

## Onondaga County/Syracuse Commission on Human Rights

John H. Mulroy Civic Center  
11th Floor East  
421 Montgomery Street  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
(315) 435-3565

### 2019 Human Rights Commission Meeting Dates

Meeting #	Date	Location	Notes
2019 - 1	January 23, 2019	South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.	This was held as a board development session, NOT as a business meeting
2019 - 2	February 20, 2019	South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.	
2019 - 3	March 27, 2019	South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.	
2019 - 4	April 10, 2019	South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.	
2019 - 5	NO BUSINESS SESSION	South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.	Commissioners to Participate in Event 5/18 in Solidarity with the Local Muslim Community
2019 - 6	June 19, 2019	South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.	
2019 - 7	July 24, 2019	<i>South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.</i>	
2019 - 8	August 28, 2019	<i>South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.</i>	
2019 - 9	Sept. 18, 2019	South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.	
2019 - 10	October 23, 2019	South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.	

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2019 - 11	November 20, 2019	South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.	
2019 - 12	December 18, 2019	South Side Innovation Center 2610 S. Salina St.	



Onondaga County / Syracuse  
**Human Rights Commission**

**J. Ryan McMahon II**  
County Executive

**Onondaga County Justice Center Oversight Committee**

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**Barrie Gewanter**  
Executive Director

**Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**February 20, 2019 Meeting**  
*APPROVED in HRC Meeting on March 27, 2019*

**Present:** Leo Sanchez (Chair), Rabbi Dan Fellman (Co-chair), Steve Butler, Bruce Carter, Sanjay Chablani, Bob Gardino, Suzette Melendez, Dave Pasinski, John Rushing, Shelly Skellington, Rosalie Young

**Excused:** Crystal Doody, Jeff Tamburo, Mary Alice Smothers, Francis Parks

**Absent:** Khadijo Abdulkadir, Shiu Kai Chin

**Community Members Present:** Mikeil Anderson, Ken Bush, Charity Copeland

**County Staff Present:** Barrie Gewanter

1. Meeting convened at 5:45 PM. Quorum was established. Guests introduced themselves.
2. Discussion of the Dec. 2018 minutes was postponed to allow time for review by members. These minutes were approved unanimously later in the meeting (after Agenda Item 7).
3. Rabbi Fellman and Leo Sanchez discussed the status of commissioner appointments. The reappointments of Rabbi Fellman and Bruce Carter by the County Exec. were confirmed by the County Legislature, as were the reappointments of Crystal Doody and Khadijo Abdulkadir by the Legislature. The HRC has been informed that we should follow New York Municipal Law regarding reappointments of Commissioners. Specifically, when a commissioner's term expires, the commissioner continues to act as a commissioner until s/he is reappointed or a replacement has been appointed to fill the position.
4. Election of officers followed. Bruce Carter chaired the proceedings during election of the Chair. It was decided that commissioners would vote by secret ballot.
  - Leo Sanchez and Rabbi Fellman were both nominated and seconded. 11 Paper ballots were distributed, marked and collected. Rabbi Fellman was elected as chair. Ballots were counted by Bob Gardino and Sanjay Chhablani.
  - Rabbi Fellman chaired the election for co-chair. After a discussion about maximizing the number of current and emeritus officers who could constitute the 2019 Executive Committee, an initial nomination for Leo Sanchez was rescinded, and Shelly Skellington and Bruce Carter were nominated and seconded. 11 Paper ballots were again distributed, marked and collected. Shelly Skellington was elected. The ballots were again counted by Gardino and Chhablani.
  - Rabbi Fellman chaired the election for Secretary. Bruce Carter was re-elected by acclamation.



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**Barrie Gewanter**  
*Executive Director*

6. Discussion followed regarding structure of committees and organization of the Commission.
  - Bruce & Barrie explained the background of the Executive Committee's proposal to change the structure of HRC Committees. This was based on discussion in the January 2019 board development session. The proposal was to identify and organize HRC Committees annually based on topics of current or desired focus rather than based on static committees.
  - Bruce introduced a motion (see attached) to modify the Committee structure of the Commission as described in the governance document. Sanjay seconded the motion. Discussion followed. The motion was amended to strike the word "standing" from Article 6, Section 2. Bruce will edit the document for consistency.
  - The motion was made and seconded to table the amendment to the Governance Document. The amendment (see attached) will be re-introduced and voted on at the March meeting.
7. Barrie Gewanter presented her report.
  - Upcoming Diversity trainings were announced: March 14 and April 23 (in the County Office Building Room 803).
  - Future meetings were discussed. Future meeting dates are: March 27, April 10, May 15, June 19, July 24, and August 28.
  - Speakers for future meetings were discussed. Rabbi Fellman suggested that we establish speakers for the remainder of the year at the March meeting.
8. Rabbi Fellman pointed that the memorial service for former Commissioner Starr Guckert will be held February 28<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM at All Saints Church. Dave Pasinski and Rabbi Fellman will officiate.
9. Rabbi Fellman began a discussion of the starting and ending times of meetings. It was decided that meetings will continue to begin at 5:30 PM. All present were asked to try to arrive promptly.
10. Discussion of three HRC working committees for 2019 followed.
  - It was agreed that there will be an Education and Youth Committee, a committee tentatively entitled "Vulnerable Populations", and a Police/Community Relations Committee.
  - Individual commissioners went to different areas of the room in order to facilitate discussions about the committees in which they were interested in serving. All committees were instructed to identify a date for a committee meeting BEFORE the next meeting of the HRC, and confirm a Chairperson who would also serve on the Executive Committee. The Education and Vulnerable Populations Committees designated a Chair and a meeting date.
11. Meeting adjourned at 7 PM

Respectfully submitted,

D. Bruce Carter, Commission Secretary & Barrie Gewanter, Executive Director



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**Barrie Gewanter**  
Executive Director

**APPROVED Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**March 27, 2019 Meeting**

*APPROVED in HRC Meeting on April 10, 2019*

**Present:** Shiu Kai Chin, Bruce Carter (Secty), Sanjay Chhablani, Steve Butler, Crystal Doody, Rabbi Dan Fellman (Chair), Bob Gardino, Dave Pasinski, John Rushing Shelly Skellington (Co-chair), Rosalie Young.

**Excused:** Suzette Melendez, Leo Sanchez, Jeff Tamburo, Mary Alice Smothers, Francis Parks

**Absent:** Khadijo Abdulkadir

**Community Members Present:** Mikael Anderson (Syracuse Police Accountability and Reform Commission); no media were present.

