

Meeting Minutes: Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism (Approved November 19, 2024)

Date: October 29, 2024

Location: Massachusetts State House, Hearing Room A2

Time: 1pm-3pm

Attendees

- State Senator John Velis (In-person)
- State Representative Simon Cataldo (In-person)
- Jeremy Burton, CEO of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (In-person)
- Jody Kipnis, CEO of the Holocaust Legacy Foundation (In-person)
- Peggy Shukur, Vice President of the East Division of the Anti-Defamation League (In-person)
- Robert Leikind, Regional Director of the American Jewish Committee New England (In-person)
- State Representative Steven Howitt (In-Person)
- David Friedman, Governor's Appointee (In-person)
- Dara Kaufman, Executive Director at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires (Virtual)
- Jill Hai, Member of the Lexington Select Board (In-person)
- Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, Mayor of Newton (In-person)
- Jamie Hoag, Senior Counselor to Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell (Virtual)
- Michael Memmolo, Executive Director at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (In-person)
- Constantia Papanikolaou, Chief Legal Counsel, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (In-person)
- Karen Sampson, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Virtual)
- District Attorney Paul Tucker, Essex County District Attorney (In-person)
- Chief Thomas Fowler, Salisbury Chief of Police (In-person)
- Superintendent Aaron Polansky, Superintendent of Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School (In-person)

1. Call to Order

- **Roll Call:** Conducted by Kyle Stapleton. A quorum was established.

2. Opening Statements

- **Rep. Cataldo:** Provided an overview of the meeting's purpose and thanked attendees.
- **Sen. Velis:** Expressed gratitude and discussed the statutory framework guiding the commission.

3. Member Introductions

- Each member introduced themselves and their affiliations.

4. Overview of Statutory Change

- **Presenter:** Sen. Velis
- **Summary:** Explained recent change in legislation that created this Commission aimed at addressing antisemitism.

5. Meeting Agenda Overview

- **Presenter:** Rep. Cataldo
- **Summary:** Presented the agenda, emphasizing the focus on strategic responses to antisemitism.

6. Overview of WH National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism

- **Presenter:** Jeremy Burton
- **Summary:** Discussed a multi-faceted approach to combat antisemitism, emphasizing societal responsibility. Key recommendations included:
 - Restorative justice
 - Support for survivors
 - Access to religious foods

7. Discussion on Emphasis Areas for the Commission

- **Facilitator:** Rep. Cataldo
- **Key Points Discussed:**
 - **Peggy Shukur:** Advocated for enhanced dialogue about antisemitism.
 - **Chief Fowler:** Highlighted the importance of restorative justice in hate crime cases.
 - **DA Tucker:** Stressed the need for education on hate crimes and first amendment rights.
 - **David Friedman:** Called for comprehensive educational initiatives from K-12 to higher education.

- **Dara Kaufman:** Emphasized understanding of antisemitism in non-Jewish communities.
- **Mayor Fuller:** Outlined actionable steps and ongoing staff work.
- **Superintendent Polansky:** Advocated for equal treatment of all students.
- **Sen. Velis:** Urged a holistic approach to antisemitism, balancing rights and safety.

8. Anti-Defamation League Presentation

- **Presenter:** Peggy Shukur
- **Summary:** Analyzed data on antisemitism and emphasized effective responses. Discussed reporting discrepancies and the impact of unreported incidents.

9. Introduction to Combined Jewish Philanthropies' Center for Combating Antisemitism

- **Presenter:** Melissa Garlick
- **Summary:** Highlighted the center's mission and initiatives, including:
 - Grants for community collaboration
 - Security support for Jewish institutions
 - Importance of awareness and training across campuses

10. Logistical Commission Matters

- **Facilitators:** Sen. Velis / Rep. Cataldo
- **Summary:** Discussed the commission's timeline and requested input from members.

11. Adjournment

- **Motion to Adjourn:** Made by Sen. Velis and seconded by DA Tucker.
- Meeting adjourned