

**COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**JANUARY 3, 2001**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair  
Mr. Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton, Vice-Chair  
Councillor Dawn Sloane  
Ms. Sylvia Parris  
Mr. Andre Massicotte  
Mr. Haji M. Amari  
Ms. Seeman Asad Khan

**ALSO PRESENT:** Ms. Charla Williams, Coordinator, Diversity Programs  
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

**REGRETS:** Ms. Lui and Cst. Upshaw

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The meeting was called to order by the Vice-Chair at approximately 5:00 p.m. in Conference Room 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Duke Street Tower.

### 1.0 **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Item 8.1, Membership on the Committee was added and an announcement re the Goat and Chicken Festival.

### 2.0 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

An error was noted in the December 6, 2000 minutes. Councillor Sloane was incorrectly referred to as Diane not Dawn. The minutes, as amended, were adopted on motion of Mr. Massicotte and Ms. Sloane.

### 3.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

#### 3.1 **WEB SITE UPDATES**

Ms. Williams referred to the need to develop a process whereby the Committee's web site can be kept up to date. She recalled that at the last meeting, Councillor Sloane indicated she had some expertise in this area and volunteered to coordinate. Ms. Marney will be contacted.

It was noted that the Origin should be revised to refer to the Policy being adopted in 1997. It was also noted that some of the links lead to dead pages.

#### 3.2 **PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED WITH INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS - UPDATE**

Ms. Williams has not had an opportunity to discuss with Mr. O'Brien. The subject was being raised again as there have been changes as a result of the Municipal Election.

### 4.0 **COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE UPDATE**

Ms. Williams reported on today's meeting of the Policy Implementation Committee. The meeting focused on the report being prepared for EMT for presentation to the Committee at its February meeting. A portion of the meeting was attended by Mr. McLellan.

One of the goals for 2001 is to have every Business Unit represented on the Committee.

It is being proposed that the Policy Implementation Committee and the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee make a joint presentation to Council. It was recalled

that the Committee presented its Annual Report to Council last April. By making a joint presentation, the Policy Implementation Committee could focus on internal initiatives and the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee on external initiatives. The subject will be discussed further at the February meeting.

The Chair advised that a reception will be arranged through Ken Meech's office to follow the February meeting with EMT and the Policy Implementation Committee.

Questions were posed to Ms. Williams regarding the budget process and to Councillor Sloane as to whether she felt Councillors take into consideration the Community and Race Relations Policy when making decisions. Councillor Sloane did not feel this to be the case. There followed a discussion of the role of Council to date. Ms. Thomas felt confident that Council is aware of the Policy, having approved it and subsequent Work Plans. Accountability is demonstrated by the establishment of the Policy Implementation Committee. It was felt that Councillor Sloane's role would be to raise the subject of whether the Community and Race Relations Policy had been taken into consideration when recommendations were formulated and decisions made.

Ms. Williams reflected that there has been a lot of activity surrounding the Community and Race Relations Policy internally. She expressed confidence that staff has made a serious commitment. The challenge is now to focus citizens' attention on the Policy, which is a role of the Committee.

Mr. Canales-Leyton posed a question to Ms. Williams regarding whether those who are not Christians are given a holiday in lieu of December 25<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Williams indicated there is no formal policy, but there is flexibility demonstrated within the organization. It is a matter which could be taken up under the Collective Agreement process. She felt there is an onus on staff to come forward and identify such issues. Referring to essential services, she demonstrated where a diverse workforce would be of benefit in such instances as holiday coverage.

## 5.0 **CHAIR'S REPORT**

In addition to identifying that she had contacted Mr. Meech about having a reception arranged to follow the February meeting with EMT and the Policy Implementation Committee, Ms. Thomas advised of a meeting scheduled with Mayor Kelly next week to discuss the Committee in general.

## 6.0 **2000 - 2001 WORKPLAN**

A general review of the Activities contained in the Workplan followed. Mr. Massicotte noted that a few things have been done, but not many. Ms. Williams reflected that the Work Plan was ambitious and given the Committee only meets monthly, progress has

been made.

Referring to the first item under Activity 1 - Establish contact with all organizations representing community of interests in HRM, Ms. Thomas noted that the letter to be sent out has been delayed pending printing of the brochure.

Mr. Massicotte reflecting on earlier comments, felt that the focus of the Workplan for 2001 - 2002 should be to develop a plan to reach the community.

During discussions, the following were noted:

- C In the event a letter is sent out to organizations, with the brochure, follow-up is required.
- C It was suggested that the various members develop an inventory of their contacts in the community to facilitate networking. Once identified, the members would take responsibility to ensure the organizations are informed of the Committee's activities. The need to ensure accurate and uniform information was provided was emphasized. Ms. Thomas will include, in the next agenda package, an inventory sheet for complying this information and sharing.
- C The Committee's Website incorporates a feedback form. It was noted that there are issues associated with such an inclusion. The matter would have to be discussed with Ms. Marney to determine capabilities and limitations.
- C The organizations to which the letter is sent, be provided with the Website address. Minutes would be available from the Website, it was noted.
- C There needs to be a Communications Sub-committee to communicate with the community. It was noted that there is essentially an informal Communications Sub-committee, consisting of Councillor Sloane, Ms. Williams and Mr. Canales-Leyton dealing with the Website.
- C It was cautioned that there should not be too much emphasis on using the Website for communicating with the community. It is a passive approach, whereby the Committee needs to take a more active approach. The Internet should not be totally relied upon as the major communication tool.
- Person to person meetings initially, with follow-up by e-mail, was suggested.
- C Reference was made to the holding of a Town Hall meeting under Activity 1. It was noted that they are usually held on some specific topic and it was questioned whether the Committee was ready to discuss the Policy and where the

implementation process is.