**County Staff Present:** Barrie Gewanter and Montanette Murphy (Human Rights Dept.)

1. Meeting convened at 5:30 pm.
2. Josh Cotter from Legal Services spoke about his agency and its legal work to address the rights of adults and youth in correctional institutions, including state inmates with disabilities, and youth held in jails in the Onondaga County and Broome County jails. Contact: [jcotter@lscny.org](mailto:jcotter@lscny.org)
3. Minutes of the meeting of Feb. 20, 2019 were reviewed. Crystal Doody moved approval; Bob Gardino seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
4. Visitor Mikael Anderson introduced himself.
5. Reports from the Chair & Co-Chair:
  - Chair Rabbi Fellman reported that he was working on appointments and reappointments to the Commission. The goal is to address all appointments annually, and by May for terms expiring the following December. He reported that the Executive Committee has requested that all reports (Chair & Co-Chair, Executive Director, and Committee Chairs) be submitted in writing so that going forward Commissioners can review reports prior to the meeting.
  - Shelly Skellington reported that two letters have been developed at the direction of the Executive Committee to be sent on behalf of the Human Rights Commission. The first is a letter to the editor related to the murder of a transgender woman named Lateisha Green. The Board approved the letter unanimously, and it will be sent to Syracuse.com. (see attached) The second letter is written to the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Health regarding the sudden cancellation



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**Barrie Gewanter**  
*Executive Director*

of funding for 3 agencies serving the LGBTQ community (Q Center for adolescents; Pride & Joy Families for parents and children; and SAGE Upstate for the seniors). The Board also approved this letter unanimously, and it will be sent to the Commissioner, the Governor, the Syracuse Mayor and Onondaga County Executive, to the Chair and Majority/Minority Leaders of the County Legislature, to the President of the Syracuse Common Council, and to several NYS legislators. The Board requested that all 3 Board officers (Fellman, Skellington, & Carter) sign the letter, and directed the Executive Committee to decide if a copy will be sent to the Syracuse Newspapers. (see attached).

#### 6. Executive Director's Report

- Barrie Gewanter asked if any Commissioners wanted to attend upcoming Diversity Trainings on 4/23/19 and 5/16/19. She also asked Commissioners to select HRC meeting dates for fall 2019. The following dates were selected: September 18, October 23, November 20, and December 18. The start time for these meetings will remain at 5:30. They will continue to be held at the South Side Innovation Center location

- There will be a Community Iftar held by members of the Muslim Community on May 18<sup>th</sup> at Syracuse University. Barrie asked Commissioners to volunteer to assist with this event

- Barrie is working with the organizing committees for two World Refugee Day events – a Training Symposium on Saturday June 15 and a Festival on Saturday June 22 in Lower Schiller Park. She asked for volunteers to work on these committees, especially the Festival on June 22, 2019.

- Barrie is working with the Onondaga Bar Association to create a Continuing Legal Education program for attorneys about Title VI, the ADA in reference to Language Assistance Issues.

7. Revisions to HRC Governing Document regarding Committee names and responsibilities (see attached) were revisited. These items had been tabled from the February Commission meeting. Each revision was discussed. All revisions were approved unanimously. (see Attached)

#### 8. Reports from Committee Chairs

- Crystal Doody reported for the Law Enforcement/Community Relations Committee. Three dates for future meetings have been identified and a meeting date will soon be finalized.

- Dave Pasinski reported for the Underserved Populations Committee. A draft of the Committee's mission statement was distributed. This statement will be finalized at a meeting to be held before the next HRC meeting. (see attached)

- Sanjay Chhablani reported for the Education and Youth Committee. The Committee has met twice since the last Commission meeting, and has identified short-, medium- and long-term goals and



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*Executive Director*

objectives. The major focus of the Committee at present is DASA, and the education of communities and specific target groups (parents, teachers, etc.) about related state regulations for addressing harassment and bullying in schools.

9. Old Business - Reports from Commissioners who have contacted other Commissions will be discussed at the next Board meeting.

10. New Business - Rabbi Fellman asked that all Commissioners familiarize themselves with articles in the UN Declaration of Human Rights (copy attached).

11. Future announcements and reports will be in writing and distributed in advance of the meeting.

12. The Meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,  
D. Bruce Carter, Commission Secretary  
with input from Barrie Gewanter, Executive Director





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**Barrie Gewanter**  
Executive Director

**Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**June 19, 2019 Meeting**

*APPROVED in HRC Meeting on July 24, 2019*

**Present:** Crystal Doody, Rabbi Dan Fellman, John Rushing, Dave Pasinski, Rosalie Young, Tricia Wittkowski  
**Excused:** Mary Alice Smothers, Frances MacMillan Parks, Bruce Carter, Suzette Melendez, Jeff Tamburo, Bob Gardino, Chol Majok  
**Absent:** Steve Butler, Khadijo Abdulkadir, Shiu-Kai Chin, Sanjay Chhablani, Leo Sanchez, Shelly Skellington

**Community Members Present:** Mikael Anderson, Lanessa Chaplin (NYCLU), Micah Pasinski, Mariah Pasinski, Gina Barbato

**County Staff Present:** Barrie Gewanter and Montanette Murphy (Human Rights Dept.)

1. Meeting convened at 5:39pm. As there were only 6 board members present there was no quorum.

2. Speaker Lanessa Owens from the NYCLU spoke about concerns related to the I-81 Viaduct project. She spoke about the impact of the original construction of I-81, and the segregation in Syracuse- then and now. She spoke about seeking remediation for the damage done to the residents of the former 15<sup>th</sup> Ward e from the I-81 project 55 years ago, and a need to mitigate potential damage to people's lives and health that may occur as a result of the upcoming project. She pointed to the release of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) 6 weeks ago, and called for the voices of affected people to be heard in the subsequent 45 day comment period, which is expected to begin this coming Sept. She also spoke about a need for a full study of the potential health impacts of the project and a relocation plan for the people who will be displaced or negatively affected by proximity to the demolition and construction work. In particular she mentioned the elders in Toomey Abbot Towers and the children in MLK school.

3. There was no quorum to consider any motion related to the draft April 2019 minutes.

4. Highlights and Discussion Items from the Chair:

There was a brief recap from Rabbi Dan Fellman, Rosalie Young, and Barrie Gewanter about the Community Iftar event at Manley Field House, including the volunteer service of several Commissioners and the Director. The May HRC Board meeting was cancelled to encourage HRC Board Members to attend this event. Sanjay Chhablani, Khadijo Abdulkadir and Shelley Skellington also volunteered at the event that evening.





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A copy of the letter to HRC officers from an administrator in the NY State Health Dept. was included in board member packets. This letter was in response to a letter from the HRC to the Health Dept. in April.

5. Highlights and Discussion Items from the Director:

Barrie Gewanter requested that Board Members sign up for outreach shifts for the Pride & World Refugee Day Festivals. Crystal Doody agreed to help recruit board members for the World Refugee Day event.

6. Written 1 page Reports from the Chairs of the Education and Youth Committee and the Police Community Relations Committee were included in Board Member packets.

7. New Business:

Dave Pasinski provided a report on his family's service trip to El Paso, Texas. He and his family worked at a center run by the Catholic Church that provided support to immigrants seeking asylum after they were processed and released by Customs and Border Patrol officials after crossing the US border with Mexico. Dave's daughter Mariah also offered thoughts about their experiences at the center.

Rabbi Dan Fellman then presented a proposal to alternate monthly HRC Business meetings with meetings of Committees on Wednesday nights previously designated for Business meetings. He suggested that this would help the committees better maintain and coordinate efforts. Those present expressed support for this approach, but without a quorum, those present could not vote to initiate this.

Rabbi Dan Fellman mentioned recent events related to citizen encounters with Syracuse police officers that have been in the news, including one incident in which a senior citizen was shot and killed. He suggested that the HRC should be a part of the subsequent dialogues. Barrie Gewanter informed those present that the Police Chief was holding a forum to discuss the new SPD use of force policy at 5:30pm on Friday June 28<sup>th</sup> at St. Lucy's Church gym.

