

COMMITTEE ON SOLIDARITY

PortlandCTSolidarity@gmail.com

Regular Meeting

Tuesday October 8, 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: Glenn “PJ” Eason, Liz Hibino (via Zoom), Cynthia Tyler, Hope Jones, Nancy Goodwin

Also present: Jennifer Billingsley, Director, Portland Library

Members Absent: Kristy Fuller (Alternate), Shelly Nolan (Alternate)

Members of the Public Present: None

1. Call Meeting to Order: Nancy Goodwin called meeting to order at 7:01pm
2. Roll Call: Nancy Goodwin led roll call
3. Approve Agenda: P.J. motioned to approve agenda, seconded by Nancy and voted unanimously.
4. Correspondence/Public Comment—Liz announced that The Connection is sponsoring “A Taste of Middletown” at the Wadsworth Mansion on October 10 from 6-8:30pm. The \$50. tickets are a fundraiser for the Q Fund (in memory of Quentin “Q” Williams—a beloved community leader.) Unfortunately, the event is occurring at the same time that Middletown Pride and Wesleyan University’s African American Studies are co-sponsoring a 6:30 pm screening and discussion of the classic documentary film, James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket. Liz announced that the SWLE panel discussion mentioned last month was postponed to October 19.
5. Approve Meeting Minutes: September 10, 2024: Hope motioned to approve and P.J. seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

6. Donations and Budget Updates: Budget update/spreadsheet from the town was reviewed and all Juneteenth expenses have been paid. The balance is \$480.53 after the most recent payment which was sent to Ray Phillips for Fun Fun's participation at Juneteenth and does not include a \$100.00 forthcoming donation for the Pride movie screening. The budget report includes contributions made and expenses paid, while it does not reflect the \$2000.00 that was to be allocated to the Committee in Portland's budget for this fiscal year; Liz will follow up about this. Nancy also offered that in her own information-seeking discussion with Michelle Ceppaglia, Executive Secretary to the First Selectman, Michelle noted that the Committee is responsible for managing (subject to review and approval by the First Selectman) its own expenditures. Specifically, funds raised by one activity become part of the Committee's resources and may be used to fund/support any other activity that the Committee chooses. Jenn also noted that donors can make purchases and then donate particular goods or services to the committee but that such expenditures should not be identified as committee income or expenditures.
7. SOBA (State of Black America) Report—Cindy reported that she and P.J had agreed on a meeting date for the initial SOBA discussion group. A 6-person meeting room has been secured at the library for 6pm on Wednesday, October 23. The draft meeting invitation was shared with the group and Nancy Goodwin offered to edit the invitation letter. Cindy reminded members that she will be on vacation until Oct. 20 and urged a quick review/approval of edits—so that individuals in the proposed discussion group could be timely notified of the meeting date/time.
8. Pride Workgroup Updates: P.J. reminded members that Tony Ferraiolo, an advocate for transgender youth and their families, will be doing an October 11, 5:30 presentation of his documentary: A Self-Made Man—to be held at the Mary Flood Room of the Portland Library. Liz noted that she realized after the event was already scheduled that it is the evening of Yom Kippur. Committee members agreed to review dates of events more carefully to attempt to avoid conflicting with holidays in the future. Jenn noted that the library will be purchasing Tony's book and, hopefully, a DVD of his documentary. Jenn already had an inquiry from someone who cannot attend the program but wants to read the book. Even if

this event has low attendance (it is scheduled at the same time that Wesleyan is doing a big “star-gazing” event), the availability of these items in the library will allow the Solidarity Committee to schedule future transgender educational programs.

9. Juneteenth Update: Liz & Hope reported on wide-ranging discussions in the last Juneteenth work group meeting. Acknowledging that the event planning was “a lot of work” and that there were going to be significant leadership changes; Liz is stepping down as work group chair and Caroline, who worked tirelessly on behalf of the event, has decided to step away from Juneteenth activities. Based on both these changes and the Solidarity Committee’s concern that the one-day event might not have best met the needs of Portland residents, Liz offered that it was time to “think outside the box and do things differently.” The Committee discussed several ideas that were brought up by the workgroup and other conversations, including possible coordination/collaboration with another town, more robust outside sponsorship, and offering several smaller, educational or social events (e.g. plays, readings, dinners, movies, etc.) The work group’s next meeting is on Oct. 21.

Liz also advised that there were 70 tickets remaining for the Amistad Center. Committee members suggested they could be given to SOBA discussion group members and participants at the February Voices of Portland event. Liz relayed the work group’s suggestion to offer any remaining tickets after Voices of Portland to area churches.

10. Voices of Portland: Collaboration with Portland Historical Society and Portland Library, supported Portland Schools and a CT Humanities grant. The tentative date for this Black history project is Saturday, February 22, 2025 at Portland Middle School on High Street. Prior to the February event, a podcast interview will be recorded and released as part of the project. The interviewees are expected to be three brothers who grew up under the bridge; Jerome Anderson, Billy King and Herman McKeever.
11. Social Work in Law Enforcement: Members agreed to keep this issue on the agenda and Liz talked about a possible work group and consideration of a social

work student(s) to work with Portland PD. Nancy offered to speak with the Portland Police Captain and Cindy also agreed to assist.

12. Solidarity in the Community: Members supported Hope's idea for continued Rivereast promotions of Solidarity Committee activities. Reports to Board of Selectmen: Hope will do October and Cindy will do Nov. 20.

13. Public Comment/Open Discussion: Liz noted that there has been a great deal of discussion among town residents regarding the school district consolidation plan that will be voted upon on November 5. She noted that she was advised of a conversation in the Portland Community Facebook page that discussed the district's participation in the open choice program. Racist themes were perceived by parents involved in the conversation, and a teacher and an elected official were involved so it was recommended that Solidarity committee members be aware that this may merit discussion by our committee. A member asked about diversity and equity efforts on the part of the school, and it was suggested that we move this topic to an earlier agenda item for the next meeting. Also Liz noted that she will reach out to the departments which formerly sent liaisons to Solidarity meetings, when it was a task force, to invite them to re-engage in our efforts.

14. Adjourn Meeting: Hope motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm, P.J. seconded and it was voted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Tyler and Liz Hibino