

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE JULY 7, 2004 MINUTES

PRESENT: Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair
Mr. Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton
Ms. May Lui
Mr. Shawn Lahey
Ms. Sylvia Parris
Mr. Thomas Rissesco
Mr. Wilfred McEachern
Councillor David Hendsbee
Councillor Debbie Hum

ABSENT: Mr. David Khokhar (Regrets)
Ms. Janet Spares
Mr. Larry Guptill (Regrets)
Mr. Nigel Allison

STAFF: Ms. Charla Williams, Coordinator, Diversity Program
Ms. Sherryll Murphy, Legislative Assistant

Table of Contents

1. CALL TO ORDER 3

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR 3

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES 4

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS 4

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES 4

 5.1 Presentation on Cultural Policy 4

 5.2 Post Cards - Community & Race Relations 4

 5.3 Alternative Meeting Day 5

6. ADDED ITEMS 5

 6.1 Future Work Plans 5

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING 7

8. ADJOURNMENT 7

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Williams called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Ms. Williams called for nominations for Chair.

MOVED by Mr. Lahey, seconded by Ms. Lui that Betty Thomas be nominated as Chair of the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee.

There were no further nominations.

The **MOTION WAS PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Williams declared Ms. Thomas Chair and offered congratulations.

Committee members extended congratulations to Ms. Thomas.

Assuming the conduct of the meeting, Ms. Thomas thanked the members for their confidence and commented that she believed the Committee was ready and willing to move forward as a team.

Ms. Thomas called for nominations for Vice-Chair.

MOVED by Mr. Rissesco, seconded by Councillor Hum that Shawn Lahey be nominated as Vice-Chair of the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee.

MOVED by Ms. Parris, seconded by Mr. McEachern that Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton be nominated as Vice-Chair of the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee.

A ballot vote was taken. Following the counting of the ballots, the Chair declared Mr. Shawn Lahey Vice-Chair. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair congratulated Mr. Lahey and thanked Mr. Canales-Leyton for allowing his name to stand.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councillor Hum noted that her name was spelled with one 'm' only.

She further commented that omitted from the minutes were her comments regarding adjustments to the Northcliffe Recreation Centre which had been requested to meet the needs of women of the Muslim faith. She requested this information be included.

Mr. Lahey noted that he used Shawn rather than Richard.

MOVED by Mr. Rissesco, seconded by Ms. Parris that the minutes, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Addition:

6.1 Future Work Plans

MOVED by Councillor Hum, seconded by Mr. Rissesco that the agenda, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

5.1 Presentation on Cultural Policy

Ms. Williams advised that staff would attend a future meeting to make a presentation regarding the proposed Cultural Policy.

5.2 Postcards - Community & Race Relations

The Committee reviewed the postcard noting the following:

- The Committee must determine whether they wish to use the postcard to raise awareness about the Committee
- Concern expressed with the wording “we ensure all residents”. The word “to “ is to replace the word “we” when referring to the Policy
- The web page address be added to the card - www.halifax.ca
- E-mail contact be changed to clerks@halifax.ca
- Address for Municipal Clerk’s Office changed to: City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax, NS
- Noted corrections to text to be made
- Bolder print for individuals who have difficulty seeing

Noting that there were substantive revisions to the postcard, Ms. Williams indicated that she would provide a revised card in draft form for the next meeting.

5.3 Alternative Meeting Day

MOVED by Mr. Rissesco, seconded by Mr. Lahey that the Community and Race

**Relations Committee hold regular meetings on the first Thursday of each month.
MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

A schedule of meetings for the remainder of the year will be provided at the next meeting.

6. ADDED ITEMS

6.1 Future Work Plans

Ms. Williams noted that the previous Committee had participated in a facilitated session during which there was some discussion of the future direction of the Committee. Ms. Williams indicated that she would provide to the Committee the results of that meeting.

A lengthy discussion regarding the future work of the Committee ensued with the following points being made:

Role of Committee

- What is the role of this Committee? There is a potential role in providing civic instruction to the diverse community
- This Committee is not only about race, but is also about community
- Other municipalities adopt a Task Force approach
- The Committee should identify where it is now, where it wants to be and how to get there
- The Committee needs to determine what is expected of the Committee and what would be appropriate for our municipality
- Perhaps implement study circles to develop recommendations to the municipality - this would involve a greater commitment on the part of members, but the number of people involved could be expanded
- This Committee is a tool which has the ear of Council

Issues on which to Focus

- Focus on diversity and communities where there is evolving diversity
- Focus on issues to better educate Council
- Assist HRM to support increased diversity in HRM
- Acknowledge that most immigrants are from countries of colour
- Identify issues within the community that we want to address
- Determine what the municipality is responsible for and what can be done at the municipal level - many of the problems are systemic
- Do our various forms of media represent our diverse community
- Heighten community awareness of the Policy and the Committee
- What is needed in 2002

- What do we need to be a truly embracing community as regards to diversity
- There is a need to have a discussion with representatives of the various religions and persons with disabilities
- Ensure that diversity is represented in HRM publications - Greater Halifax Partnership, International Airport, Port Authority and Recreation, Tourism and Culture
- Ensure that there are promotional materials to support cultural activities
- Suggest a second postcard/poster highlighting the cultural organizations within HRM

- Encourage a dialogue and share experiences and purpose with the Halifax Regional School Board
- Assist the Greater Halifax Partnership - How can we encourage more immigration to Halifax
- Dialogue with the Office of Canadian Affairs and African Nova Scotia Affairs
- Web site in both French and Arabic
- Encourage more women and more people within the diverse community to become involved in the upcoming municipal elections
- Hold a series of seminars/meetings on various topics and invite the public
- Meetings held in City Hall so that the various communities understand that this building is their building
- Funding is needed for community and race relations initiatives. For example, if an amount representing 10% of the budget for solid waste was applied to community and race relations initiatives, this would represent a significant commitment

During the discussion, Councillor Hendsbee noted that HRM has made application to be the Cultural Capital of Canada for 2005.

Mr. McEachern suggested that HRM is more monoculturalistic, due to the sharing of values, than is readily recognized. In response, Ms. Williams offered that there is more a sharing of practice than culture. Ms. Williams went on to suggest that this is evidenced by the cultural conflicts happening in the schools of HRM. Ms. Williams pointed to the Sunday Shopping issue as another example of differing cultures.

Ms. Lui commented that the differences in culture are significant. Referring to Mr. McEachern's suggestion that the Committee should be involved in civic instruction with the diverse communities, Ms. Lui pointed out that immigrants from China would not approach the government based on their experiences in China.

Further highlighting the differences, Councillor Hum noted that as per Statistic Canada's information, the second most common language in District 16 was Arabic. She went on to note that parents are experiencing difficulty with the school system. For example, many of them do not understand English and are not able to read the information sent home.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

As per the resolution of the Committee, the next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 2, 2004.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Prior to the meeting adjourning, members of the Committee noted the upcoming cultural events:

- July 10, 2004 Halifax Highland Games and Scottish Festival
- July 12, 2004 Pride Week
- July 31 - August 15 - Congres Mondial Acadien
- July 10, 2004 Halifax Dragon Boat Festival
- Lebanese Fesitval at the Olympic Gardens

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Sherryl Murphy
Legislative Assistant