8. Crystal Doody motioned to adjourn the meeting. John seconded the motion. There was unanimous agreement to adjourn despite the lack of a quorum.

Respectfully submitted:

Barrie Gewanter, Director

*Board Secretary Bruce Carter was excused from attendance at this meeting.*



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**Barrie Gewanter**  
Executive Director

**Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**July 24, 2019 Meeting**  
***APPROVED in HRC Meeting on August 28, 2019***

**Present:** Crystal Doody, Rabbi Dan Fellman, John Rushing, Dave Pasinski, Bob Gardino, Tricia Wittkowski, Shelly Skellington, Leonardo Sanchez (via phone), Chol Majok, Francis Parks, Suzette Melendez, Sanjay Chhablani, Khadijo Abdulkadir  
**Excused:** Mary Alice Smothers, Bruce Carter, Jeff Tamburo, Shiu-Kai Chin, Rosalie Young,  
**Absent:** Steve Butler,

**Community Members Present:** Mikiel Anderson,

**County Staff Present:** Barrie Gewanter, Montanette Murphy and HRC Intern Autumn Burgin

1. Meeting called to order at 5:38 pm. **Welcome and Introductions** of HRC and new board members, Chol Majok and Tricia Wittkowski were introduced, along with HRC intern Autumn Burgin. Francis Parks was welcomed back to Commission meetings after a health-related absence.

2. **Minutes:** Dave P. moved to approve and accept the draft April and June 2019 minutes. Frances P. seconded the motion, which passed unanimously

3. **Recognition of Visitors:** Mikiel Anderson declined to speak until later in the meeting.

**4. Discussion of Alternative Monthly Schedule of Full Business & Committee Meetings**

Rabbi Fellman explained the rationale for the proposed new approach to alternate meetings as a way to facilitate more productivity from Committees, and better utilize Commissioner time. A speaker would still be sought for meetings where the bulk of time was devoted to Committee Meetings. Sanjay recalled the norm established where no one should speak more than once in discussion of a topic. Rabbi suggested that we renew our commitment to start meetings in a more timely fashion. Chol M. asked the time length of the HRC meetings. Rabbi Fellman replied that meetings should wrap up around 7 p.m. Board members discussed their thoughts on how time has been wasted during full business meetings, in unnecessary side conversations and determining whether the meeting will have enough members for a quorum. Barrie explained the Exec. Committee's intention to distinguish between the HRC full commission meetings and the HRC committee meetings. Bob Gardino moved to call the question. Crystal D. seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Barrie was asked to send out notifications of the upcoming meeting schedule indicating committee meetings and full business. The HRC's next full business meeting will be August. It was noted that September and November will primarily be committee meetings and October and December will also be full business meetings.



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*Executive Director*

#### **4. Highlights and Discussion Items from the Chair & Committee Chairs**

Rabbi Fellman reported that the County Executive is moving forward with filling HRC posts. Ali Adan will be joining the Commission, which will leave two vacancies to be filled by the County Executive, one by the Legislature, and one vacancy to be filled by the Mayor. Tina Leatherhead is the County Executive's point person to fill open HRC posts.

Rabbi Fellman urged commissioners to write out questions in advance of Syracuse City School District Superintendent Jaime Alicea's upcoming HRC meeting visit. Barrie provided a sheet for this purpose. Bob G. said that we should include a DASA question. Bob has already confirmed dates for superintendent Jaime Alicia and for Patty Clark, SCSD ombudsperson.

Bob G. is a facilitator for a local neighborhood group and mentioned that he reached out to Syracuse Police Chief Kenton Buckner about attending his neighborhood group meeting. Leo S. and Crystal D. will reach out to Chief Buckner about meeting with him and attending an HRC meeting.

#### **5. Highlights and Discussion Items from the Director:**

- Barrie discussed the need for workers to fill shifts for the upcoming Westside Block Party. She also sought volunteers to staff tables at the Latino Festival and upcoming Westcott Street Fair.
- Barrie gave a brief review of her notes of the June presentation by Lanessa Chaplin, Esq., of the NYCLU. Barrie stated that commissioners can issue a comment during a comment period regarding the discussion of the I-81 Viaduct initiative.
- Shelly S. and Leo S. gave a report on the recent NYS Division of Human Rights/Civil Rights roundtable to which the HRC was invited. Leo S. discussed the Crown Law and DASA. Leo commented that the roundtable event was a positive experience and very informative, but he was surprised that few people spoke or commented during the event. Leo said Ms. Angela Hernandez spoke urging participants to contact her office and encouraging community members to send her emails or to come visit. Ms. Hernandez has been in office for six months. Leo said several other local Civil Rights and Human Services organizations and agencies attended the roundtable. Shelly indicated that the NAACP president talked about a disturbing school incident in Watertown. Leo said he thought Ms. Hernandez supported local Human Rights Commissions.
- Shelly S. reported on her contact with the NY State Office of Mental Health about enforcement of language assistance for participants in the HARP program providing Home and Community Based Services for Medicaid recipients. Shelly made them aware that some providers are not following the law.
- Dave Pasinksi indicated that the Vulnerable Populations Committee has not met while he has been travelling.



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**Barrie Gewanter**  
Executive Director

## **6. New Business:**

Barrie reported on SPD Chief Buckner's and Mayor Walsh's first Community Meeting. Barrie provided information about the second Community Meeting to be held at the South Side Innovation Center.

Khadijo A. shared a story about being stopped by the police prior to the July 24<sup>th</sup> HRC meeting. Khadijo plans to write a story about the police stop. Barrie told Commissioners that she informed Mayor Walsh that the HRC staff would be available to document stories from community members who attend future forums.

Crystal D. asked Barrie if commissioners could have professional IDs produced to identify themselves as commissioners. Barrie Gewanter said that she would look into this.

Suzette M. stated that ICE raids may begin to step up or increase again in the Latino communities, and that Hispanics may be more likely to be stopped by law enforcement.

Barrie discussed the Kairos Blanket Exercise and urged commissioners to be part of the event if possible.

Community member Mikiel A. commented that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wants to convene a commission on inalienable rights and what the definition of Human Rights means.

Bob G. questioned whether intern Autumn B. would sit in on one of the committee meetings. Barrie said that this would be fine.

Suzette M. moved to adjourn to committee meetings. The motion was seconded by Crystal Doody and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted:

Montanette Murphy and Barrie Gewanter

*Board Secretary Bruce Carter was excused from attendance at this meeting as he was out of the country.*



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**Barrie Gewanter**  
Executive Director

**Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**August 28, 2019 Meeting**

*APPROVED in HRC Meeting on 10/23/19*

**Present:** Present: Sanjay Chhablani, Crystal Doody, Bruce Carter, Shiu Kai Chin, Bob Gardino, Suzette Melendez (on phone), Francis M. Parks, Leonardo Sanchez, Rosalie Young, Shelly Skellington, John Rushing.

