

**MINUTES  
LGBTQIA+ COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING FEBRUARY 21, 2023**

Present: Commissioners Steven Kovach, Dan Barry, Christine Rebstock, Jennifer Billingsley, Sandy Aldieri, Anthony Mangiafico, Dolly Haddad, Beth Shapiro, Cayes Jarda, Christine Santacroce (arrived at 5:31 pm), Laura Timmons (arrived 5:37 pm), and Assistant General Counsel Christopher Forte.

Members of the Public: Ayanna McKennon, Haley Stafford, Jessi Ewart, Derek Cartagena, and Erik Costa.

1. **Call to Order.** Chairperson Kovach called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.
2. **Approval of the Minutes for the December 20, 2022 Regular Meeting of the LGBTQIA+ Commission.**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Mangiafico made a motion to approve the minutes for the December 20, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Shapiro seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously at 5:33 p.m. Commissioners Timmons and Santacroce were absent for the vote.

3. **Public Session on Agenda Items.** Jessi Ewart introduced himself to the Commissioners.
4. **New Business.**

**A. Election of Grand Marshals for PrideFEST 2023.** Prior to the meeting the Commissioners answered an informal poll regarding the seven wonderful grand marshal nominations. The results of the poll were as follows: (1) Karleigh C. Webb, (2) Hella Swagg, (3) John Pepe, (4) Jesse Nasta, (5) Lisa Gramlich, (6) Kim Adamski, and (7) Julia Gordon. AGC Forte said that in previous years two grand marshals were chosen, one of whom is a drag performer, but the Commission could have as many or as few grand marshals as they chose. Commissioner Billingsley stated they liked having 2 grand marshals, which was echoed by Commissioners Mangiafico, Haddad, Jarda, and Rebstock. Commissioner Kovach stated that in the event that the two chosen grand marshals were unable to serve, we would select grand marshals in order.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Mangiafico made a motion to recommend that Karleigh C. Webb and Hella Swagg be the Grand Marshals for PrideFEST 2023, and if they are unable to accept, to invite the other nominations in the order of most points attained in the informal poll. Commissioner Haddad seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously at 5:39 p.m.

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**B. Submitted Applications for Proposed Events (AGC Forte).**

**I. Drag Queen Story Hour for Earth Day on April 22, 2023.**

Commissioner Billingsley informed the Commission that they were planning and Drag Queen Story Hour Event on April 22, 2023, from 12-3pm involving 3 drag performers at the Earth Day Event at Harbor Park. The cost of the event would be \$750, including payment for the performers, an ASL interpreter, and a photographer.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Shapiro made a motion to recommend approval of the event as proposed. Commissioner Mangiafico seconded the motion. Motion passed at 5:46 pm., with Commissioners Mangiafico, Kovach, Aldieri, Haddad, Shapiro, Rebstock, Jarda, Barry, Santacroce, and Timmons voting in favor. Commissioner Billingsley abstained.

**C. New Initiatives and Events. (Commissioners of LGBTQIA+ Commission).**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Mangiafico made a motion to move item 5(A)(III) forward to discuss first under 4(C). Motion passed unanimously at 5:53 pm. See discussion below under item 5(A)(III).

**I. Middlesex Health and Middletown Pride (Commissioner Rebstock).**

Commissioner Rebstock was reached out to by Catherine Rees from Middlesex Health, who works on MH+ Pride. Ms. Rees was seeking involvement from the City's LGBTQIA+ Commissioners. Commissioners Rebstock and Jarda stated they would be interested in attending their meetings which take place on the first Friday of every month in the morning.

**II. Senior Center (AGC Forte).**

AGC Forte informed the Commission that the managers at the City's Senior Center reached out to the Commission seeking to create educational and social opportunities for their residents. AGC Forte advised them to create and distribute a short survey seeking information on what their needs are. AGC Forte will continue to update the Commission on the progress, and asked the Commissioners if anyone would be interested in assisting.

**5. Old Business.**

**A. Update on LGBTQIA+ Commission Initiatives and Events.**

**I. TCC Partnership Update (AGC Forte).**

AGC Forte recapped the amazing first-ever community pizza dinners coordinated by Brianna Skowera on February 3, 2023 and February 10, 2023. The response was incredible, over 50 people were in attendance for the adult dinner, and people requested more events such as this including a dance party, trivia night, game nights, etc. Commissioner Jarda said they were interested in holding a speed dating night during June. Commissioner Haddad stated that she was willing to coordinate a game night in April. AGC Forte informed the Commissioners

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that they should each plan to coordinate one event per month, and a sign-up sheet will be sent around in the coming days so that each commissioner can sign-up for a month.

- II. Q+ Partnership Update (AGC Forte).** AGC Forte updated the Commission that Q+ and Middletown Pride have started a new pre-teen group that meets once a month at First Church.
- III. Safety for LGBTQIA+ Community in Middletown (Commissioner Timmons).** Commissioner Timmons stated that she met with Chief Costa and asked him to provide information on the training that the MPD receives regarding the LGBTQIA+ Community. Chief Costa stated that all of our officers receive training the community as required by state law, and expressed interest in having first line supervisors receive additional training. Chief Costa also asked whether a member of the Commission would be interested in providing guidance from time to time with the Middletown PD. The Commission discussed that request and tabled it for the next meeting.
- IV. Concert at Harbor Park (Acting Director Peterson, ECD).** No updates. Will remove from the agenda.
- V. Queer Inclusive Pool Swim (Commissioner Billingsley).** Commissioner Billingsley asked the Commission whether this should be a family event, all ages event, or whether we should restrict ages for this event. Commissioner Haddad stated she believed this should be a family event. No other updates

- B. Middletown PrideFEST 2023.** The Russell Library will be holding a Drag Queen Story Hour Event at RJ Julia at 11:00 am. The Russell Library will also then be broadcasting an episode of its podcast live from the Main Street stage starting at noon, which will be interactive with the crowd and will be regarding intellectual freedom and banned books, with a banned book station at the festival. AGC Forte also reminded the Commissioners that all events for pride month need to be submitted on the google form no later than April 1, 2023.

Commissioner Aldieri stated that they will no longer be able to donate photography services for PrideFEST. AGC Forte and the Commission thanked Commissioner Aldieri for her amazing work over the past 4 years. Commissioner Aldieri recommended that photographer Sam Giardina be the photographer for PrideFEST 2023.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Aldieri made a motion to recommend that Sam Giardina be the photographer for PrideFEST 2023. Commissioner Billingsley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously at 6:51 p.m.

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**I. Pride March. No updates.**

**II. Pride Rally.** Dr. AJ Eckert, Connecticut's first out nonbinary trans doctor, the head of Anchor Health's Gender & Life Affirming Medicine (GLAM) Program, and Vice-President of the Stonewall speakers will be giving remarks at this year's Pride Rally.

**III. Pride Showcase Concert.** AGC Forte stated that Middletown Pride has confirmed that there will be two stages at PrideFEST—one stage on the South Green, and one on Main Street. Applications for performers are due on February 28.

**IV. Tea Dance on Main.** Tea Dance on Main is confirmed from 7-10pm.

**6. Adjournment.**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Mangiafico made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Shapiro seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously at 6:57 p.m.