- C An environment needs to be created whereby people trust that their issues will be addressed. While there was concurrence that there is a need to identify issues in the community and determine how they can be best addressed, it might be preferable to approach organizations one by one, rather than use the Town Hall format. The emphasis would be on determining whether the organizations know the committee exists, the role of the Municipality and whether there are concerns pertaining to the Municipality's role. It was cautioned that it might take forever to visit all groups. Different ways of approaching this were debated, for example District by District.
- C It was suggested that a newsletter to the various organizations might be the best way to communicate with them.

Mr. Massicotte volunteered to do the first draft of a plan based on the above noted discussions for further discussion at the March meeting. Prior circulation via e-mail or fax was suggested.

Mr. Canales-Leyton, referring to the meeting Ms. Thomas was going to have with Mayor Kelly next week, suggested that it be proposed that a significant event be held by HRM March 21<sup>st</sup>. There were reservations expressed about holding such an event on March 21<sup>st</sup>, when there are so many other initiatives on that date, thus creating the potential for conflicts. Holding an event on another day was felt reasonable.

In closing, Ms. Parris reflected that this is not a Committee to serve organizations but the community as a whole. If contacting organizations is an avenue for contacting the community that is fine, but it may not be the most appropriate method, she cautioned.

Councillor Sloane referred to the **Chicken and Goat Festival** being considered for Gottingen Street to increase awareness of the diversity of cultures in the area. Money, support and sponsors will be required to get the event off the ground. She felt that in addition to creating public awareness of the community and its diversity, such an event would be good for business on Gottingen Street and would be good for the self esteem of those who live and work in the area. She sought the Committee's support, through endorsement by the Committee, ie. use of the Committee's name and logo.

A discussion followed on whether the Festival would fall within the Committee's mandate, given it is not a Region wide initiative. However, it was conveyed to Councillor Sloane that the Committee was supportive of anything which supports the Community and Race Relations Policy.

It was suggested to Councillor Sloane that the organizers might wish to check into the

Grants Application Process and the Tourism Department for dates of other Festivals. It was cautioned that the Festival should not conflict with the annual Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia Festival held on the Dartmouth Waterfront.

Ms. Khan indicated to Councillor Sloane her interest in being involved with this event, upon her return from her studies in Toronto this spring.

#### 6.1 **COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE BROCHURE ESTIMATE FROM SHARED SERVICES**

Ms. Williams has not obtained an estimate to date. Mr. Canales-Leyton questioned whether outside agencies have been contacted to give a quote. Ms. Williams indicated there is a chance the brochure may be done for free. If not, Councillor Sloane indicated she had expertise as a Graphic Designer and has the software and could help. The importance of developing the brochure in a fashion whereby it could be easily updated was emphasized. The members unanimously agreed that if Shared Services can produce the brochure at no charge, Ms. Williams was authorized to give them the go ahead.

#### 7.0 **ISSUES AFFECTING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**

##### 7.1 **COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN NEW CANADIANS AND THE POLICE**

Deferred in the absence of Cst. Upshaw.

A situation regarding problems being encountered with a **Metro Transit** bus driver, by a member of the Muslim Association, were outlined to the Committee. The situation described regarded a reluctance by the driver to provide a bus transfer to the individual. It was concluded that the problem should be identified to Metro Transit by the individual or a spokesperson. If not resolved by this route, Charla Williams to be contacted,

#### 8.0 **NEW BUSINESS**

##### 8.1 **MEMBERSHIP ON THE COMMITTEE**

Ms. Thomas referred to a letter of resignation she had received from Mr. Wedderburn. This information will be conveyed to the Clerk's Office to be taken into consideration when appointments are made to the Committee.

Concern was expressed regarding the attendance of several individuals on the Committee. The Chair will contact those members who have not been active.

It was noted that the Terms of Reference indicate the Committee should consist of no less

than 11 and no more than 15 members, plus two Councillors. A discussion followed on the response to the recent newspaper advertisements for volunteers and the need to use another form of recruitment for this particular Committee. As pointed out by Mr. Canales-Leyton, not everyone reads the newspaper. A more personal approach was suggested.

The need to discuss succession planning was identified by Ms. Williams, as the Terms of Reference limit membership on the Committee to three terms of two years. How to get people interested and involved requires future discussion.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

Mr. Canales-Leyton identified to the members shortcomings in **translation** in pamphlets published by the Nova Scotia Department of Justice and one related to health. A discussion ensued on whether materials can be provided by the HRM in languages other than English. Ms. Williams identified some issues which would have to be first addressed and the need to make a Business Case, if funds for such a purpose are to be obtained.

It was proposed by Ms. Khan that when the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee's brochure is finalized, consideration be given to including a line or two in other languages, which would send a positive messages to the diverse communities.

Ms. Williams was questioned as to whether HRM has identified employees within HRM familiar with languages other than English. It was felt that those in the front line services should know who to contact in the event there are communication problems. Initiatives in this area and hurdles to be overcome were outlined by Ms. Williams.

The Chair advised the members that she has started a **new job** as Volunteer Coordinator for the Youth Alternative Society. Her work number is 424-8933. She noted that she will be endeavouring to identify volunteers from the ethnic communities to be trained as mediators. Ms. Khan indicated her willingness to participate.

Ms. Williams noted that the Building Cultural Competency Training sessions have been well attended and three more sessions have been scheduled.

### **9.0 NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 7, 2001.

### **10.0 ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Betty Thomas  
Chair

Lynne Le Boutillier  
Assistant Municipal Clerk