**Excused/Absent:** Mary A. Smothers, Jeffrey Tamburo, Rabbi Daniel Fellman, T. Wittkowski.

**Community Members Present:** Mikael Anderson

**County Staff Present:** Barrie Gewanter and Montanette Murphy (Human Rights Dept.)

1. Meeting was called to order at 5:38 PM by Commission Co-chair Shelly Skellington. Members introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of July 24, 2019 meeting were reviewed. Minor typographical errors were accepted as corrections. The minutes were unanimously approved.

- a. Mikael Anderson was recognized as a visitor. He shared an event. 100 Black Men of Syracuse are presenting the Winston Gaskin Community Walk for Health and Wellness on Saturday, September 20, 2019. The walk will be at Cedar Bay Park in Fayetteville, NY from 8:30 to 11:30 AM. Registration is \$15 (including a t-shirt). Proceeds benefit the Winston Gaskin Health & wellness initiative. Register online (or get more information) at [100BLACKMENFYR.ORG](http://100BLACKMENFYR.ORG).

3. Chair Report (Shelly Skellington, Co-Chair)

- a. Ali Adan is a newly appointed commissioner (replacing Gabe Ramos).
- b. Mayoral appointments Sanjay Chhablani and Jeff Tamburo have terms that expired 12/31/18. Efforts are being made to have them reappointed.
- c. There are four vacant positions on the Commission. Two appointments (replacing Doug Mackay and Joyce Suslovic) are County Executive appointments. 1 is a legislative appointment (Murphy), and 1 is a Mayoral appointment (S. Carman). The Executive Committee is attempting to have the positions filled.
- d. The Executive Committee recommends holding Board Officer elections be held in December of 2019 rather than in February 2020. New officers will begin serving their terms immediately in 2020.
- e. Questions for Syracuse City School District visitors Supervisor J. Alicia (September) and Administrator P. Clark (October) were reviewed, modified and approved. The questions will be shared with these visitors before their attendance at the respective meetings.



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Barrie Gewanter  
*Executive Director*

4. Executive Director's Report (Barrie Gewanter)
  - a. The Westcott Street Fair will be held September 22, 2019. Volunteers are needed. Both Barrie and Montanette will be attending a professional conference in Chicago that weekend and cannot coordinate the event.
  - b. The next Syracuse Police Department Public Forum will be held August 29<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM. Volunteers were solicited. Suzette and Leo will attend.
  - c. An article from the Syracuse Post-Standard on social justice and the I-81 plans was distributed. Commissions were asked to review and to consider using these and similar issues if asked to speak publically about the topic.
  - d. Barrie received training and will be participating in the Kairus Blanket Exercises for 18 groups of Syracuse City School District 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Support persons are needed (can't serve as facilitators because additional training is needed. Event will be Tuesdays in October.
5. Committee Reports followed:
  - a. Education and Youth Committee report (available as attachment). Progress on DASA project and Guide to Human Rights was discussed. The HRC intern Autumn provided an in-depth analysis of DASA responsibilities as described on school websites in the county. Committee will follow up. Sanjay reported that the Committee also was working on meaning of human rights in national and international contexts.
  - b. Police/Community Relations. Crystal and Leo met with Chief Buchner on August 5, 2019. They informed him about the Human Rights Commission and its roles in the county. Chief Buchner reported his biggest issue was the level of crime among youth and the Police Community Forums. Barrie discussed the new "Use of Force" policy that has been introduced.
6. Executive Director's Report  
Future HRC meetings were discussed. Executive Committee will meet on September 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:15 p.m. at Temple Concord. HRC will meet September 18<sup>th</sup>, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, November 20<sup>th</sup>, and December 18<sup>th</sup>.
7. Announcements were made. August 28<sup>th</sup> was the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the murder of Emmett Till. Commissioners were encouraged to attend the Police-Community forums.
8. Meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM. Committee meetings followed.

Respectfully submitted,

D. Bruce Carter, Commission Secretary





Onondaga County / Syracuse  
**Human Rights Commission**

**J. Ryan McMahon II**  
County Executive

**Onondaga County Justice Center Oversight Committee**

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**Barrie Gewanter**  
Executive Director

**Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**September 18, 2019 Meeting**

*APPROVED in HRC Meeting on 10/23/19*

**Present:** Ali Adan, Sanjay Chhablani, Crystal Doody, Bruce Carter, Shiu KI Chin, Bob Gardino, Chol Majok, Suzette Melendez, Francis Parks, Dave Pasinski, Leo Sanchez, Rosalie Young, John Rushing, Jeff Tamburo, Daniel Fellman

**Excused:** Mary Alice Smothers, Shelley Skellington, Tricia Wittkowski

**Absent:** Steve Butler, Khadijo Abdulkadir

**Community Members Present:** Mikael Anderson, Monu Chetri, Eva (Student), Cynthia Pease, Mariah (a Pre-K Teacher), Sign Language Interpreters Jess and Micki

**County Staff Present:** Barrie Gewanter (Human Rights Dept.)

**Guest Speakers:** Syracuse City School District Supervisor Jaime Alicea with Patricia Clark (SCSD)

1. Meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM.
2. New Commissioner Ali Adan was introduced to the Board.
3. Rabbi Fellman presented a plaque to Leo Sanchez in acknowledgment of his service as the 1<sup>st</sup> Chair of the reconstituted Human Rights Commission.
4. Discussion with Syracuse City School District Superintendent Jaime Alicea. He responded to six questions provided in advance by the Board.

Supt. Alicea stated that he has spent his entire professional career in SCSD, which has 21,203 students and 14,000 families. 73% of the department are from racial or ethnic minority groups. 18% of the students receive special education services. For 17% of the students, English is a 2<sup>nd</sup> Language. SCSD students speak 84 different languages. He acknowledged that language can be a barrier in communication with students and parents, but that the district is trying to make parents feel welcome. 5 bi-lingual people were hired as Parent Assistants. Together they speak 15 languages. The district has access to an online service with interpreters in 270 languages. They contract with Interfaith Works for translations in 50 languages. He stated that the district sometimes uses students to translate, but not for their own parents. There are 82 ENL teachers, all of whom are trained to use interpretation services in parent-teacher conferences. These services are also used in Parent University, and a translator is provided at events. Bob Gardino asked if there were Adult Education Programs in other languages. Supt. Alicea said that there were at St. Lucy's Church and the West Side Learning Center, as well as a daytime ENL program at the Johnson Center. Barrie asked if non-





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**Barrie Gewanter**  
*Executive Director*

