

# **HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY**

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## **COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE September 2, 2004 MINUTES**

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

**ABSENT:** Mr. Thomas Rissesco (Regrets)

**STAFF:** Ms. Charla Williams, Coordinator, Diversity Program  
Ms. Millie Hull, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:55 p.m.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOVED by Ms. Parris, seconded by Ms. Lui that the minutes, as circulated, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

**Additions:**

- 6.1 Provincial Immigration Discussion Paper - Councillor Hendsbee
- 6.2 Possible Additional Role of Committee to Include Immigration - Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton

**MOVED by Mr. Canales-Leyton, seconded by Mr. Lahey, that the agenda, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**

**4.1 Postcards - Community & Race Relations**

The Committee reviewed the amended postcard noting the following:

- Add the word "Advisory" to read "Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee".
- "Community" to be pluralized to read "HRM listens to its communities".
- Text area to have a white background or a stronger text color for individuals who have difficulty seeing.
- To include the complete URL to the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee Web page - [www.halifax.ca/crrac](http://www.halifax.ca/crrac).

**4.2 2004 Meeting Schedule**

The Committee felt the Trophy Room was too small and agreed that, if possible, the meetings will be held in the Media Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, City Hall.

**MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Hum that the meeting schedule for the remainder of 2004 as presented, with the change in location, be**

approved. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **4.3 Future Work Plans**

It was agreed to consider this item under New Business.

At this time Mr. Lahey welcomed Mr. David Khokar back to the Committee from his extended absence due to health issues.

### **5. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **5.1 Review of Terms of Reference**

Ms. Thomas opened the floor to proposals for changes to the current Terms of Reference.

Mr. Canales-Leyton, referencing his added item on Immigration, gave a brief explanation as to why he felt the Committee should make Immigration a part of its mandate. He noted that due to the criticisms HRM has received for not looking at the immigration issues more closely, he suggested the Committee is suited to consider Immigration because:

1. the Committee has expertise in the area of race relations and how communities of different ethnic and social backgrounds should work together;
2. the Committee has specific training and knowledge or expertise in issues of Immigration.

He went on to note that he felt Immigration enhanced the focus of the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee. Mr. Canales-Leyton clarified that he was referring specifically to whatever the Municipality can do regarding Immigration whether it was to attract immigrants to the Municipality or to deal with Immigration issues.

During discussion Councillor Hendsbee noted that Immigration was a federal jurisdiction. He noted that the Province of Nova Scotia has put out a Discussion Paper on Immigration and indicated that it would be a great opportunity for the Committee to study and provide comment. He noted the deadline was mid-October and the paper can be obtained from the Internet.

Mr. Larry Guptill noted that, based on his experience in the field, one issue was attracting immigrants to the area and the second was keeping them here. He stated that Immigrants tend to congregate in municipalities where there are critical masses of immigrants already and the municipal and provincial infrastructures are in place to provide the support they need.

Mr. Guptill noted that in order to attract and maintain the immigration population, municipal services should be put in place to communicate with immigrants in their language as they may have limited ability in our official languages. He further stated that there would be a requirement in the school system to educate children in their own language while being taught our official languages. Mr. Guptil further noted that the municipality would need to look at making adjustments to municipal facilities and programs that are offered on a daily basis to provide the support that Immigrants need.

Mr. Canales-Leyton proposed that the Committee not abandon the role as Advisory to Council on issues of Immigration.

During discussion, Ms. Charla Williams indicated that the Mayor and CAO's offices are presently working on this topic on behalf of the Municipality and advised that this Committee make a request to be invited to participate in any forums or round tables on Immigration.

Discussion ensued with Councillor Hendsbee noting that the current Terms of Reference does not reference Immigration. He noted that the question could be the retention and capacity to serve immigrants once they arrive and how the Committee can fit this into the Terms of Reference. He also stated that this is an area where the Committee can recommend to the Municipality that they try to broaden the services to the citizens. He further noted that it is important for the Committee to give advisory information or direction to the Municipality and to whomever will be charged with the responsibility of bringing the Municipal Immigration Policy forward.

Councillor Hendsbee referenced the Smart City, Greater Halifax Partnership, radio ads regarding HRM being a culturally diverse workplace and community. He noted that he was unsure of how or whether the promotional information is being heard abroad and whether it was being distributed in appropriate languages.

Mr. Shawn Lahey proposed striking a sub-committee from the Committee members to evaluate the resources available to Immigrants and with a mandate to prepare a response to the Committee on how to incorporate Immigration into the Terms of Reference.

Ms. Williams indicated that, although a good idea, this may be creating unnecessary work for the Committee. She indicated that staff are currently addressing the issue of Immigration and noted that assessing what resources were available will be part of the mandate. She also noted that any new services would have to be identified through the budget process. Ms. Williams suggested the Committee keep abreast of issues, read the Discussion Paper, be available to attend the forum and be available as an advisory resource.

Councillor Hendsbee noted that first impressions are important and suggested that a request

be made to the Halifax International Airport to have their "Welcome" sign in more international languages. He further noted that the Mayor and Members of Council receive invitations to attend Citizenship Swearing In Ceremonies and suggested the new citizens be given a Municipal Welcome Package or a gift, for example, a pin and the Diversity Postcard.

