

A meeting of the **Civil Rights Task Force** for March 2022 was held tonight via web conference. Members in attendance were: Commissioner Brockington, Liza Meiris, Will Pillsbury, Herb Bailey, Wendy Blutstein and Kathleen Jake Marcus. Staff present: John Slavin, Acting Chief of Police; Andy Snyder, Police Lt. Guests present: Commissioner Ann Rappoport.

1. Mr. Brockington called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.
2. The Meeting Minutes for December 7, 2021 were accepted.
3. Update on the Chief of Police Position-

Mr. Brockington asked the members to email questions to him that they would like asked during the Chief of Police Interviews. Mr. Brockington asked that these questions be submitted as soon as possible and he will share these questions with the Township Manager.

4. Follow up on the direction of the Human Relations Commission.

Ms. Rappoport has been meeting with Dr. William Taylor, who sat on the Human Relations Commission, to find ways to bring back the Human Relations Commission. The biggest struggle is that the Township does not have the bandwidth right now. Mr. Brockington asked if the Human Relations Commission members have been in contact with each other to have meetings amongst themselves. Ms. Marcus said that a few years back, she had made attempts to reach out to the members to schedule a Zoom meeting, but that she was told by the Township that she could not hold a meeting. Mr. Brockington suggested a meeting be set up. Ms. Marcus and Ms. Rappoport both noted that the Township has not updated the members in a few years. Ms. Meiris suggested reaching out to the members on record to see if they are still interested in volunteering on this Commission. Ms. Rappoport will talk to the Township Manager about whether or not to add the Human Relations Commission as an active Citizen's Committee seeking volunteers. Mr. Brockington will email the Township Manager reinforcing the need to make the Human Relations Commission active again.

5. Mission Statement for the Civil Rights Task Force.

Ms. Blutstein asked what the status was for the State Human Relations Committee, as she heard that they were taking very few cases. Ms. Marcus said the State has a legal mandate to take all of the complaints that are filed in accordance with the law. The issue is that the backlog from the time you file to the time something happens with the case is roughly 18 months to 2 years. Acting Chief Slavin noted that there is a link on the State Human Relations Commission website that takes you step by step to filing a complaint. Ms. Marcus noted that there are also links on the Township website.

6. Membership, advertising, and keeping meetings going.

Ms. Meiris asked if the Township could promote this Task Force as a way to bring in more volunteers and asked that the Task Force continue to meet on a regular basis.

7. Black History Month - Black History on the website and beyond.

Ms. Meiris said the history of Cheltenham is really unique. Ms. Meiris commented that the history text on the Township website is white-centric, with problematic language speaking about free black folks as though they were enslaved; in the La Mott section, it talks a lot about white people who gave land and nothing about the black folks themselves. Ms. Meiris said she would like to better showcase the diverse history of the Township. Ms. Rappoport suggested that since Ms. Meiris sits on the Historical Commission, she could work with the Commission to suggest revisions to the history section of the Township website. Mr. Bailey said that he would work with Ms. Meiris.

8. Mechanism for sharing information about politics that affects us: Ex. Fair Funding.

Ms. Meiris asked about adding a news section on the website that is dedicated to issues that affect the Township, including, for example, the fair funding trial that is happening in the State. She stated when people complain about Cheltenham taxes, they are really complaining about school taxes, and the reason they are so high is to make up for the fact that we have less funding from the state, which has a lot to do with our black population. If more people knew about these issues, we could be finding

more ways to get the support that we need. Ms. Blutstein asked if it would be possible to share links on the Township website regarding certain issues that people should know about. Mr. Brockington stated that we do need to be careful with what we put on the Township website, especially if it is political. Ms. Rappoport asked that if there is an issue that needs to be followed up on as a Township, please bring it up at a public meeting, where we can discuss it as a group and decide what steps we can take to intervene.

9. Update on police and body cam video.

Acting Chief Slavin mentioned that at the December meeting, the Committee spoke about the body camera footage that the Township Manager was able to view. This was because it was an internal investigation being conducted by the Township. It was confirmed with the District Attorney's office that due to the confidentiality, privacy and protection of others, these videos are not to be viewed by the public. Acting Chief Slavin did note that the Department will be presenting their 2021 car stop data at the April Public Safety Committee meeting. The Department wants to be as transparent as possible and create a dialogue between the department and the community. Ms. Meiris was understanding of the confidentiality with body cam videos and not being able to view them. She also said that body cams could be used as a great learning tool. Acting Chief Slavin said that the Department regularly reviews the body cam videos to make sure that things are being done the right way. Lt. Snyder commented that the body cam videos are ways for the Department to see how the officers are interacting with the public, how well they are doing the things that they are taught, and getting an overall perspective of each individual officer. Ms. Meiris asked how we handle officers that may turn off their body cameras. Lt. Snyder said that they have not had a single incident since implementing the body cameras where an officer should have activated his body camera and didn't. Technologically, the reason the department bought the system they did, is because the in-car camera and body camera are linked, so anytime an officer activates his lights and sirens, the body camera turns on automatically. Mr. Brockington asked if there have been any situations where a person being pulled over requested that the body camera is turned off. Lt. Snyder said that it is in their policy that in a public place there is no requirement for officers to discontinue the recording. Acting Chief Slavin said that there are certain circumstances where a body camera may be turned off, out of respect for the victim, particularly in a domestic violence or sexual assault situation.

11. Old Business: None.

12. New Business: None.

13. Open Discussion/Citizen Comments:

A. Ms. Blutstein commented on the general public and how it seems like people are more hostile these days. Ms. Marcus asked about a Committee that could help with these issues. Ms. Rappoport commented that the Township does have a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Committee that meets to discuss these issues.

B. Mr. Brockington spoke about the war going on in Ukraine and would like to try and coordinate a silent demonstration or walk to show support for Ukraine.

14. Mr. Brockington adjourned the meeting at 8:48 p.m.

  
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Robert Zienkowski  
Township Manager

Per Ashley Lupino