ENL teachers were trained in how to use language services. Supt. Alicea said that school administrators know about these services. Ali Adan asked how parents would know that these services were available. Supt. Alicea said that this information is in the newsletter, in Parent University, and on the website. Ali asked about parents who do not understand English or know how to use the internet. Supt. Alicea acknowledged that the district has to “do more,” and will address this. Rosalie asked if there is a way to tell parents when their child is doing well, rather than only when there is a problem. Chol Majok suggested that the district’s annual foundation dinner is another way to celebrate success. Supt. Alicea said that the foundation has 3 events a year. He agreed that more needs to be done to highlight the positive things about the district, such as the 27 different pathways to high school graduation. Supt. Alicea stated that the district looks carefully at every single DASA incident. The Dignity for All Students Act (known as DASA) was implemented in 2012 and the law was amended in 2013. SCSD has 2 Dignity Act Coordinators in each building, and the complaint form is available on the website. Ms. Clark says the district continues to work on this issue, and that there are too many reports of bullying and harassment. All staff are trained. There has been a collaborative effort in regards to DASA and helpful suggestions to improve related processes. In response to a question from Ali Adan Supt. Alicea confirmed that there is information about DASA and bullying on the district website. Bob Gardino asked how a parent advisory group helps with DASA. Supt. Alicea says the group meets each October and there is also a Superintendent’s Student Advisory Board. He also responded positively to a question about HRC speakers in the schools, and suggested that Board members contact social studies coordinator Nick Stamolocatus about beginning at the Middle Schools. HRC fliers and factsheets could also be sent to Nick or Patty Clark for placement in guidance offices. Suzette mentioned a program in which law students could interact with middle school students. Ms. Clark said that they are training sentries and staff in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCIS), which is based on building relationships with students. They aim to train all staff. They are also working with School Resource Officers to build more bridges. She has received some positive feedback from the work with sentries, including improved perception of them among parents. In response to a question about student discipline, she said that she expects to see positive results in the data on student discipline, and that there is improvement but that there is more work to do. She stated that the district had an agreement with the Attorney General to train SRO’s before they work with students and that the district pays for this. One SRO was removed. Ali asked about the objectives for renaming schools. Supt. Alicea said that NY State said that quite a few schools were underperforming on standard English and Math testing. The district reduced the number of such schools from 18 to 4. The state told the district to redo the 4 schools, including changing 50% of the staff. Dr. King will be a STEAM school, Blodgett will be a STEM school aligned with LeMoyne College. Fowler became the Public Service Leadership Academy (PSLA), and an Expeditionary Learning program was instituted at Brighton. In each the district. The stated reviewed and approved the programs. There is a independent monitor for each school. Dave Pasinski asked how the County can support SCSD. Supt. Alicea praised the County Executive’s proposal to support



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**Barrie Gewanter**  
*Executive Director*

a new county wide STEAM School at Central High School. The County has family and support

programs in schools, and mental health clinics in each school as well. He mentioned that there is a student attendance problem starting in Kindergarten. Suzette Melendez asked how the district has addressed disparities in discipline of student of color, especially students with disabilities. Supt. Alicea pointed to the work with the sentries, and said that he reviews each case before a Supt. hearing is schedule and checks to ensure that an investigation was done. This reduced the number of hearings, but they continue to work on this issue. Rabbi Fellman asked what the HRC can do for the district. Supt. Alicea asked HRC members to share good news about the district. Jeff Tamburo stated that he has 3 kids in the district and sees a lot of good things happen.

5. Rabbi Fellman requested that all commissioners bring their calendars to the next meeting as the HRC will be setting meetings for the first several months of next year.
6. Barrie reported that there is a pending reorganization of offices in the County which may result in her office being moved into a new Department of Diversity & Inclusion. Barrie will retain her title as Executive Director of Human Rights, but a new Department Head will be hired. The functions of the Human Rights portion of the office should remain the same. Barrie may be able to utilize the new Department's Administrative Assistant to some extent. The creation of the new Department will require approval of Legislature. Additional details will be provided to the HRC as things solidify.
7. Visitors were invited to introduce themselves and offer comment.
  - a. Monu Chetri is from Bhutan and immigrated from Nepal as a refugee. She works for Aurora of CNY with Deaf refugees. She described concerns of the Deaf refugee community, and challenges they face interacting with the school district. She reported that issues arise in the availability of interpreting resources in the community and in the schools. When schools send letters home in English the Deaf Refugees rely on her to translate. She is the only NSL interpreter in the area.
  - b. Eva reported on her mother's experiences as an ENL teacher at Dr. King School. She said there are issues with the timeliness of testing of students with special needs in the City School District.
  - c. Cynthia Pease said she was with Circare & Trababando Juntos. She described difficult circumstances for non-English speakers in health care. Transportation can be difficult because they cannot communicate with drivers. They may then have problems negotiating office buildings. They may also be referred to group counseling when there is a language barrier.
8. Suzette announced that Journalist Jose Antonio Vargas will be speaking about the Human Rights of Immigrants on Nov. 1 at SU's Hendricks Chapel at 4pm
9. A motion was made and seconded to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:37 PM. Commission Committee meetings followed.

Respectfully submitted, D. Bruce Carter -Commission Secretary



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**Barrie Gewanter**  
Executive Director

**DRAFT**

**Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes**

**DRAFT**

**October 23, 2019 Meeting**

*APPROVED in HRC Meeting on 12/18/19*

**Present:** Bruce Carter, Shiu-Kai Chin, Daniel Fellman, Bob Gardino, Suzette Melendez, Francis Parks, Dave Pasinski, John Rushing, Leo Sanchez, Shelley Skellington, Jeff Tamburo, Tricia Wittkowski, Rosalie Young

**Excused:** Mary Alice Smothers, Crystal Doody

**Absent:** Ali Adan, Khadijo Abdulkadir, Steve Butler, Sanjay Chhablani

**Community Members Present:** Mikael Anderson

**County Staff Present:** Barrie Gewanter & Montanette Murphy (Human Rights Dept.)

**Guest Speakers:** None

1. Meeting was called to order at 5:39 pm
2. Minutes of August 28, 2019 and September 18, 2019 were reviewed. John Rushing moved approval; Leo Sanchez seconded. Minutes were approved unanimously.
3. Mikael Anderson was recognized as a visitor.
4. Announcements
5. Chair report
  - a. Terms of Commissioners were discussed. Rabbi Fellman announced that Bruce Carter had resigned effective January 1, 2020. 4 positions are open: 2 County executive (Mackey and Suslovic resignations), 1 Legislative (Murphy resignation), 1 Mayor (Carman resignation). 1<sup>st</sup> term ends 12/31/19: Gardino, Butler, and Rushing. John Rushing has been reappointed to a 2<sup>nd</sup> term by the Mayor. Gardino is interested in being reappointed to a 2<sup>nd</sup> term. 2<sup>nd</sup> term ends 12/31/19- Chin, Parks, Skellington. They cannot be appointed to another continuous term, but can be reappointed after 12 months of not serving on the board.
  - b. Questions for the Police Chief were solicited. Questions need to be submitted to Barrie by November 6, 2019. Bob Gardino said that he was appointed to the Chief's Advisory Committee as a result of his work with Neighborhood Watch. Francis added that the NAACP is willing to speak at an HRC meeting, but the President needs potential dates.
  - c. Nominations for officers (Chair, co-Chair, and Secretary) are solicited; election will occur at December meeting.
  - d. The Executive Committee has planned a Board development meeting for January that will include a potluck meal and a reassessment of the committee structure as needed for 2020.
  - e. Vandalism at May Memorial Unitarian and St. Albans Episcopal Church were discussed as was potential responses from HRC. Frances Parks will contact the minister at First Universalist Unitarian church which was asked to remove a Black Lives matter flag. She will



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*Executive Director*

report back. Rabbi Fellman is in touch with May Memorial. Bob Gardino will contact clergy at St. Albans. Commissioners were encouraged to attend event at May Memorial on 11/5 from noon to 1 PM. HRC asked Bruce Carter (as Board Secretary) to draft a press release.

