

**HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

4:45 p.m.
Conference Room 1
3rd Floor Duke Tower
March 1, 2000

PRESENT: Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair
Mr. David Khokhar
Ms. May Lui
Councillor Colwell
Councillor Blumenthal
Mr. Haji Amari
Ms. Seemeen Asad Khan
Mr. H. A. J. Wedderburn
Mr. Keith Gillis
Mr. Thomas Rissesco

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. Charla Williams, Coordinator, Diversity Programs
Cst. Cedric Upshaw, Black Youth Liaison Officer
Ms. Peta-Jane Temple, Coordinator Grants Committee
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

REGRETS: Mr. Massicotte, Mr. Canales-Leyton and Ms. Parris

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At the commencement of the meeting, the Chair welcomed Mr. Gus Wedderburn, a new member and introduced Ms. Peta-Jane Temple, Coordinator, Grants Committee.

1.0 AGENDA

The agenda, as circulated, was approved on motion of Mr. Rissesco and Mr. Khokhar.

2.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of February 3, 2000 were approved, as circulated, on motion of Mr. Khokhar and Mr. Amari.

3.0 1999-2000 WORK PLAN - STRATEGIES

ISSUES AFFECTING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

The Chair canvassed the members on whether there were any issues which they wished to discuss.

Mr. Amari raised the issue of foreign students only being able to work at the university they attend. It was explained to Mr. Amari that this did not fall under the purview of the Committee's mandate. It was within the Federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Gillis questioned how closely the Committee works with MISA. Ms. Thomas noted that to date there had not been much communication with MISA, but as a result of discussions at the February meeting, it is intended that such organizations be contacted to introduce the Committee and invite input on issues affecting diverse communities.

Councillor Colwell referred to a meeting he attended last evening in North Preston. The subject of the meeting was the community centre. Serious mold problems have been identified with the facility which would cost approximately \$250,000 to remedy in addition to structural faults identified earlier which would cost approximately \$500,000 to fix. Councillor Colwell left the meeting, attended by approximately 85 people, with the understanding the facility would be closed. Others attending the meeting left with the impressions that the facility was to be closed and demolished. An additional meeting is being planned as members of the community felt the turnout would have been larger if the community had been properly informed.

A discussion followed on complications in dealing with this facility which is owned by the community not HRM. Councillor Colwell referred to the lack of facilities in North Preston

where 200 to 300 young children reside. He suggested a visit by the Committee to North Preston.

Mr. Wedderburn proposed that Legal Services should investigate those responsible for the construction of the facility given it is a relatively new building. Ms. Williams assured the Committee that the Recreation Department is taking a lead role in this matter and all avenues will be pursued. She felt it was important that the Committee was made aware of the situation, particularly its background, in the event Council seeks advice from the Committee. She felt there is an opportunity for the community and HRM to come up with a solution. The community will need sometime to consider the situation.

Councillor Blumenthal proposed tabling the matter until more information is available from the Recreation Department. He also suggested a letter of support be sent indicating the Committee's willingness to help the community.

Councillor Blumenthal moved a motion seconded by Mr. Rissesco that the Committee table the issue of the problem that exists in North Preston about their Recreation Centre until more information is received. Motion carried unanimously.

STRATEGY TO PROMOTE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES WITHIN HRM

The Chair recalled that the Committee had spent sometime on this subject at the previous meeting. A number of the suggestions made have been incorporated in the draft Workplan.

Councillor Colwell referred to an awards ceremony he recently attended at Bell Park Academic Centre. Four young children were given Peace Awards. He was very impressed and felt the Committee should offer encouragement for such initiatives.

He moved a motion, seconded by Mr. Rissesco that the Chair send a letter to the principal of Bell Park Academic Centre, on behalf of the Committee, congratulating them on the Peace Awards and the fine job they have done and seeing if the Committee can offer its encouragement in the future. Motion carried.

The Chair reflected that these children would undoubtedly have all kinds of suggestions for the promotion of diversity.

Reflecting on the above, Mr. Wedderburn questioned whether the Committee had any funds. If so, he proposed the creation of a Martin Luther King Award. He was advised that the Committee has no funds. Mr. Rissesco suggested that a request be made to the

Grants Committee, but Ms. Peta-Jane Temple noted that the Committee would not qualify for a grant as it would not be considered a non-profit organization. Councillor Blumenthal noted that each Councillor has discretionary funds and Councillor Colwell might wish to direct some of his funds for this purpose in his District.

Referring to last month's minutes, Ms. Williams noted that the development of an awards/recognition program had been suggested. The meeting also dealt with various methods which could be used to communicate the Committee's existence. One of these vehicles involved the submission of an article to every community news publication. It is understood that Mr. Massicotte has submitted a draft to Mr. Canales-Leyton.

Mr. Wedderburn noted that this was a broader approach than he was suggesting. He was simply suggesting the presentation of small medallions within the schools. Ms. Williams cautioned that entering the realm of the School Board falls outside the HRM's jurisdiction. She did not feel such an initiative would have a broad impact on the HRM.

Ms. Williams described a initiative related to a diversity awareness program involving a partnership of Metro Transit, Scotia Bank and HRM. The intention is to start modestly on developing an image to be used to change attitudes within society related to the positive aspects of diversity. Different organizations will be approached for funding. Over time, the goal is for the project to move out to other areas of the Province.

Ms. Lui reflected on her past experiences with Metro Transit related to public education. They have been very cooperative in not only displaying posters but producing posters. She felt it would be worthwhile to meet with Metro Transit representatives to have such posters again displayed. It was proposed that this idea be suggested to the group that Ms. Williams referred to. Alternatively, Ms. Lui be assigned to meet with Metro Transit and bring back some recommendations to the Committee. Councillor Blumenthal suggested the schools might be able to come up with a design.

The Chair cautioned that the Committee needs to be more focused. There is an initiative taking place and the Committee has its own Work Plan. Ms. Williams concurred that the Committee's energies would be better directed in an area not covered. The School Board and N.S. Human Rights Commission are very effective in this area.

The suggestion has been noted and consideration will nevertheless be given to incorporating it in next years Work Plan.

Mr. Gillis made reference to the Tall Ships Event to take place this year and if any consideration has been given to promoting Halifax as a diverse community at this event,

ie. through a booth at the waterfront, etc. The Chair felt this suggestion warranted further consideration.

4.0 BUSINESS ARISING

4.1 WEB SITE

Required changes to the Web site have been made. A copy of the Web page will be circulated with the next agenda package. Members were encouraged to visit the Web site if they have Internet access. Mr. Canales-Leyton is seeking suggestions to update the site.

4.2 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY - UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF WORKING GROUP

Ms. Williams, Coordinator of the Working Group, advised that a meeting was held yesterday and she is very pleased with the commitment. She will provide the Committee with a copy of the membership list, which consists of 10 or 11 individuals, including George McLellan, Deputy CAO and Pat Hartling, Director of Human Resources. There is some diversity represented on the Committee, as it is not all management staff. Individuals have been appointed by Directors to represent their Business Units. The intention is to hold two hour meetings every two weeks.

Time was set aside at this meeting to talk about inclusiveness as a principle and philosophy. She felt it important that the members develop a common understanding. There will be a need to identify in each business unit what is currently being done to support the Community and Race Relations Policy and identify areas that counter the Policy.

The Working Group is very committed to developing a relationship with the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee and will call on its resources as required. She will keep the members informed of progress.

(Councillor Blumenthal left)

5.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

Circulated at the meeting was a letter the Chair had drafted to be sent to various organizations throughout HRM and an accompanying synopsis of the Committee. She encouraged the members to review the draft and phone her with any suggestions.

The Chair reported that May Lui, Andre Massicotte and she met with Lewis Rogers to discuss promoting HRM's diverse culture. This initiative resulted from a letter received by the Mayor's office from a tourist. Ms. Thomas and Ms. Lui felt the meeting had been very constructive. Mr. Rogers would be very receptive to any suggestions the Committee can provide on how they can be more inclusive in their promotional materials. It was proposed by the Chair that the Committee brainstorm for ideas at the April meeting. Mr. Gillis' suggestion regarding the Tall Ships Event could be included in these discussions.

May Lui proposed that a Department representative be invited to attend the brainstorming issue to save time. The Chair did not feel this was warranted as information pertaining to the Tall Ships has already been published. The Committee would be drafting suggestions for the next round of publications.

Reference was made to the fact that the Department was to have provided information packets for tonight's meeting. They could not be located.

Mr. Rogers offered meeting space to the Committee in his offices located in the Ferry Terminal Building.

The Chair encouraged those who were assigned to research significant dates to submit them to her as soon as possible. She advised that she had another discussion with Ms. Nehiley on research aspects for the significant dates. The Clerk or the Corporate Library will be the repository for this information. As new dates are added to the Significant Date list, research will be done. Someone in HRM will be responsible for the actual proclamations.

Cst. Upshaw updated the Committee on the Racially Visible Recruitment class to be held by Police Services. While it had originally been anticipated that the program would start in September, for legal reasons it has been deferred to April 2001. Recruitment for the program will start in September.

On Friday, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation are holding a Community Forum to talk about anti-racism education in the schools. The event, of which Ms. Thomas is the Moderator, is being held at the Black Cultural Centre from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

6.0 NEW BUSINESS

6.1 2000-2001 WORKPLAN

Copies of a draft Workplan were circulated at the meeting. The members were asked to review and call the Chair with comments. A discussion followed later in the meeting on

how the subject of the provision of food for the meetings can be addressed. The Chair has a concern about committee members who have diabetes. It is an accommodations issue. Ms. Williams and Ms. Thomas will discuss further.

6.2 1999-2000 ANNUAL REPORT

A draft of the Annual Report was also provided and comments are to be forwarded to the Chair.

The Annual Report, Workplan and draft correspondence will all be dealt with at the April meeting.

6.3 GRANTS COMMITTEE

Ms. Peta-Jane Temple, Coordinator, HRM Grants Program was in attendance to provide information on the Grants Program's application and review process. Information on the business plan and summary of applications was circulated with the agenda package.

Ms. Temple noted that she has been in this position for only a short while and she appreciated the opportunity to gain some insight into one of the HRM's standing committees. Her office is on the 4th Floor, Duke Tower if the members wish to meet with her on any issues which arise during the course of the year. She hoped to have an ongoing relationship with the Committee. She can be reached at 490-5460.

She described to the members an initiative which has been undertaken with respect to community development within HRM. The first step involved circulation of a small internal newsletter. Ms. Temple noted that people have various interpretations of what community development is. She made reference to the Committee's Policy and its broader definition of aspects of community development, ie. community of interest. She felt it imperative to determine what exists internally, before proposing any changes. She wondered if the Committee would like a column in the newsletter. There was consensus this would be a good idea to make the Committee more visible within the organization. The Chair suggested Ms. Temple draw upon the draft synopsis to accompany the letter to organizations for the column.

At the meeting she explained the decision making process and answered queries from the members. She encouraged the members to direct any concerns or queries following the meeting to her. She'd be available to meet with the Committee on other occasions. She felt the Grants Committee would be interested in calling upon the Committee in its advisory capacity.

The Chair noted that reference is made to a new role for the Grants Committee in the materials circulated and asked Ms. Temple to elaborate. Essentially Ms. Temple explained that it is being advocated that a more coordinated approach and partnership with other organizations and community groups be initiated. She stressed that the Business Plan has yet to be approved. They are hoping to work toward more long term and sustained initiatives. They desire a more linkage role.

(Mr. Wedderburn left)

Ms. Temple noted that the Grants Committee is planning two meetings in March, after which she anticipates they should be able to take recommendations on the 265 applications to Council. The Grants Committee will be considering recommendations made by staff. Until Council has approved its budget, no recommendations can be made. She anticipated the report to Council in April.

Referring to the flow chart on page 12 of the Grants Program Business Plan, Ms. Williams questioned whether there is any diversity within the staff on the Departmental Review Teams. Ms. Williams noted that this is one of the issues which came out of the Policy, i.e. in every level of the grants process diversity should be evident. In addition to having diversity represented on the teams, individuals need to be trained to look for and recognize it.

This has been an ongoing issue the Committee has had with the Grants Committee, the Chair noted.

Ms. Khan reflected on the policies the senior levels of government have with respect to diversity and she wondered if there was any communication between the municipal level and provincial and federal. She felt the municipality appears far behind in this regard.

Staff explained why they felt that the Municipality was in fact not that far behind. Ms. Lui noted that both the former City of Dartmouth and City of Halifax had signed Affirmative Action Agreements with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. Ms. Williams reflected that there is not a good mechanism to communicate internally and departments are at different levels in their activities, understanding and awareness. She also noted that HRM is the only municipality east of Montreal with staff employed in this area.

Ms. Temple was thanked for her attendance and asked to advise the Committee when their Business Plan is adopted by Council. The Chair noted that the individual members will ensure that the information is provided to those they come in contact with.

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Mr. Khokhar circulated a plaque and certificate from the Indo - Canadian Association which he and his wife recently received in recognition of their contributions to community service for many years. Mr. Khokhar assured the members that he communicates with the Indo-Canadian community what the Committee is doing. The Association is aware that if they have any problems they can raise them with the Committee.

7.0 NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, April 5, 2000.

8.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.

Betty Thomas
Chair

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk

(March28,2000)

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TO DO: Check into Mr. Gillis not receiving his assignment. Call Juan Carlos noting you spoke to Chair before the meeting about ad. She did not raise at the meeting. Mentioned you and Mr. Massicotte had been working on something.

Page 7, after the meeting May Lui indicated that her name should also be included with Mr. Khokhar's under the Organizations' Newsletters.

Call Councillor Colewell with number to fax information.

Send out to those not present Annual Report, letter to organizations plus synopsis and workplan, together with HRM newsletter.

Check into where information packages from Tourism went. (Shelly)