

# **HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY**

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## **COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

June 6, 2001

### **MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair  
Councillor Colwell (part)  
Mr. Andre Massicotte  
Ms. Sylvia Parris  
Mr. Shawn Lahey  
Ms. Ann Fougere  
Mr. Tom Rissesco  
Ms. May Lui

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

**REGRETS:** Ms. Amari and Mr. Khokhar

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The meeting was called to order by the Chair in Conference Room 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Duke Tower at 5:00 p.m. An Orientation Session had been held by the Chair for new members prior to the meeting.

### 1.0 **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The following items were added to the agenda:

- C Brochure
- C Preston Cultural Festival
- C United Nations Conference

### 2.0 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the April 4, 2001 meeting were adopted, as circulated, on motion of Mr. Lahey and Mr. Massicotte.

Notes of the May 2, 2001 meeting were circulated in the agenda package.

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

#### **COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE POLICY - PROPOSED CHANGES**

The notes of the May 2, 2001 meeting which dealt with a proposal brought forward to the Committee by Jane Cale, Vice-Chair, Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities were discussed. Essentially it was proposed that rather than the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities drafting a policy, the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee's Policy be revised slightly to emphasize the inclusion of those with disabilities and a joint presentation be made to Regional Council of the amended version. It had been concluded that a subcommittee, consisting of a couple of members from both Committees, meet to review the wording of the Policy and develop suggestions on how this could be done. Volunteers were sought from the Committee. Ann Fougere, Shawn Lahey and Sylvia Parris expressed interest in joining the sub-committee. Mr. Lahey offered to coordinate.

A discussion followed on implementation aspects if more emphasis was placed on those with disabilities in the Policy and the large dollar sums required to provide, for example, full physical access to HRM facilities for those with disabilities. Ms. Williams noted that the HRM operates under the Federal Building Code's Barrier Free design aspects and under the Human Rights legislation. She referred to inroads made by transit, provision of materials by the HRM in braille and modifications to the Website to make it more accessible for those with

visual impairments. Ms. Williams concluded that implementation of policies associated with the disabled are not difficult to achieve. No resistance has been met and the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities is working on Accessibility Guidelines.

A letter will be written to Paul Connors, Chair of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, copied to Jane Cale identifying the three members wishing to participate on the sub-committee to make revisions to the Policy.

Item to be dealt with as an on-going item in future.

### **ABSENTEEISM**

Concern was expressed regarding absenteeism. It was noted that Section 11.1 of the Terms of Reference states "In the case of any member missing three meetings without the consent of the Committee, the member shall be deemed to have resigned. The Secretary will review the records and develop a list of those in contravention of this section as it was felt that some action needs to be taken due to the difficulty obtaining a quorum. If members can't attend meetings more than occasionally, the Chair would appreciate a telephone call for an explanation.

#### **3.1 WEB SITE - LINKS**

To be dealt with as an ongoing item.

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

Ms. Williams noted that the Policy Implementation Committee, which meets every second week, has recognized the need to develop some performance measures to clearly identify what has or has not been accomplished. They intend to start the process at their next meeting and report back to the Committee.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding concerns expressed by Mr. Massicotte that the reporting process to date has not been frequent enough. Essentially, the only regular feedback the Committee has with the Implementation Committee was through Ms. Williams at the monthly meetings. An Annual Report was given by the Implementation Committee earlier in the year, but he felt reports should be provided to the committee if not monthly, quarterly and be more specific. He would like to see metrics/measurements, tangible facts regarding what has or has not been done. Mr. Massicotte would like to be advised of the performance criteria, goals and objectives and budgets for this year. Ms. Williams stressed

there are no separate budget items for implementing the policy. The costs are integrated into the budget.

Ms. Williams felt that the energy used to provide these reports would take time away from implementation initiatives. Polling the various units can be quite time-consuming. She also referred to staff being responsible for implementing the Policy and their accountability to Executive Management. She felt the roles and expectations of the Committees need to be very clearly defined. Staff does not normally report to advisory committees under the structure of municipal government. To insert advisory committees in the reporting process will complicate it. The Committee could ask for the report the CAO receives from the Implementation Committee.

