



**COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

January 6, 2005

PRESENT:

Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair
Mr. Larry Guphill
Mr. Wilf McEachern
Ms. Sylvia Parris
Ms. May Lui
Mr. Juan Carlos Canales - Leyton
Councillor Debbie Hum

ABSENT:

Mr. David Khokhar (regrets)
Councillor David Hendsbee
Mr. Shawn Lahey, Vice Chair
Mr. Thomas Rissesco

STAFF AND OTHERS:

Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Charla Williams, Coordinator, Diversity Program
Sgt. Don McLean, Equity/Diversity Officer, HRP
Councillor Steve Streach (5:10 p.m.)

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. in the Media Room, City Hall without a quorum present.

The Chair advised that the Committee had an invited guest which would arrive shortly. Noting that there was no quorum, she advised that she would not proceed with the regular agenda, however those present could bring forth any issues for discussion.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - September 2, 2004, October 7, 2004, November 4, 2004 and December 2, 2004

Deferred to the Committee's next regular meeting due to lack of a quorum.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES:

4.1 Review of Community & Race Relations Policy

No report.

4.2 Future Work Plans

No report.

4.3 Design of a Poster

No report.

4.4 Committee Members Biography on the Web

The Legislative Assistant will forward the biographical information received to date to Charla Williams, and Ms. Williams will extract information to prepare a four or five line biography on each member. The Legislative Assistant will then have the information uploaded to the Committee's web page.

Governor's Brook Subdivision:

Mr. Guptill noted that a proposed subdivision—Governor's Brook Subdivision—has a number of residents and groups opposed to its development, and he questioned if this was something

that was within the Committee's mandate to consider, from a 'community' perspective.

A discussion ensued and it was agreed that this matter was not within the Committee's mandate.

5. NEW BUSINESS:

5.1 Councillor Steve Streach

- C A letter dated December 6, 2004 from Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair, Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee to Councillor Steve Streach was circulated.
- C Copies of a News Release dated December 3, 2004 RE: Statement by Councillor Steve Streach District 1 was circulated.

Referring to the submitted letter, the Chair indicated she spoke with Councillor Streach after he received it and advised him that it reflected the entire Committee's concerns with the comments he made in regard to immigration at a recent meeting of Council. She added that she invited him to attend the Committee's next meeting to which he indicated he would be pleased to do so.

At 5:10 p.m. Councillor Streach entered the meeting. The Chair welcomed Councillor Streach.

The Chair suggested the discussion be an open forum, and invited Committee members to put forward their comments.

The Committee members addressed Councillor Streach, each providing their views on the negative impact that his statement on immigration has had.

Councillor Streach addressed the Committee, advising that he appreciated the concerns they expressed. He noted the situation wherein he made the remarks at Council, explaining it was a presentation to Council on a broader issue, in which he disagreed with some of the points of the presenter. Councillor Streach indicated that he became embroiled in a heated debate with the presenter, and it was during this exchange that his unfortunate remarks were said.

Councillor Streach noted the controversial nature of his remarks, adding that he has never received as much contact on an issue as he had on this one. He advised that in his six years on Council he has never said anything that could be interpreted by one racial group or another as being a slight towards them. He added that, unfortunately, a word he used during the exchange was interpreted as a slight and for that, he had apologized. Councillor Streach suggested that instead of looking back, he would like to begin to look forward and find ways to be part of the solution. To that end, Councillor Streach advised of an initiative by the Greater Halifax Partnership to embark on an immigration task force to look at the issue, and to make recommendations to Council and to the Province of Nova Scotia on ways to go about

attracting upwards of 12,000 new long-term residents to HRM. Councillor Streach pointed out that he is co-chairing this committee and he advised that he would like to have the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee involved in the process, by appointing a couple of its members to the ad hoc committee which will be established.

A discussion ensued, and Mr. McEachern advised that he was not satisfied with the Councillor's remarks here this evening and suggested that the Councillor needed to provide further clarification with regard to his News Release. Mr. McEachern added that he didn't feel things could move forward unless the past was settled.

Councillor Streach indicated that when he put out his news release he had apologized at that time. He added that at this point in time, he did not want to go back in history, but rather move forward in a positive way.

Some members indicated their understanding with Mr. McEachern's view but, on the other hand, they felt the Councillor's news release and his attendance at this meeting indicated his error in judgement and willingness to move ahead and create something positive out of the experience.

Further discussion ensued with Councillor Streach responding to questions.

Ms. Parris noted that Mr. McEachern's comments reflected much of the concern expressed and discussion held at the Committee's last meeting, and she thanked Mr. McEachern for raising his points.

At 6:10 p.m. Ms. Lui retired from the meeting.

Mr. Canales-Leyton explained a situation a few years ago where he experienced racial slurs and he felt so intimidated by the person he called the police. When the police responded they did not know what to do and were not aware of the Race Relations Policy. Mr. Canales-Leyton went on to note that the person who was making the slurs had been awarded a tender by HRM. He felt this company therefore was representing HRM and as such should be adhering to HRM's Race Relations Policy. Mr. Canales-Leyton went on to note that, at that time, he and Charla Williams met with HRM's Procurement staff and as a result, Procurement added a section to its Call for Tenders regarding quality of customer service. He added that he would like Procurement to state more clearly that the Race Relations Policy is part of their guidelines, and he asked for the Committee's support.

At 6:20 p.m. Councillor Hum and Sgt. McLean retired from the meeting.

A discussion ensued and **the Committee agreed** to discuss this matter at its next meeting. Further, **it was agreed** that Mr. Canales-Leyton would draft a recommendation for the Committee's consideration. He will forward this to the Legislative Assistant for inclusion in the agenda package.

Prior to concluding the discussion, the Chair thanked the members of the Committee for the open and frank discussion, and she thank Councillor Streach for attending.

Councillor Streach advised that he will follow up with the Chair with regard to the GHP immigration task force initiative and will have further information to provide the Committee for its next meeting. He noted that if a meeting is scheduled before the Committee's next regular meeting of the Committee, he will advise the members through the Clerk's Office.

6. ADDED ITEMS

None.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

February 3, 2005

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Sheilagh Edmonds
Legislative Assistant