

Connecticut Hate Crimes Advisory Council
October 22, 2021 – 2:00 pm ET (Virtual)
Minutes

1. Welcome and Call to Order (Hon. Doug Lavine and Amy Lin Meyerson, Co-Chairs)

A meeting of the Connecticut Hate Crimes Advisory Council was held on Friday, October 22, 2021. The meeting convened at 2:00 p.m. EDT. Co-Chairs Amy Lin Meyerson and Hon. Douglas Lavine presided. Luke Reynolds served as Secretary.

2. Roll Call

Council members present were: Douglas Lavine, Amy Lin Meyerson, Michael Bloom, Rabbi Farbman, Andrew Feinstein, Andrew Feinstein, Erene Hammond, Rathanak Keo, Diana Lombardi, Tamara Lanier, Duane Lovello, Robin McHaelen, John Merz, Fernando Muniz, Aida Monsoor, Jonathan Slifka, Sharad Samy, Richard Wilson, Richard Colangelo, Jr., Tashun Bowden-Lewis, Leonard Rodriguez, James Rovella, Cecil Thomas, Michelle Querijero, and Christopher Ferace.

Also in attendance were: Hallie Tingstad, Rebecca Oestreicher, Devon Fray, and Luke Reynolds.

3. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Andrew Feinstein and seconded by Chris Ferace to approve the minutes from the meeting on September 17, 2021. Motion passed.

4. Website

Amy Lin Meyerson reported that she and Doug Lavine had a good meeting with representatives from the CT Department of Administrative Services to establish the Council's web presence on ct.gov.

5. Subcommittees Reports

Richard Wilson commented that UConn Law School is hoping to archive any relevant documents, work product, reflections from conversations with experts, minutes, etc. All subcommittees are encouraged to send information to Dean Wilson, even if you do not know its value, and the librarians can determine its' worth.

Every three months subcommittees are to submit a report to Council Co-Chairs with (1) what the subcommittee is doing and (2) where the subcommittee is going.

Community Awareness: Michael Farbman reported that the first meeting had been scheduled for Nov. 2nd. Survey on mission and purpose sent to subcommittee members. Amy Lin Meyerson clarified that all people in the subgroups of the Community Awareness subcommittee are members of the Community Awareness subcommittee.

Co-chairs Lanier and Wilson, Hate Crimes Reporting and Analysis: Dean Wilson reported that the subcommittee is in fact-finding mode and met to review the charge of the subcommittee and language of the statutes. Attorney Colangelo, Commissioner Lovello, and Kate Evans attended the initial meeting and went over the system for reporting. The next meeting is on Tuesday morning on November 9th. Currently, the subcommittee is working to set up a DropBox folder that Council members may access to see resources and minutes. Tamara Lanier stated that to move forward, collaboration with other subcommittees is necessary to determine what policies and institutions are valid and should be implemented. Tamara added that it will be a labor-intensive process.

Chair Lavine, Restitution Programs and Sentencing: Judge Lavine reports that the subcommittee met once and is meeting again in early November. Luke and Devon (UConn Law Students) have been doing an intensive literature review on alternative sentencing and restorative justice. There is a lack of data for hate crimes in particular – for example, it is hard to find information about recidivism for hate crime offenders specifically.

Law Enforcement Training and Best Practices: Duane Lovello reports that subcommittee members attended an Anti-Defamation League webinar on hate crimes and FBI reporting. There was a powerful presentation from Officer Jamie Byrd (Daughter of James Byrd) on the need to see many crimes as hate crimes. The slides have been forwarded to Richard Wilson. Judge Lavine noted the importance to recognize not just “intent” but also “motivation” and how some prosecutors are reluctant to prove all these elements. He suggested looking to other jurisdictions such as NYC to learn how they are pursuing hate crimes and charging offenders.

Chair, Samy, Administrative: Initial inquiries have been made for funds available through the US Department of Justice.

6. Meeting Schedule

The Council agreed to meet on the second Friday of every month at 2:15 p.m. ET. Attorney Colangelo will email meeting invitations that can be added to Council members’ calendars. The next meeting will be on November 12, 2021, at 2:15 p.m. ET

7. New Business: How HCAC Subcommittees Will Work Cooperatively

Judge Lavine: Many area’s overlap so please include Amy and the Judge in all links that you are sending out about meetings with your subcommittee

Mike Keo: Many in the Asian-American community fear retaliation from police if they report anything so there should be close collaboration between the community awareness subcommittee and law enforcement subcommittee. Detectives have told him that often most racial slurs are done during traffic incidents and it is hard to prove motivation/intent.

Attorney Colangelo offered to have a local prosecutor meet with any victims who feel that way because the prosecutor can explain the process.

Tamara Lanier: Some officers ask if victims want to report a hate crime and sometimes the victim will say “there’s enough on your plate.” Do officers charge based on what victim says or what the officer believes is the right charge?

Attorney Colangelo: victim input is always important but the prosecutor can change the charge depending on the circumstances.

Judge Lavine: it is also important to note that hate speech and hate crimes are different, and prosecutors may drop the charge if there is not enough to prove the hate crime. Furthermore, incidents are trickier than crimes.

Michelle Querijero suggested that subcommittee chairs not only share subcommittee minutes but also identify in the minutes areas of overlap between the subcommittees. The Council will post one-page reports submitted by subcommittees every three months on the website.

Council members are encouraged to email subcommittee chairs directly with questions, comments or suggestions that are relevant to the work of their subcommittee.

8. Other Business

Sharad Samy: Discussed his work with Ken Barone on the police accountability task force to coordinate, collect, and navigate data.

Robin McHaelen: The DoJ in New Haven is doing a series of PSA's together with the FBI in November to encourage additional reporting of under-represented groups. The contact is David Heath; Office: 203-821-3752 | Cell: 203-232-9275 | David.Heath2@usdoj.gov.

Tamara Lanier: Suggested recommending a uniform response for behavior incidents that involve hate-motivated victimization in schools. Andrew Feinstein, Robin McHaelen and Michael Bloom expressed interest in participating in further discussion on this topic.

9. Announcements

Amy Lin Meyerson: The Connecticut Bar Association has a policing task force that will be discussing its recommendations in a program on November 4th in the Constance Baker Motley Speaker Series presented by the CBA and the Connecticut Bar Foundation. The CBA Legislative Agenda includes a list of the recommendations that have been submitted by this task force.

The CBA Executive Committee and the Council have received a one-hour time slot for the June 2022 Connecticut Legal Conference to present a program on Hate Crimes and the Council’s work.

10. Adjournment

The meeting on October 22, 2021, adjourned at 3:30 p.m. EDT.