- f. The response from the NY State Department of Health regarding funding (failure to fund) for LGBTQ agencies in the Syracuse/Onondaga County area. Letter was attached to Agenda.
6. Executive Director's Report
    - a. County Executive has decided to reorganize into a new Diversity and Inclusion Department to which Dept. of Human Rights (Barrie) will report. Responsibilities will be largely the same although Barrie will report to a new Director of the Office. Office will be on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor.
    - b. Barrie participated in a meeting to address interpreting for hearing impaired refugees in medical settings. Meeting was very productive. Meeting was characterized as a beginning not an end point.
    - c. Barrie assisted Onondaga Votes in registering inmates at the jail; 79 were registered; 70 absentee ballots were distributed.
    - d. Next Syracuse Police Department Forum is Tuesday November 12 at 5:30 PM in the City Hall Commons Atrium.
    - e. Barrie is working with Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation on Kairos Blanket exercises that will be done with 11<sup>th</sup> graders in the Syracuse City School District 10/21 to 12/3/19.
  7. Committee Chair reports
    - a. Education and Youth- There has been progress on the DASA Outreach and Guide to Human Rights. The HRC intern has completed the list of DASA coordinators at the district level. Francis and Bruce reported that there will be no HR Day event in December because we have no willing co-sponsor and had no response from the church leaders at the last venue.
    - b. Underserved/Vulnerable Populations: Dave Pasinski and Rosalie Young met to try to identify a time when Committee could meet. Further discussion followed. Suzette Melendez suggested the committee research on how to incentivize providers to provide interpretation.
    - c. Police & Community Relations Report: Committee is moving forward. Barrie and Crystal met with the Camillus Police Chief. Once Camillus schedules community forums, HRC should send out letter to police chiefs in other jurisdictions.
  8. Discussion followed of 2020 meeting dates.
    - a. January 22<sup>nd</sup>, Feb 25<sup>th</sup>, March 25<sup>th</sup>, May 20<sup>th</sup>, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, August 26<sup>th</sup>, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, October 21<sup>st</sup>, November 18<sup>th</sup>, and December 16<sup>th</sup>. The January meeting will be a Board development meeting. February, April, July, September, and November will be Committee meetings; March, May, August, October, and December meetings will be Business meetings.
    - b. Motion to approve dates for the year was made and seconded. Unanimous vote to approve.
  9. Several Commission meetings were scheduled for 2020.



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10. There was a brief discussion about the potential for rising rent and property taxes after the community grid is established in place of I-81 in the City of Syracuse, as well as the differential impact this may have on home ownership. Suzette commented on the effect of gentrification on rent stabilization in NYC and the high incidence of lead exposure in some lower-income neighborhoods in the city of Syracuse.
11. The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

D. Bruce Carter, Commission Secretary  
(with Barrie Gewanter, Director)





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**Barrie Gewanter**  
Executive Director

**Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes**

**November 20, 2019 Meeting**

*APPROVED in HRC Meeting on February 26, 2020*

**Present:** Bruce Carter, Sanjay Chhablani, Shiu-Kai Chin, Crystal Doody, Daniel Fellman, Barbara Johnson, Suzette Melendez, Francis Parks, Dave Pasinski, Leo Sanchez, Jeff Tamburo, Tricia Wittkowski, Rosalie Young

**Excused:** Mary Alice Smothers, Suzette Melendez, Steve Butler, Bob Gardino, Shelley Skellington

**Absent:** Ali Adan, Khadijo Abdulkadir, Chol Majok, John Rushing

**Community Members Present:** Rev. Eric Johnson (new pastor of Plymouth Church)

**County Staff Present:** Barrie Gewanter & Montanette Murphy (Human Rights Dept.)

**Guest Speakers:** SPD Chief Kenton Buckner

1. Meeting was called to order at 5:45 pm
2. New board member Barbara Johnson introduced herself. She works as an Adult Health Home Case Manager. She is a member of the Onondaga Nation and its Snipe Clan.
3. Syracuse Police Chief Kenton Buckner addressed the Commission by answering 8 questions sent to him in advance.
  - In regards to key problem areas in SPD relations with the community: Historical scars exist from prior police contact, especially use of force, including excessive force, and unprofessional demeanor, including “talking down” across racial lines. Current leadership can’t do anything about the existence of those scars, but he has “ownership” of it now.
  - In regards to improving SPD’s relationship with members of diverse communities: The Syracuse Police does lack diversity. Officers are not reflective of the community, and there have been questions raised about whether the Dept. has genuine interest in addressing this. Diversity is a big issue. He believes in it at all levels. When he came to SPD there was an all white command structure. Women were represented, but there was only 1 woman of color who was a command officer. He is working with CAMP 415 (a minority police officer organization) to build diversity in the Dept. He also believes in having “uncomfortable conversations.” The 1<sup>st</sup> step in community policing is dialogue. However it needs to be 2 way communication. He wants community members & leaders to also tell him what they are doing to improve relations with the department. He points out that issues are concentrated in poor high minority communities with low education levels. He feels that police officers in these neighborhoods can be a bridge. For example, he has a goal of training 20% of officers in the CIT (Crisis Intervention) model of interacting with people in mental health crises.
  - In regards to SPD’s relationship with the CRB: In the past, there has been a lack of transparency and a strained relationship with the CRB. There is an opportunity for general improvements in transparency, for example by posting key documents on the internet, and





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**Barrie Gewanter**  
*Executive Director*

when interacting with the CRB. He feels that all police policies should be available online as well as training curricula. He has re-instituted the CRB Liaison Committee and he meets with the CRB Administrator monthly.

- Chief Buckner said he wants to look for alternatives to incarceration parallel to the changes being made at the state level, however he has some concerns about the 2020 bail reforms. In particular that the community will feel the results of arrestees being released with appearance tickets. He suggested that if “resources are not in place, they will continue to commit crimes. He suggested that 85% of people arrested will not qualify for incarceration under the bail reforms. He said that the community asked for these reforms, but they may be an over-correction.
- In regards to SPD’s relationship with the New American population: He did walk with the Native American leaders on the North Side recently. Generally he feels that SPD needs to start relationship building with youth, and in all SCSD schools. SPD is also working with Catholic Charities and Interfaith Works, as they both do a lot of work with the refugee community. He does want to build more language capacity in the department.
- In regards to community relations generally: He plans to set up more participation in the citizen police academies. In Dec. 2019 there will be 35 participants. He wants to do these 2-4 times per year. The goal for 2020 is 3. . He will be targeting these trainings to communities and neighborhoods.
- In regards to the School Resource Officers: The goals for this are 1. Ensure a safe learning environment, 2. Engage in constructive relationships with the kids. Part of that is if there is a violation of school rules, and no crime, then officers should not be involved. He has put SCSD on notice. He does not want school administrators to misuse SRO’s, 3. Create opportunities for conversations about what to do when stopped by police, drug avoidance and making connections to services.
- In regards to CRB recommendations and SPD Internal Affairs: He will consider CRB recommendations on a case by case basis. They are non-binding. He is trying to improve SPD’s relationship with the CRB. There is a workgroup looking at the language of the CRB law to see what can be changed to benefit the CRB and the community. He is looking at moving Internal Affairs out of the Public Safety Building and into the City Hall Commons building on the same floor as TNT, Neighborhood Watch and the CRB. He has added staff to address the backlog in IA.
- In regards to body worn cameras: There is a process to outfit all patrol and specialty units with body worn cameras by the end of 2019, if possible. However they provide only one type of evidence in an investigation.
- In regards to increasing, retaining and promoting racial and ethnic minorities and city residents in SPD: Recruiting is also a community responsibility. ½ of homes do not favor



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their child joining the police force. He has Chiefs telling their sons to “do something else.” The profession is changing. If you make a mistake on the job, its on the news and you are condemned, especially if there is a racial component, and an officer earns a base salary of \$46,000. He asked the Commissioners “What would you do to convince an young person to become a police officer? Crystal Doody suggested that SPD be clear about how bridges are being made to the community and how diversity is valued. She suggested that if internal issues with diversity are dealt with it will be easier to recruit.