Discussion ensued and Councillor Hum noted that the Mainland North area promotes diversity and working together to create a better community. She noted that diversity is not, however, as visibly promoted in other areas of the Municipality.

Mr. Khokhar stated that he had attended numerous meetings and workshops in the past to discuss how Immigrants can be attracted to the area in the form of sponsorship and jobs. He further noted that there is no security or assurances that Immigrants will obtain employment. Mr. Khokhar advised that our government and professional system does not always recognize other countries educational and training standards thus creating additional obstacles for Immigrants.

Mr. Canales-Leyton suggested the Committee request that Immigration be added to its Terms of Reference.

**MOVED by Mr. Canales-Leyton, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee that the Committee request Council approve adding Immigration as an area of responsibility under the Terms of Reference for the Committee. Further that the Committee advise Council the Committee is available to assist the Municipality in dealing with issues of Immigration.**

Mr. Guptill noted that the Objective of the Committee within the Terms of Reference covers the issues of Immigration that have been discussed.

Ms. Williams suggested that, rather than making an amendment to the Terms of Reference, a letter be sent to the Mayor, Council and CAO indicating the Committee considers Immigration to be part of its mandate and understand the Municipality is addressing the concern. Also, she further suggested the Committee make Council aware the Committee is available and would like to be involved with offering advice on this matter.

**MOVED by Mr. Guptill, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee that the a letter be sent to the Mayor and members of Council, and copied to the Chief Administrative Officer, advising that the Committee considers Immigration to be an integral part of its mandate. Further, the Committee request that members of Council ensure the Committee is informed of and actively involved in any development of forums in dealing with this issue. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Councillor Hum left the meeting at 6:30 pm.

Further discussion ensued and the following housekeeping amendments were made to the Terms of Reference:

1. Second sentence, add the word "*Advisory*" between "*Relations*" and "*Committee*".
2. Subsection 1.1 of Section 1 OBJECTIVE, add "*of HRM*" after the word "*residents*".
3. Subsection 2.1 of Section 2 RESPONSIBILITIES, replace the word "*citizens*" with "*residents of HRM*".
4. Subsection 8.2 of Section 8 RELATIONSHIP TO COUNCIL AND CAO, replace the word "*citizens*" with "*residents of HRM*".

**MOVED by May Lui, seconded by David Khokhar that the Terms of Reference, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **5.2 Review of Community & Race Relations Policy**

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

#### **4.3 Future Work Plans**

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting. Ms. Thomas suggested the Committee review the number of suggestions that were made at the July 7<sup>th</sup> meeting and review the document dated November 6, 2002 from the facilitation session with Ms. Kathy Brown. She requested that, based on the above, the Committee make suggestions on what the Committee can accomplish and to prioritize their suggestions based on the issues of today. Ms. Thomas also requested the Committee give some thought to how to communicate information on the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee to the diverse communities.

On another matter, Ms. Williams advised the Committee that HRM has hired a Diversity Consultant, Tatjana Zatezalo, and noted she will invite her to the next meeting.

Ms. Williams noted that HRM will be having its Fourth Annual Workplace Diversity Week, September 20 - 24, 2004. She advised that during this week diversity issues are reviewed within the workforce in relation to what we are doing and where we are going. She further noted that there will be a forum of HRM employees to discuss women and men in non-traditional jobs. Ms. Williams also advised there were other activities such as pot luck lunches where employees can celebrate and share their culture.

May Lui noted that the Italian Festival is scheduled for the weekend of September 10 - 12,

2004, 2629 Agricola Street, Halifax.

Ms. Thomas submitted a black and white copy of an advertisement from the "Citizens Police Academy" entitled "Embracing Our Cultural Diversity" and raised a concern that the embedded photo appeared not to show persons of color. Ms. Williams suggested that Ms. Thomas contact Sergeant Don McLean, Equity Diversity Officer, Halifax Regional Police to discuss her concerns.

**6. ADDED ITEMS**

**6.1 Provincial Immigration Discussion Paper**

Councillor Hendsbee requested that a copy of the Discussion Paper be circulated the Committee for review. He further suggested that the Committee forward a note to the Mayor and the CAO asking whether the Municipality was preparing to make any representations or comments on the Discussion Paper either through staff or the Greater Halifax Partnership.

On another matter, Mr. Canales-Leyton, advised that MISA had obtained funding to purchase an eleven apartment building for single immigrant men. He further noted the grand opening was scheduled for Sunday, September 12, 2004, Gebhardt Street (off Main Street), Halifax.

Councillor Hendsbee noted that the official opening of the North Preston Community Center was scheduled for Wednesday, September 22, 2004 at 3:00 pm. He requested the Diversity postcards be available for this event.

On another matter, Councillor Hendsbee noted that the Municipal Business Units will soon be preparing next year's work plans. He recommended that the Committee have discussions at the next meeting on how the Municipality can improve services to its diverse communities. Responding to the question from Councillor Hendsbee regarding how the Committee can make suggestions to the Business Units prior to the finalization of the work plans, Ms. Williams recommended that the Committee formalize their recommendations and then request a meeting with the CAO and DCAO for discussion. She noted that it may be more appropriate at the executive level to identify what areas should be considered in the business plans.

**6.2 Possible Additional Role of Committee to Include Immigration**

This item was dealt with under Item 5.1 Review of Terms of Reference.

**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for October 7, 2004.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Millie Hull  
Legislative Assistant