



TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT

Human Rights & Relations Commission Minutes

Regular Meeting

7:00 PM, October 8, 2026

[Click to View Agenda](#)

Hamden Government
Center
Third Floor Conference
Room
2750 Dixwell Avenue
Hamden, CT 06518
Tel: (203) 287-7070
Fax: (203) 287-7075

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Claudia Lesueur called the regular meeting of the Human Rights & Opportunities Commission to order at 7:05 pm.

2. ATTENDANCE

B&C Clerk Porsche Edmundson took the roll call.

Present

- Claudia Lesueur, Chair
- Ganiyus Mimiko
- Dana Parmelee-Guzman
- Tiffany Artis Wilson
- Gopika Sheth
- Savannah Nazaire

Guest Speakers

- Jessica Rizzo
- Vincent DeStefanis
- Asya Brandon

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

No formal public comments were received.

1. We have invited Police Chief Reynolds to discuss Hamden youth programs and answer the questions we presented in advance.

Unfortunately, Police Chief Reynolds was not able to attend the meeting. However, he was gracious enough to send three of his distinguished representatives.

4. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

The meeting minutes for the September 29 special meeting are being recovered due to technical issues with updates.

1. Approval of the minutes from the September 29th meeting.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

The Commission reviewed outreach efforts related to upcoming Human Rights Commission programs and community presentations. Members reported ongoing

communications with schools, community organizations, municipal officials, local service providers, and faith-based organizations regarding participation in upcoming events. Discussion also included continued promotion of the Commission's upcoming community presentation, ***Peace: The Other Side of Anger***, and efforts to increase public attendance through flyers, social media, schools, community organizations, and houses of worship.

1. RSVP's to the October 20th PTV event.

6. REPORTS

Hamden Police Department Youth Programs and Community Engagement

Representatives from the Hamden Police Department attended the meeting to discuss youth programming, community outreach efforts, and initiatives designed to strengthen relationships between law enforcement and Hamden youth.

Chair Lesueur explained that Commissioners had developed a series of questions because members possessed varying levels of familiarity with police-sponsored youth programs.

The Commission sought a better understanding of available programs, participation levels, community impact, and methods used to determine program success.

The Commission requested information regarding:

- Youth programming offered through the Police Department;
- Program participation and accessibility;
- Methods used to evaluate effectiveness;
- Community engagement efforts;
- Use of the community space at Hamden Plaza; and
- Relationships between law enforcement, youth, and schools.

Cadet Program

Police representatives described the Cadet Program as one of the Department's most successful youth initiatives. The program serves youth ages, 13 through 18 who have expressed an interest in law enforcement and public service careers.

Representatives explained that cadets are introduced to many aspects of police work, including traffic enforcement, calls for service, departmental procedures, and law enforcement protocols. Participants are also exposed to practical demonstrations of police equipment and operations.

The Department emphasized that the program is intended not only to educate participants about potential careers in law enforcement but also to foster positive relationships between young people and police officers through direct interaction and education.

The Commission learned that the program currently meets once each week and serves approximately 12 to 16 students. Police representatives reported that interest in the program remains strong and that recruitment has been largely successful through relationships established by School Resource Officers.

Commissioners expressed interest in understanding how many youth are reached through such programs and discussed whether participation could be expanded should additional interest arise.

Introduction to Emergency Services Course

The Department also discussed the Introduction to Emergency Services course offered through Hamden High School.

The course provides juniors and seniors with exposure to careers in law enforcement, fire

service, and emergency medical services while allowing students to receive elective academic credit.

Officials reported that approximately twenty students are currently enrolled and that strong interest continues in future offerings. The course is presently in its second year and has been considered successful by both students and instructors.

Police Activity League (PAL)

Police representatives discussed the Police Activity League (PAL), which was established approximately one year ago to create additional opportunities for youth engagement.

Current programming includes:

- Martial Arts
- Arts Programming
- Hiking Activities

Participation levels generally range from 15 to 30 young people, depending on the program.

Representatives noted that officers volunteer their personal time to support and lead these activities. Commissioners expressed appreciation for the dedication of participating officers and acknowledged the importance of positive youth engagement opportunities.

Measuring Program Success

Commissioners asked how the Department evaluates the success of youth programs beyond participation numbers.

Discussion focused on the possible value of collecting long-term data regarding:

- College enrollment;
- Criminal justice studies;
- Public service careers;
- Emergency services careers; and
- Employment in law enforcement.

Commissioners noted that outcome-based statistics could help demonstrate the effectiveness of youth programs to the public and provide measurable evidence of community impact.

Police representatives acknowledged the value of such data but indicated that a formal long-term tracking system is not currently in place.

Community Space at Hamden Plaza

The Commission discussed the utilization of the community space located at Hamden Plaza.

Police representatives reported that the site currently hosts approximately ten different programs and community activities throughout the week.

Programs operating from the location include:

- PAL Arts Programming;
- Youth Ambassador initiatives;
- Hamden Business Academy;
- Grieving Mothers Support Group;
- Youth mentoring programs; and
- Various nonprofit community services.

The Police Department Social Worker explained that the space also serves as a neutral and welcoming location for supporting families following critical incidents. The facility is used for counseling, resource coordination, family support meetings, and community outreach efforts.

Representatives further explained that the location also contains office space for staff and a community library established through a donation from the FBI Citizens Academy. Commission members expressed appreciation for the services currently being offered but noted that many residents remain unaware of the programs operating within the space.

Suggestions discussed included:

- Posting visible program schedules;
- Creating a public calendar of events;
- Improving website and social media visibility; and
- Increasing community outreach efforts.

Police representatives agreed that greater community awareness would be beneficial and indicated a willingness to explore additional methods of public communication.

School Resource Officers and Elementary School Engagement.

The Commission held an extensive discussion regarding police presence within Hamden schools and opportunities to strengthen relationships between law enforcement, students, and families.

Dana Parmelee-Guzman raised concerns regarding police presence at elementary schools serving large immigrant populations. She explained that some families may have previous negative experiences with law enforcement in their countries of origin or concerns stemming from current immigration-related issues.

Discussion centered on situations in which police vehicles may be present at schools without advance notice and how those appearances can sometimes cause anxiety among students and families.

Police representatives explained that School Resource Officers regularly engage with students through school visits, field trips, mentoring opportunities, educational presentations, and informal interactions intended to build trust and familiarity.

Commission members discussed several ways to improve communication and community engagement, including:

- Scheduled school visits;
- Advance notification through school newsletters;
- Family engagement opportunities;
- Community-oriented events involving police officers; and
- Increased visibility of positive law enforcement interactions with youth.

The Police Department Social Worker discussed services available to families requiring support and emphasized a willingness to work collaboratively with schools, students, and families whenever invited.

The Commission agreed that continued trust-building efforts between schools, law enforcement, and community members remain an important goal.

1. Social media posts and invitations were sent for the October 20th PTV Presentation. The Mayor's Office Response to the Request for an Update on Commission Applications.

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

(if recommended by the town attorney)

8. OLD BUSINESS

Peace: The Other Side of Anger

The Commission reviewed preparations for the upcoming community presentation, Peace: The Other Side of Anger.

Chair Lesueur discussed the planned event featuring David Lewis, a former New York City guidance counselor who has dedicated significant time to conflict prevention, anger management, and violence reduction initiatives.

Commissioners reviewed plans for the October presentation and discussed a follow-up interactive workshop scheduled for a later date that will include role-playing exercises and opportunities for deeper community engagement.

The Commission extended an invitation to representatives of the Hamden Police Department and community organizations to participate.

Community Outreach

Members discussed continued outreach for Commission-sponsored events.

Efforts included:

- Distribution of flyers;
- School outreach;
- Social media promotion;
- Outreach through faith communities;
- Communication with Youth Services; and
- Direct engagement with community organizations.

Commissioners emphasized the importance of maximizing public awareness and attendance at upcoming programs.

1. October 20th PTV presentation Details.
November 17th IRIS Presentation Details.
New Haven Legal Assistance: Alex Smith, to attend the November 12th meeting — any specific questions we would like to ask?

9. NEW BUSINESS

Mayor's Office Update and Commission Appointments.

Chair Lesueur reported on discussions held with representatives of the Mayor's Office regarding pending Commission appointments.

The Chair explained that applications submitted earlier in the year continue to move through the municipal approval process but require additional actions before appointments become official.

Commissioners discussed concerns regarding vacancies and delays in the appointment process. Members noted that maintaining an active and fully staffed Commission is important to effectively carrying out the Commission's responsibilities.

The Commission also discussed potential methods for encouraging more timely action on future appointments.

New Haven Legal Assistance

The Commission was advised that representatives from New Haven Legal Assistance have agreed to attend a future meeting.

The presentation is expected to provide information regarding:

- Immigration assistance;
- Housing and tenant matters;
- Employment discrimination issues; and
- Additional legal resources available within the community.

Commissioners expressed interest in learning more about these services and their availability to Hamden residents.

Future Programming

The Commission discussed future educational presentations, guest speakers, and community engagement opportunities.

Because of possible scheduling limitations at the library during upcoming months, members explored alternative meeting and presentation locations.

The community space at Hamden Plaza was discussed as a potential future venue for Human Rights Commission programs and educational events.

Members agreed to continue identifying community partnerships and educational opportunities that support the Commission's mission of promoting human rights, equity, understanding, and inclusion.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded.

The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Human Rights & Opportunities Commission, Town of Hamden

By: B&C Clerk Porsche Edmundson

Video Link:

https://hamden.zoom.us/rec/share/0xQ02SMfD5hPXmzhROeQkWsZ3GCZkpwPCvls7vkiIW9oV4AUxxPdQ4ybYTcWJk4d.frXwMfKI34jnF0T1?pwd=DGzAN0y4oCtZsXYZVwAAIAAAAN3OV i7CnFev7GpFt1uehNrCrx5LtiEJP sYZCN0qatZeKDR eWobEu_tQRWa_aJiMXTAwMDAwNA&from=hub