- In regards to recruiting activities: We want to have all new recruiting materials, and we are translating documents into Spanish. We are assessing our recruiting practices. We also want to have a new website with a micro site focused on recruiting.

Rosalie Young asked what SPD was doing to recruit candidates in area schools. Chief Buckner said that they went to all university and job fairs where criminal justice was a component. He is also talking about combining the SPD academy with the Sheriff's Office. However he feels that law enforcement must get to the kids ealier. Once we get to them they are knocked out of eligibility based on the background jail.

There was then a discussion about the perceived impact of the 2020 bail reform measures. Dave Pasinski brought up the earlier stated statistic that 85% of those now held in jail will get an appearance ticket in 2020. Chief Buckner said that the NY State Association of Chiefs of Police was not consulted before the law was written. He said that it was the Chiefs interpretation that the law says that an individual defendant has a new right to go back and view the location of the crime as part of their defense. He suggested that someone who had broken into a person's home would be allowed to go back to it, not by trespassing, but through a mechanism to go back to the same location. He said that this was “disturbing.” Sanjay Chabblani suggested that in the Chief's remarks there was no mention of the presumption of innocence for those accused of a crime. This is a norm for the criminal justice system. The 85% referred to are presumed innocent in our system. He asked if the Chief was saying that this 85% present a danger to society. The Chief denied saying anything other than 85% of those now held would get an appearance ticket. Sanjay stated that the reforms were well thought out, and he expected the law enforcement community to be a partner in the reform rather than denigrating them. He suggested that the Chief was raising specters of fear. The Chief agreed that criminal justice reform was needed, and that we will see if unintended consequences will occur. He said that Chief are concerned about this, and while people will focus on extremes, he feels that it is important to raise these concerns.

Leo suggested that the latest recruiting class seemed more Caucasian. He asked whether new recruits are taught to interact with communities of color, to not profile and to communicate effectively. The Chief said that they were in academy and in-service training. Barrie requested a copy of the SPD policy on avoiding bias-based policing and mentioned that she had worked on this with the previous chief. He promised to send the policy to her.



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Tricia Wittkowski suggested that it may trigger victims if a person who had been accused of a crime against them was allowed to go back to where the crime occurred. The Chief said the language in the law was not clear as to how this would happen. Crystal said that the DA's investigator would do this. Tricia also pointed out that based on her work in Auburn prison, some inmates would enjoy going back to the "scene of the crime."

Rabbi Fellman asked the Chief about his involvement in the events at SU and if he perceived a threat to community members in that area. Chief Buckner said there was no physical harm to anyone, only graffiti and a manifesto. There is no suspect in regards to the manifesto.

Leo asked if the Chief felt that the forums were effective. The Chief said that they were because people want to be heard and respected. He felt that this was why the forum at St. Lucy's was productive. It was important to hear people.

Barrie Gewanter mentioned the training program she supports for community members to learn what they need to know when interacting with police, and that Commissioners were working with Camillus Police to develop a version of this. She suggested that he reach out to her or the Commission if he wanted more information.

Rosalie asked who put together the new reforms and why police were not consulted. Chief Buckner said that he was told that the Chiefs were not consulted. He said that the Chiefs Association is telling officers to document examples of related problems.

In conclusion, Chief Buckner said that the police can't do the job alone. A successful police department hires the right people, trains them effectively, disciplines them when necessary, supports officers when they do the right thing, and has community connections and support to provide public safety. He added that he does not turn down meetings in the community. .

4. Rev. Eric Jackson was introduced as a visitor. He was invited to attend the commission meeting by Dave. Paskinski. Rev. Jackson is the new pastor for Plymouth Congregational Church

**5. Highlights from Chair:**

- a. Status of appointments was listed in the agenda. Rabbi Fellman talked to Sue Stanczyk in the County Executive's office. She is clear on the appointments that are needed. He also has calls into the legislature chair. He and Barrie contacted the Mayor and he has acted.
- b. Rabbi asked if the HRC should respond to what is going on at the University. There was a discussion of this with input from Crystal from Suzette, who is in active contact with SU students. Students are getting a lot of supports from the professors. There are also a lot of students who are criticizing the protestors and students struggling with what has occurred on campus. Rabbi Fellman said that he had gone to the Barnes Center with Rev. Wood and Imam El-Fiki, and identified himself as a Commissioner as well. Leo Sanchez suggested the HRC send out a cohesive statement that is emphatic and effective. Barrie mentioned the NCBI Diversity Training. Shiu-Kai stated that there are experts on campus working on the inside to create diversity trainings. He also said that it is important to avoid



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**Barrie Gewanter**  
*Executive Director*

accusations, blame, criticism. There was a lot of blame going on and we should not feed into that. The focus must be on protection, response, recovery and how to prevent and avoid recurrence. Bruce Carter then arrived directly from a University Senate Meeting.

Board members then engaged in a discussion about the situation at SU. University professors Shiu-Kai Chin and Bruce Carter described their observations of events, students positions, university administration reactions, that evenings University Senate meeting. Board members then discussed crafting an HRC statement, but voiced caution to stick to a statement of solidarity, denouncing hate and expressing concern about the impact of actions of hate on campus, to state HRC support for efforts to address the situation and our willingness to assist as needed. Bruce said he would send around a copy of the Chancellors speech via email.

#### **6. Follow-up to Discussion about the Dialogue with SPD Chief Buckner**

Sanjay Chhablani revisited Chief Buckner's presentation, making a point to communicate accurate facts associated with NYS's bail reform law, and expressing concern about his perception that the Chief engaged in "fearmongering" and a 'presumption of guilt' in his comments. Crystal expressed her agreement and appreciate of Sanjay's comments. Rabbi Fellman suggested that it was important for the HRC board to continue dialogue with officials such as Chief Buckner and also SCSD Superintendent Jaime Alicea. Barrie asked if the HRC wanted to do education on the topic of bail reform to counter public misunderstanding and spin from opponents of the reform. Crystal suggested that the HRC do outreach on the topic and/or find out who is doing this. Bruce suggested that this include reaching out to Legal Services, the NYCLU, and CCA for this. Crystal stated that the Law Enforcement/Community Relations Committee could take the lead on this topic. Sanjay said he could bring related information to the next meeting and review it with board members.

