Legal Delays in School Liaison Program**: Commissioners express frustration that a legal agreement to protect student liaisons has been pending for over a year. Despite student interest in participating, the district's legal department has yet to approve the necessary documentation. This delay is hindering the CRC's ability to engage with students on civil rights issues and has become a source of ongoing concern for the commission

7. Ms Wineglass - Kevin Pierre is still following up with Ms Wineglass and the Housing and Landlord - Tenant Advisory committee on the challenges being faced with her landlord. Another update will be presented at the October meeting.

8. Mr. Yagci follow-up - Kevin Allen advised that there were 3 incidents involving the 1 Yagci boy, and Paul Burr will provide Kevin with the MUSC policies for family terminations from MUSC activities.

9. **Budget Challenges and Reimbursement Issues**: Kevin Allen advised to submit the initial reimbursements directly to Ms. Nieves, the Town clerk. Separately, Leslie Brown will meet with the Township Finance committee on the CRC nominal budget and requesting a councilor to use their discretionary funds for this.

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