Mr. Massicotte referred to the Committee's mandate to report to Council on how the Policy is operating in HRM. Reference was made to the Workplan's Activity 2 which relates to the Committee monitoring role and reads:

"Work closely with the HRM Community and Race Relations Policy Implementation Committee

c Receive regular feedback from the Implementation Committee"

Mr. Massicotte did not feel this reporting should be a burden, just part of ones day-to-day job.

Ms. Parris proposed the Committee write Mr. Meech, CAO referring to the Workplan, particularly Activity 2 and ask him for suggestions to facilitate the Committee receiving information and reports to enable the Committee to fulfil this activity. A mechanism is required.

Ms. Williams felt the Committee needs to be very clear on the feedback it desires so it can monitor progress. There is no guarantee that the Performance Measurements to be developed will provide they information the Committee wants, without communicating with them.

Developing a list of questions the Committee wishes addressed will be an ongoing item the Chair suggested.

Mr. Massicotte referred to a list of questions the Committee had prepared a couple of years ago and suggestions on how to go about implementing the Policy. Ms. Williams referred to the check list which came out of the document. The Community and Race Relations Policy Implementation Committee has decided that rather than continue with the check list, copies of which she provided to the members, performance measurements might be the best tool for implementing the Policy. Ms. Williams reflected that even without the Policy, there are Business Units which would have implemented aspects of the policy, during the normal course

of their business, thus it is difficult to monitor what has taken place because of the Policy's adoption.

## 5.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

### 5.1 JOINT PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL - MAY 1ST

The Chair reiterated on how well the Joint Presentation by the Committee and the Policy Implementation Committee went at Council. She noted Mr. Rissesco was in attendance. From the tone of questions from senior staff, the Mayor and Councillors, she concluded the subject is taken very seriously. She felt this to be evidence that Council is paying attention to the Policy and the Committee's work and she applauded the members.

## 6.0 WORKPLAN (2001-2002)

### 7.0 ISSUES AFFECTING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Mr. Massicotte raised the subject of a recent incident regarding a sports team, using a Metro Transit bus, being insulted by the driver. He was pleased to report how promptly the matter was dealt with. He felt the handling of the situation reflected well on the HRM.

## 8.0 NEW BUSINESS

### 8.1 PRESTON CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Councillor Colwell reflected on his attendance at the Gospel Fest organized by the Preston Cultural Festival held at Prince Andrew High School in March. He felt the performance was the best he has seen. He felt the Festival has done a lot to preserve the heritage of the Preston area and the organizers and participants should be congratulated on the excellent job. He had not seen anything to compare to this performance. It was remarkable. The Chair had also been in attendance and also commented on how moved she was with the excellent performance.

**MOVED by Councillor Colwell and seconded by Mr. Massicotte that a congratulatory letter be written to the organizers of the Preston Cultural Festival. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

It was noted that the Committee has not written to MANS regarding the Multicultural Festival or the organizers of events associated with Asian Heritage month. The Chair suggested that

when the subject of issues affecting diverse communities is discussed that members bring such matters to the Committee's attention.

### **UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE**

Mr. Lahey referred to a United Nations Conference on the elimination of racism being held this fall in South Africa and wondered if HRM is sending any representatives. Councillor Colwell and Ms. Williams did not know. Ms. Williams was asked to find out by Councillor Colwell. She will e-mail the Directors and pass along the response to Mr. Lahey.

### **BROCHURE**

A copy of a draft brochure, prepared by Shared Services, was circulated to the members. Ms. Williams sought the Committee's agreement that staff proceed with the brochure. It was recognized that a couple of modifications are required, regarding color, telephone numbers and emphasis on the Committee. The Committee liked the brochure and wished to extend to the designer, Corinne Hartley-Robinson, their thanks for the nice job she has done.

Ms. Williams referred to the need to develop a strategy to identify concerns in the community. It was recognized that this will result in a long discussion and time needs to be set aside at a meeting for just this purpose.

### **9.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held Wednesday, July 4, 2001, 4:45 p.m. It was decided not to hold a meeting in August.

### **10.0 ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Lynne Le Boutillier,  
Assistant Municipal Clerk