

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MAY 3, 2000

MINUTES

PRESENT: Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair
Councillor Blumenthal
Ms. Sylvia Parris
Mr. Andre Massicotte
Mr. Keith Gillis
Ms. Seeman Khan
Mr. H. A. J. Wedderburn
Mr. Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton
Ms. May Lui
Mr. Tom Rissesco
Councillor Colwell

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

REGRETS: Mr. David Khokhar and Mr. Haji Amari

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The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 4:50 p.m., Halifax Hall.

1.0 INTRODUCTIONS

Members of the Implementation Strategy Committee were introduced to the Committee and vice versa. Attending the meeting were Bob Nauss, Recreation Department; Alasdair Graham, Shared Services; Linda Matthews, Finance; Darlene Ellis and Jackie MacLachlan, Fire Service.

2.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

3.0 MEETING WITH IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Following the introductions, Ms. Williams noted that the five individuals present were appointed by their respective Directors/General Managers to represent their Business Unit. They were assigned the task of figuring out how to implement the Community and Race Relations Policy within the HRM organization.

She reiterated some of the points she had mentioned at previous meetings regarding why this task is so daunting, i.e. the units do such diverse work, the size of the municipality and the tend to focus on the core, etc. She felt today's meeting essentially served a relationship building purpose.

Ms. Williams noted that the Committee is meeting every two weeks. She listed their goals. One of the roles of the members will be to sell the implementation process to their business unit staff, particularly the advantages of diversity. She stressed the importance of taking back the same message. The goal is to reflect elements of diversity within their Business Plans.

Circulated to those present was an article on the advantages of diversity initiatives in the workplace. In order to review this information and come up with additional ideas, those present were divided up into discussion groups. The discussion groups were instructed to review the points in the article which delved into cost savings, increased safety and customer service excellence.

Following the conclusion of the Discussion Group session, the individual groups reported back and Charla Williams jotted down elements of their reflections for future consideration.

During the course of this reporting, Mr. Massicotte questioned if when the HRM is contracting out services, the Community and Race Relations Policy is part of the contract.

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It was noted that nothing like this is presently done by Finance, but staff is aware of the need.

A question was also posed regarding how diverse communities would find out about vacancies in the various business units. This subject will be addressed at an upcoming Implementation Strategy Committee meeting.

A discussion followed on the difficulty faced by those with years of experience arriving in Canada and trying to find a job with foreign accreditation. Councillor Colwell had some experience in this area and the members were encouraged to contact him if assistance is sought. It was felt that the attitude of the employer plays a key role.

In conclusion, Ms. Williams felt that it is a daunting task, but one has to infect the organization with the positive aspects. She referred to initiatives already being embarked upon:

- C The secondment of a Police Officer to develop a succession planning model, which will include aspects of diversity.
- C "Mission Possible" - to raise awareness with Councillors, senior management, etc. of the challenges faced by people accessing HRM facilities, as employees or for services.

(Mr. Wedderburn left)

Copies of the membership list of the Implementation Strategy Committee will be circulated with the next agenda package.

4.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the April 5, 2000 meeting were adopted, as circulated, on motion of Mr. Massicotte and Ms. Lui.

5.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair reported that she had made a presentation of the Annual Report and Workplan at the April 18th meeting of Council. In addition to Councillors Blumenthal and Colwell, Mr. Massicotte attended the meeting.

The Mayor asked Ms. Thomas to convey to the members of the Committee a thank you for a job well done.

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Ms. Thomas noted that she and Ms. Williams attended an Asian Heritage Month event, organized by May Lui on behalf of the Chinese Society of Nova Scotia, May 1 in Halifax Hall.

Referring to the 2000/2001 Workplan, it is the Chair's intent that this be the focus of every monthly meeting. She reminded the members to bring their green folder, which should include a copy of the most recent Work Plan, to upcoming meetings.

6.0 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

According to the terms of reference for the Committee, the Chair and Vice-Chair must be elected each year.

Ms. Williams called for nominations for Chair. Mr. Massciotte moved that Ms. Thomas be nominated for Chair. Nomination seconded by Ms. Parris. Nominations were called for three times. There being no further nominations **Ms. Thomas was declared Chair by acclimation.**

Ms. Thomas called for nominations for Vice-Chair. Mr. Massicotte nominated Ms. Parris. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Gillis. Ms. Khan nominated Mr. Canales-Leyton. Nomination seconded by Mr. Rissesco. It was moved that nominations cease.

