

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

APRIL 3, 2002

PRESENT: Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair
Councillor Sloane
Mr. Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton
Ms. Sylvia Parris
Mr. Shawn Lahey
Mr. Haji Amari
Mr. Tom Rissesco
Mr. Michael Paul

REGRETS: Mr. David Khokhar and Ms. May Lui

GUESTS: Mr. Kamal Karim from Malaysia
Mr. Esteban Hernandez Zamora from Cuba

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

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Meeting called to order by the Chair at 4:55 p.m., Conference Room 1, 3rd Floor Duke Tower. The Chair apologized for starting the meeting late. The subject of starting the meetings at 5:00 p.m. versus 4:45 p.m. was discussed later in the meeting. Ms. Thomas welcomed the Committee's new member Mr. Michael Paul.

1.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councillor Sloane requested that an item be added re Sewage Treatment Plant - District 12. The item was added as 7.2 under Issues Affecting Diverse Communities. The agenda, as revised, was adopted on motion of Mr. Rissesco and Mr. Lahey.

2.0 DRAFT NOTES - MARCH 6, 2002

There was a question regarding whether or not the January 2, 2002 minutes had been approved. Some of those present indicated there had not been a quorum at the March meeting for approval of the minutes. There had only been notes of the February 2002 meeting, as there was no quorum. The Clerk will check with Sherryl Murphy, who filled in for her for the March meeting.

The Chair was unable to attend the March meeting due to work commitments. Mr. Canales-Leyton was to Chair the meeting in her absence, but explained that due to difficulties he encountered entering Duke Street Tower after hours, he missed the meeting. He apologized. Mr. Chedrawe filled in as Chair.

Ms. Thomas questioned those who did attend whether having Police and Department of Justice representatives address the Committee on **Bill C-36, the Anti-Terrorism Legislation**, had been worthwhile.

Mr. Lahey reflected that he thought it had been a good presentation overall. However, he noted that at the end of the presentation a statement was made that he had taken offence to, i.e. "The next group of terrorists might be blond haired and blue eyed". He pointed out that by making this statement, the presenters were contradicting the whole tone of the presentation to that point.

Ms. Williams advised the Chair that the meeting was taped by Ms. Murphy if she desired to hear the tape. Ms. Williams however noted the notes provided had been quite thorough. Ms. Williams felt the information provided had been quite valuable and alleviated a lot of concerns and provided good information to take back to the members' communities.

It was felt that there is a need to educate the community that there is no need to be concerned regarding the provisions of Bill C-36. For example, concern has been expressed about the whole issue of wire-tapping. When the police representatives

explained the amount of paper work involved in taking such a step, it was evident to those present that wire-tapping a whole community was not feasible.

Mr. Amari also felt the presentation to have been worthwhile.

Mr. Paul noted that the presentation clarified that the police will not be able to pick a person up and hold them without reason, which had been a fear expressed about the legislation.

Ms. Parris felt the Committee members had done a good job in posing the questions they did and the panel made a nice presentation. However, she felt the importance of educating the public may have been missed. She did not know whether this concern was heard by the panel members towards the end of the meeting, however.

Ms. Williams proposed that the Chair write the panel members a thank you letter and reference Ms. Parris' point. She noted that the Committee had indicated to them their willingness to be of any assistance.

Referring to the tentative arrangements made by Mr. Rissesco for the Committee to meet with Geoff Regan, which were subsequently cancelled, Mr. Rissesco advised that he had met with Mr. Regan and his Executive Assistant on this subject. He noted that the comments made by Mr. Schermberger, Department of Justice, at the March meeting, could be paraphrased as comments from Mr. Regan.

The Chair thanked the members for sharing their perspective. She will write the three individuals who gave the presentation.

3.0 BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

3.1 COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS POLICY/ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Circulated to the members at the meeting was a draft Information Report prepared by Ms. Jane Cale, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Lahey noted that he was on the sub-committee involved with this initiative and had met with the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities. If the Committee decided to adopt the draft, he would attend their next meeting, April 15th. Ms. Williams noted that what was being proposed was a joint statement which would go to Regional Council from both committees.

The Chair felt it would be appropriate to approve the draft in principle. She felt the Committee's concerns had been addressed as reflected in the Statement of

Endorsement.

MOVED BY Mr. Lahey and seconded by Mr. Rissesco that the Committee accept the Statement of Endorsement from the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

Ms. Williams advised that the Implementation Committee has changed its schedule to meet every fourth week. It is hoped that this change will result in more regular attendance.

She made reference to the Diversity Logo/Slogan Contest. Ms. Williams indicated it is still at the selection stage. She should have more information to report at the May meeting.