#### **7. Director's Report**

Barrie asked board members to sign up for workshifts for the Plowshares event. Barrie confirmed that two board members would serve as bridge builders for the Dec. 5 diversity training for Sheriff's Academy trainees. Barrie talked about the successful Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> Clinical Legal Education (CLE) session she worked on with the Bar Association.

Rosalie Young motioned to adjourn meeting. The motion was seconded by Shiu-Kai Chin and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Barrie Gewanter, Executive Director & Montanette Murphy, Human Rights Specialist



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Executive Director

**Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**December 18, 2019 Meeting**

*This initial draft was posted on the HRC Website.*

*This draft was APPROVED in the HRC Meeting on May 20, 2020.*

**Present:** Shelly Skellington, Rosalie Young, Crystal Doody, Chol Majok, Sanjay Chhablani. Leo Sanchez, Rabbi Dan Fellman, Francis Parks, Bruce Carter, John Rushing, Dave Pasinski, Suzette Melendez (by phone)

**No Record if Present or Absent:** Ali Adan

**Excused:** Mary Alice Smothers, Bob Gardino, Barb Johnson, Tricia Wittowski, ShiuKai Chin

**Absent:** Khadijo Abdulkadir

**Community Members Present:** Mikiel Anderson

**County Staff Present:** Barrie Gewanter & Montanette Murphy (Human Rights Dept.)

**Guest Speakers:** Patricia Clark & Jackie LeRoy from the Syracuse City School District

1. Meeting was called to order at 5:44 pm
2. Patricia Clark made a presentation in response to 6 questions submitted to her from the Executive Committee in advance of the meeting. Board members then engaged in discussion with Ms. Clark about the items in her presentation. Those items included
  - a. Her work and responsibilities as Chief Ombuds and Student Support Services Officer.
  - b. Current provision of language assistance for parents from the refugee community, and related resources, communication and staff training, She also addressed needed improvements in the same.
  - c. Continuing work to address disproportionality in student discipline on the basis of race, ethnicity and disability, as well as the training of school sentries, SRO's, teachers and other school staff when responding to student behavior issues. She also spoke about new discipline processes, resulting changes in student discipline rates, and monitoring of related data required by the NY State Attorney General in the Assurance of Discontinuance (AOD). She said she is also looking at differences in student referrals for behavioral intervention, in School Suspension (ISS) and out of School Suspension (OSS) at individual schools. She that the District continues to provide staff training in cultural sensitivity and restorative processes.
- Commissioner Shelley Skellington made suggestions about community based locations for contact with parents of students that may seem more welcoming for parents from the refugee community.
- Commissioner Rosalie Young asked about student attendance levels and Commissioner Chol Majok asked about steps being taken to address attendance gaps and how to get district demographics info..





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Ms. Clark and Ms. Leroy were thanked for their willingness to speak with the Commission and for their open, frank and productive dialogue with Commissioners.

3. Crystal Doody made a motion to accept the draft minutes of the October 2019 board meeting. This motion was seconded by Leo Sanchez. The motion was approved unanimously.
4. Chair Dan Fellman stated that the Commission is sending certificates of appreciation to Commissioners whose term had ended. Fellman also reviewed open positions on the board and reminded all that the January meeting would again be held as a Board Development session.
5. Executive Director Barrie Gewanter thanked several Commissioners for doing tabling work shifts at the Plowshares Craft Fair, and two for participating in a diversity training with Corrections Officers.
6. Under Old Business:
  - a. Francis Parks provided an update about a social justice banner displayed by first Unitarian Church moved due to a town codes issue. It was agreed that no further action is needed from the Commission.
  - b. Barrie Gewanter relayed a phone message from SPD Chief Buckner that he would welcome HRC assistance when his department introduced new policies and programs to the community. Crystal Doody reported about a meeting in the LGBTQAI Community about a new SPD policy addressing officer interaction with people who may identify as Transgender. Crystal suggested it may not be appropriate for the Commission to assist SPD. as Chief Buckner suggested in his message to Barrie, and that the Commission should more generally focus on helping community members learn about interacting with police officers. Francis Parks suggested that the Commission write to invite Chief Buckner back for more dialogue on this and other topics.
  - c. On behalf of the Executive Committee, Rabbi Fellman acknowledged that no letter to the editor or other statement was issued in relation to the situation at Syracuse University, as was discussed in the previous board meeting. He also suggested that now that the students are on break, the Commission should wait to see what occurs in January. There were no objections.
7. Under New Business:
  - a. Outgoing board secretary Bruce Carter conducted elections for board officers. There were no new nominations for secretary. Tricia Wittkowski was willing to serve, and was approved by acclamation.
  - b. Carter then opened nominations for Chair. Sanjay Chhablani nominated Dan Fellman. Leo Sanchez nominated Shelley Skellington. Carter suggested this was not appropriate because her 2<sup>nd</sup> term was expiring on Dec. 31, 2019, and she could be replaced by the Mayor at any time. He also suggested that making such a person an officer could cause instability in the organization. There was a discussion about the length of terms for Commissioners having been staggered by appointing



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authorities from 1-3 years when the Commission was reconstituted in 2016, and that the enabling legislation does not allow a Commissioner to serve more than 2 consecutive terms. Carter clarified that this is without reference to the designated length of the initial term, and that a Commissioner who has served 2 consecutive terms cannot be reappointed for 12 months. Carter also stated that these parameters are out of Commissioners control. In response to a question from Leo Sanchez Carter clarified that NY State law says an appointed board member whose term has expired can continue to serve and participate in meetings until the appointing authority designates a replacement. Carter suggested that the Commission remind appointing authorities that all terms going forward should be 3 years. Leo Sanchez nominated John Rushing for Chair, but he declined the nomination. Shelley Skellington pointed out that last year Commissioners stated a desire to rotate leadership. Sanjay Chhablani stated that he would be willing to serve as Vice Chair to continue this goal. Carter stated that there was currently 1 nomination for the position of Chair. Dan Fellman said he would be willing to serve as Chair for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year, but not beyond that. Fellman was approved as Chair by acclamation.

c. Carter opened the nominations for Co-Chair. Sanjay Chhablani said that he would be happy to defer to Dave Pasinski or Crystal Doody. Pasinski and Doody declined due to other current obligations. Chhablani was approved as Co-Chair by acclamation.

d. Barrie Gewanter described a potential for the Commission to work with a professor at the SU Falk School on an annual one day symposium for social work students, perhaps with a focus on the lives and issues of refugees living in Onondaga County.

8. Under Committee Reports:

a. Sanjay Chhablani reported that the Education Committee had not been able to meet, that two members terms on the board had ended. He suggested that the committee be reconstituted in January.

b. David Pasinski stated that the Vulnerable Populations Committee met the week before Thanksgiving, and designated several doctors' offices to approach for educational interventions based on reports related to provision of language assistance to LEP patients.

c. Leo Sanchez reported he is working to get a next meeting with the sergeant assigned to work on the joint presentations with the Camillus PD. In 2020, Crystal Doody will move to another committee.

9. There being no other items for discussion, John Rushing made a motion to adjourn. This was seconded by Chol Majok. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10pm

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Commissioners,

Barrie Gewanter, Executive Director