An election was conducted by ballot for the position of Vice-Chair. When the votes were counted, **Mr. Canales-Leyton was declared Vice-Chair.**

7.0 BUSINESS ARISING

As there was more time left in the meeting than had originally been anticipated, the balance of the agenda was waived and some Business Arising items dealt with.

7.1 WEB SITE

Mr. Canales-Leyton reported on his observations of the Web site. He noted that the telephone numbers for staff associated with the Committee are not included. This will be brought to Kelly Marney's attention.

He reflected on the flatness of the Web site, mostly as it related to content. The Chair recalled he was going to prepare a synopsis on how to improve the site. Mr. Canales-Leyton reported that to date no input has been forthcoming from the members. This being the case, the Chair felt that a proposal should nevertheless be provided by Mr. Canales-Leyton for the Committee to react to. Mr. Massicotte and Mr. Canales-Leyton will meet

next week to discuss.

Reference was made to information provided on the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities' Web site, regarding access. Ms. Williams suggested this might be something the Committee may wish to incorporate in theirs.

7.2 WORKPLACE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Ms. Parris reported on her meeting with Maryanne Rodriques. She circulated copies of a report prepared by the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) on immigration, including background information on immigration to Nova Scotia in particular.

Ms. Rodriques would appreciate any support the Committee can provide ie. letters be written to CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) regarding cancellation of funding of the Workplace Education Program. The Chair noted that there is some question as to whether this subject falls within the Committee's mandate. While a letter from the Committee might not be appropriate, individual Committee members could write.

Ms. Rodriques expressed interest in attending an upcoming Committee meeting to speak on the subject.

Concern was also expressed regarding cuts being made to the Education Budget and the impact this will also have on those who need their language skills improved. Bob Nauss confirmed that language courses have up to now always been dealt with by the Continuing Education Department. With the cutbacks, Recreation may pick up components.

7.3 PAMPHLET

Mr. Massicotte provided copies of a draft pamphlet on the Committee for discussion at the next meeting.

8.0 NEW BUSINESS

8.1 ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Copies of the Asian Heritage Month Proclamation were circulated to the members. Ms. Lui reflected on the fact that this was the first time this event had been held. She indicated that she would have liked to have invited all the Committee members, but space had been at a premium.

She circulated to the members copies of the May/June 2000 Halifax Regional Library's

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Library Guide, noting references to Asian Heritage Month. Particular reference was made to the NFB film **Under the Willow Tree**. This film examines stories of Chinese women in Canada.

It was moved by Councillor Colwell and Mr. Massicotte that the Chair send a letter to the Organizing Committee congratulating them on the occasion of their first Asian Heritage Month celebration. The correspondence will comment on the significance of holding their first event in Halifax Hall, since this date is a Significant Date proclaimed by the HRM. **Motion carried unanimously.**

8.2 HRM WEB SITE

Mr. Canales-Leyton expressed frustration that when he checked the HRM Web site for details on the Asian Heritage Month event that was held in Halifax Hall, no reference could be found to it. He contacted four offices within the Municipality and no one was aware of the event taking place. Ms. Williams suggested that the Commissionaire would have been able to provide some information. She noted that some of these events are arranged privately. She cautioned that due to restrictions on the room capacity, it would not necessarily be desirable to publicly announce all bookings in City Hall.

Nevertheless, the Chair felt the point raised by Mr. Canales-Leyton was well taken. Ms. Williams will contact John O'Brien, Corporate Communications Officer, about problems identified re internal communications.

9.0 NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 7, 2000, tentatively at the Black Cultural Centre. Transportation issues, etc. yet to be addressed. The Chair has spoken with Councillor Colwell and Mr. Massicotte regarding transportation and will be writing the Black Cultural Centre regarding the booking immediately. Invitations to Community Groups are yet to be done.

10.0 ADJOURNMENT

The Chair thanked Bob Nauss for staying for the entire meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:05 p.m.

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Betty Thomas
Chairman

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk

To do: When ordering food in future ensure the meat sandwiches are separate from the vegetable ones.

Get membership list from Charla Williams for circulation with next package.

Advise Shelly of change in Vice-Chair and web site requires change.

Advise Kelly of need to add 3 staff telephone numbers.

Provide 4 handouts to those not present. 5 if I had more copies of Library Guide.

Write draft letter. May have to contact May Lui about contact person of the Chinese Society of N.S. She is Chairperson of the multicultural committee.

Remind Charla to contact Mr. O'Brien re concerns expressed by Juan Carlos specifically related to the Asian Heritage Month event Halifax Hall.