One issue that has been discussed by the Implementation Committee related to the lack of interpreters for the deaf at HRM events. The problem had been raised by a deaf member of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities with regard to the New Years Eve event held on the Grand Parade. As a result, a search was done of the HRM data base to determine what employees have some ability to sign. Discussions were initiated with HRM to determine how better support can be provided to the deaf and hard of hearing community. It is recognized that there is a limited number of professional signers and the cost of paying for their services must be budgeted for.

Ms. Parris referred to the Nova Scotia Community College's ASL program. She proposed that perhaps its students could become involved, thus providing them with work term experience. Ms. Williams referred to the concern that they meet certain standards and the difficulties translating for Council would pose.

Ms. Williams referred to Mr. Canales-Leyton receiving a Human Rights Award at this year's celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racism, March 21st. The award recognized his work with immigration and newcomers to the community. She also noted the involvement of Cst. Upshaw at the March 21st event held at the Dartmouth Sportsplex and special annual service held the preceding Sunday at the Cornwallis Street United Baptist Church.

Later in the meeting, Ms. Williams related to the members her concern that the CBC held its Metro Food Bank drive on March 21st. She felt this to be evidence that there still needs to be more work done in identifying March 21st as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and maintaining the focus on this date. Ms. Williams called the producer and voiced her concern that March 21st had been selected

for the Food Drive. Mr. Canales-Leyton noted that October 16 and 17 are the International Days re Food and the Elimination of Hunger. He felt the Committee could suggest CBC hold its food drive on those days in future. It was noted that the event had been rescheduled, as their regular Christmas Food Drive was cancelled due to a strike at CBC.

Lastly, Ms. Williams reported that she has just completed the first sessions of the second day of HRM cultural competency training. This is the first group to go through the second level of training. She felt this to be an important milestone.

5.0 **CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair advised the members that there is a need to hold an election for Chair and Vice-Chair. This item will be added to next month's agenda. Mr. Canales-Leyton questioned if the Chair was prepared to remain for a further term. Ms. Thomas noted that if someone else is interested in the position of Chair, she would be willing to step down. Ms. Williams encouraged the members to contact Ms. Thomas and any other members individually regarding their interest in these two positions in preparation for the next meeting.

5.1 **COUNCILLOR COLWELL**

Ms. Thomas advised the members that Councillor Colwell has resigned from the Committee. Although he has expressed continued interest in the Committee's work, other commitments make it impossible for him to attend meetings on a regular basis. During discussion, it was noted that information on the Committee can be readily obtained from the Committee's page on the HRM web site. It was felt there is a need to find a replacement for Councillor Colwell, as required under the Committee's terms of reference. The Municipal Clerk will be alerted that the Committee desires the Membership Selection Committee to become involved in finding a replacement.

6.0 **WORKPLAN - WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

Councillor Sloane asked that this item be deferred.

Mr. Lahey suggested that when the elections are dealt with next month, it might also be an opportune time to consider membership on the subcommittees.

In the interim, the Chair suggested that the Workplan Working Group try to hold at least one meeting via e-mail in the next month. It was recalled that the group consists of Councillor Sloane, Mr. Canales-Leyton, Ms. Parris, Mr. Rissesco, Charla Williams, and Ms. Thomas.

Referring to the October 3, 2001 minutes, it was recalled that main subject had been the HRM website and media as they relate to diversity.

7.0 **ISSUES AFFECTING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**

7.1 **ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION (BILL C-36)**

Refer item 2.0.

7.2 **SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT- DISTRICT 12**

Councillor Sloane relayed to the members that a human rights complaint has been laid against the HRM on March 21, 2002, associated with the construction of a Sewage Treatment Plant on HRM lands rather than DND lands. The proposed location of the plant is at the corner of Barrington and Cornwallis Streets.

She outlined to the Committee the failure of the public participation process, i.e. the last time community groups heard from the HRM was July 21, 2001 and a decision on the location of the plant was made by Regional Council February 26, 2002. She and the community had lobbied that the DND site be used. She noted that the actual complaint has to do with classism. She noted that most of the residents of the community are renters; they don't own their homes.

She indicated she advised community representatives of the date which Regional Council would deal with this matter. Only two of the four area representatives were permitted to speak, the night the decision was made. The reason given for Council's decision to build on the HRM owned site was to save money. There was a subsequent statement by the Mayor in the media that the issue to racism or classism had never been thought of in making the decision.

She emphasized that she just wished to bring the matter to the Committee's attention, so the members will be knowledgeable of what is taking place in her community. She noted that the Central Halifax Community Association and Barrington Street Heritage Residents Association are holding a meeting tomorrow night, at 7:00 p.m. in the North Branch Library to discuss what is going on with the STP (Sewage Treatment Plant) and associated human rights complaint. She encouraged the members to attend.

