

COMMITTEE ON SOLIDARITY

PortlandCTSolidarity@gmail.com

Regular Meeting

Tuesday November 12, 2024 7:00 PM

Portland Senior Center, 7 Waverly Avenue, Portland Connecticut 06480

In-person and Zoom B—ID: **352 700 8408** Password: **113ct**

Members Present: Liz Hibino, Cynthia Tyler, Hope Jones, Nancy Goodwin

Also present: Jennifer Billingsley (Library Director)

Members Absent: Glenn “P J” Eason, Kristy Fuller (Alternate), Shelly Nolan (Alternate)

Members of the Public Present: Brie Harris

1. Call Meeting to Order: Liz Hibino called meeting to order at 7:02pm and led roll call.
2. Approve Agenda: Nancy Goodwin motioned to approve agenda with amendment that meeting was a regular, not special, meeting. Seconded by Liz and voted unanimously.
3. Correspondence/Public Comment—Liz shared with the group a text she had received from community member Brooke Lloyd. Lloyd wrote: “Thinking of you all as you meet for Portland solidarity tonight. Know you have solidarity with us.”
In response to Brie Harris’ question about the group’s mission and evolution, Liz provided a brief history—describing the Social Justice Committee and the advice received by former First Selectman, Susan Bransfield, from the organization ‘Sustainable CT’ that Portland create a committee to look at DEI-related and solidarity issues in Portland.
4. Approve Meeting Minutes: October 8, 2024: Nancy motioned to approve and Cindy seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.
5. Donations and Budget Updates: Nothing new to report.
6. Equity & Inclusion efforts in Portland Schools: Liz reported that since 2020 Portland schools have had an “Equity & Inclusion Coalition” consisting of school administration, employees, parents and students. Liz was informed that the group was taking a break at one point and recruiting new members.

7. SOBA (State of Black America) Report: Cindy reported that she and P.J. used their scheduled 10/23 discussion group time at the Portland Library to discuss our need for more effective solicitation of, and outreach to, members of the Portland community who self-identify as Black. Members agreed to continue individual outreach and/or provide names to Cindy or P.J. so they might initiate 1:1 discussions with identified individuals—both about the SOBA report and the goals of a discussion group (to share stories and experiences that might help to identify “The State of Black Portland.”) Members agreed that outreach to both the school Equity & Inclusion group and the Portland PD (due to some anecdotal reports) might help with identifying racial issues in Portland and/or individuals who might participate in a discussion group. Cindy will f/u with PD and Liz will f/u with school group. Cindy and P.J. also agreed to give us all a longer time for outreach and to next try for a discussion group during the week of December 2.
8. Pride Workgroup Updates: Jennifer reported that the next Pride Workgroup meeting is scheduled for 11/14/24. By way of f/u, they also reported that Portland was now the only library in the state with a copy of Tony Ferraiolo’s DVD—A Self-Made Man. Those in attendance gave excellent reviews to the film and discussion. Based on the low turn-out for the presentation (there were competing community events), members also discussed the possibility of videotaping in the future— Jennifer explained that this type of event would not have been appropriate for recording. We can consider for appropriate events in the future, but neither the library nor this committee has the funds to purchase such equipment or to pay others to provide professional recording services.
9. Juneteenth Updates: Discussion around what type of event the committee can undertake for 2025. Discussion around different perspectives amongst Juneteenth workgroup members. Liz suggested a special meeting be held when we can focus on Juneteenth and make decisions. Date TBD.
10. Voices of Portland. This Black history project following up on the Gallery of Portland event, continues to focus on oral histories of former Portland residents, and will include recordings and podcasts. The planning team has had a brief delay due to illness but remains on track. The 2/22/25 presentation will be at Portland Middle School on High St.
11. Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month Discussion: Liz shared the fact that her husband’s grandmother was among those Japanese internees that the U.S. government forcibly relocated and incarcerated during WWII. She reminded members that May is AAPI Heritage Month; that we may want to consider hosting an event, and that we could

create a calendar of such dates to refer to during our meetings in order to plan events ahead of time. Hope has created such a calendar in the past and will look for it to share.

12. Social Work in Law Enforcement (SWLE) Updates: Nancy reported that she had met with Portland PD representative, Dan Knapp. He was helpful and informed as to the SW/police collaborations in other communities and suggested that Portland might work with other towns to develop collaborations. Since Nancy found Knapp to be very helpful, Cindy wondered whether he might also be a resource for info as to diversity in Portland Town positions and, possibly, police reports that could validate or refute racism in Portland. Cindy will also reach out to Knapp.

13. Solidarity in the Community:

a) Outreach to community; membership—Liz agreed to review Hope’s proposed language for regular Solidarity reports/info in the Rivereast.

b) Town meetings; Reports to Board of Selectmen: Cindy: Nov. 20 and Liz: Dec.18.

14. Open Discussion/Public Comment: Brie Harris clarified that the True Vine congregation continues to meet and agreed to provide additional information to Cindy. It appears that the members are not Portland residents so that recruitment for SOBA discussion group members would be more indirect—i.e. from church members identifying Black friends or family members who are Portland residents. Brie also suggested that we reach out to non-Black parents of Black children, regarding the SOBA focus groups.

Brie offered that as a member of the Juneteenth workgroup, she was attending this meeting to discuss ways for Solidarity to continue supporting/sponsoring a Juneteenth event at the Portland Middle School in 2025. Brie emphasized that she, David and Barbara listened to Solidarity concerns and “want to do the event again...better organized...on Father’s Day weekend.” Brie emphasized that “we’re not residents of Portland...the reason why I’m here is for guidance.”

Members were reminded of the 2pm Interfaith Celebration at Trinity Church on 11/24 and an LGBTQIA rally on 11/17 at Blueback Square West Hartford.

15. Adjourn Meeting: Liz motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 pm, Hope seconded and it was voted unanimously.