



County of Onondaga
Office of Diversity and Inclusion

John H. Mulroy Civic Center, 15th Floor
421 Montgomery Street, Syracuse, New York 13202

Phone: 315.435.3565
Human Rights: 315.435.3565
MWBE: 315.435.5065

www.ongov.net

J. Ryan McMahon, II
County Executive

Monica Williams
Chief Diversity Officer

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES

June 21, 2023 ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC MEETING

*****Draft: pending approval*****

COMMISSIONERS:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| _Hassina Adams | _Paul Harvey |
| _Bishop H. Bernard Alex | _Agnes McCray |
| _Samia Al-Fareh | _Liam O'Connor |
| _Mbonimpa Banabas | _Lauren Rosenstein |
| _Rev. Roosevelt Baums | _Leo Sanchez |
| _Rasheada Caldwell (Chair) | _Ryan Smith |
| _Chris Gilkes | _Mia Wade |

Absent: Samia Al-Fareh, Mbonimpa Banabas, Chairperson Rasheada Caldwell, Chris Gilkes, and Leo Sanchez.

County staff present: CDO Monica Williams, Exec. Dir. of HR Montanette Murphy, Human Rights Specialist Johanna Sellers.

Opening: Meeting began at 5:35 – Meeting is being recording via Zoom.

Introduction and Welcome: Montanette Murphy introduced Office of Diversity staff; Commissioners then introduced themselves, including the two new Commissioners Ryan Smith and Paul Harvey. Public: no one. Meeting took place in Literacy Room because of early voting in the library’s auditorium.

Chair’s Report: None

Administrator’s Report: Pride parade on August 25 at the State Fair. Commissioners encouraged to attend. National Night Out set for August 1, 2023. Lauren inquired about the FOCUS Greater Syracuse forum.

Discussion: Commissioners discussed the realistic expectations of what the school district can and will do concerning the incident with the two young black students. The Commission agreed to send a letter to the school board, no later than July 5th, responding to the school board’s May 4th letter to the HRC. The Commission will give an August 10th deadline for the school board to respond, which will be before the HRC’s August 16th meeting. Commissioner McCray wants our office to check with Pam Romeo and Law to find out what to do if Jordan-Elbridge only gives

the Commission tidbits of their progress towards Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Agnes wants legal counsel to figure out what recourse we have or if they don't respond the way that Commissioners want. Commissioner Alex asked if the HRC can seek outside counsel. CDO Monica Williams responded yes. Monica wants to discuss what hiring outside counsel would involve and also retaining a lawyer. ODI will follow up with HRC Law person Pam Romeo. HRC Local Law states that Commission can hire a lawyer – but how does the Commission do that, is there a bidding process? It was also discussed to keep the Jordan-Elbridge parents in the loop about everything that is going on with the School Board and HRC. It was also noted that the parents who brought the complaint to the HRC should write a note stating that they asked the Commission for help and advocacy regarding the racist incidents their sons experienced. Commissioners also said that they want plain language of the DASA (Dignity for All Students Act) law and the code of conduct.

- Also, Montanette had a separate conversation with Commissioner McCray about creating business cards with QR codes on them; and hosting an event at the Boys & Girls Club with Commissioner Chris Gilkes.

Meeting ended at 6:40 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Montanette Murphy on June 22, 2023.