Mr. Canales-Leyton questioned whether the decision was reversible. Councillor Sloane noted the contract has yet to be signed. She noted that the Coast Guard site in Dartmouth and 360 lands in Herring Cove have yet to be acquired by the Municipality, but by proceeding on the HRM owned site on Barrington Street, it is easier to initiate negotiations for funding with the Provincial and Federal Governments. She felt that if HRM's Barrington Street lands were sold, a good portion of costs incurred to obtain the

DND lands could be offset. She noted that an impact study was planned, but had been stopped in the fall of 2001. The community did not find this out until January 29, 2002.

Mr. Paul questioned whether the lodging of a human rights complaint might put the project on hold. Councillor Sloane noted an injunction would have to be laid, which is costly. The members were given a brief explanation of the process followed after a complaint is lodged and the associated time frame.

Ms. Williams reflected on the failure of the public participation process, which might have helped put to rest concerns of the community, if there had not been a lack of communication. She noted the fallacies associated with Sewage Treatment Plants. Modern plants don't emit odors and are not necessarily a blight from an aesthetics point of view. She felt there is a need for the HRM to improve the public consultation component of its processes when large projects are being considered, to ensure the process is not only partially completed.

The Chair questioned what the Committee's role should be. Mr. Paul felt the subject fell within the Committee's mandate, given the location of the STP affects diverse communities. Ms. Williams encouraged the members to be cautious in how they deal with this subject. As stated above, she agreed there is a need to develop a community consultation process to ensure diverse communities are taken into consideration, ie. this is an issue of concern and something should be done to address.

Mr. Rissesco applauded the Councillor for standing up for her District. The Chair concurred with Mr. Rissesco's remarks. She felt it was very important that Councillor Sloane had enlightened the members.

The Committee questioned how the Committee might address the situation to at least show its concern.

Mr. Lahey reflected on how funds to purchase the DND site may have been allocated to purchase sites for a proposed C & D (Construction and Demolition Waste Disposal) site. As a member of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee, Councillor Sloane was unaware that this could be the case.

She referred to Integration Funds which had been set aside for four plants. Given only three plants are proceeding, she is lobbying that the \$1 million associated with the fourth site be allocated to District 18, to increase their funding to \$2 million. She noted that another Councillor is proposing that the \$1 million saving be divided between Dartmouth and Halifax.

Ms. Williams, in response to the Chair seeking direction, recommended the Committee

delay responding. This would enable the members to see what the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission's response is to the complaint. As an advisory committee of Council, she did not feel the Committee would want to be seen as taking sides and supporting a complaint against the HRM. In the interim, the Committee might wish to obtain more information from the CHCA (Central Halifax Community Association) and HRM. Essentially having heard of the human rights complaints, the Committee simply wants to obtain more information from both sides.

The Chair agreed that before she wrote any correspondence, she'd need more facts and documentation. Nevertheless, she felt the discussion today to be very helpful. The item will be put on the May agenda.

Cst. Upshaw referred to how issues related to Africville and the Prestons had been addressed in the past. He felt it would have been worthwhile to raise awareness of this history before a decision was made. It was noted that District 18 is not really a black community but diverse, thus the parallels would be difficult to argue. There is no direct tie in.

Councillor Sloane indicated that she did not wish to put the Committee in a difficult position.

Ms. Williams noted that there is nothing stopping individual committee members becoming involved. In the interim, the members were encouraged to become informed and encourage others to lend their support to either side.

In the interim, Councillor Sloane was asked to provide the Committee with articles from the media. She will also provide copies of a CHCA petition which earmarks where the process failed. The Clerk will provide copies of the report that went to Council.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Before leaving early, Mr. Amari raised the issue to the subject of school closures, particularly Joseph Howe School.

Councillor Sloane reported the School Board is considering closing three schools in Halifax. She referred to the importance of Joseph Howe and St. Mary's Schools being located in their respective communities. They serve a similar population. She referred to the multicultural emphasis of St. Mary's School and proposed the Committee might consider visiting the school one Multicultural Day. The third school, Ecole Beaufort, was identified as having some environmental problems, due to mold.

Reference was made to the issue of racism being raised. Copies of a media report on comments Councillor Uteck made will be distributed to the members. A press release

on the subject can be obtained off the HRM website.

8.0 **NEW BUSINESS**

It was proposed by Ms. Parris that the meetings start later. The suggestion was discussed and it was decided to start meetings henceforth at 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Mr. Canales-Leyton noted that he will be unable to attend the May meeting as he is visiting Chile. He reflected on his life in Chile and in Canada, the past twenty-three (23) years.

He also noted that an event is being held April 21st by the Centre for Diverse Visible Cultures at the Lord Nelson Hotel.

Lynne LeBoutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk