

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 7, 2005

MINUTES

PRESENT: Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair
Mr. Wilfred McEachern
Mr. Larry Guphill
Ms. Susanne Wise
Ms. May Lui
Councillor Debbie Hum
Mr. Thomas Rissesco
Councillor David Hendsbee

ABSENT: Ms. Sylvia Parris (regrets)
Mr. David Khokhar (regrets)
Mr. Richard Lahey
Ms. Gail Wilson
Mr. Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton

STAFF: Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant
Ms. Charla Williams, Coordinator, Diversity Program

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:55 p.m. in the Media Room, City Hall without a quorum present.

The Chair advised that she was expecting additional members, which would give a quorum and suggested that, in the interim, Ms. Charla Williams would give a brief presentation on her recent trip to Guyana.

Ms. Williams advised that she recently returned from a two-week trip to Guyana where she was working with a development project under the auspices of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. She explained that the project is designed to strengthen municipal governments in Guyana.

At 5:00 p.m. Councillor Hendsbee entered the meeting.

Highlights of Ms. Williams remarks are as follows:

- C The Guyana central government appoints municipalities and they have proportional representation;
- C The political parties are aligned by race
- C As a diverse population the people get along very well except during elections
- C There has not been a property assessment in twelve to fourteen years; not permitted to add properties to their tax roles
- C Taxes are approximately \$11(U.S.) a year
- C Average income is \$100 (U.S.) a month with 40% to 60% going towards electricity costs
- C Few resources in their municipal government, e.g. finance staff do not have computers so tax bills are processed by hand.
- C Haven't had a municipal election in approximately fourteen years; therefore, do not have full complement of Councillors because they have exhausted the slate of people that had their names on the list as candidates during the election
- C Guyana is a very inclusive society - all groups celebrate the religious holidays of each other
- C Future plans include a couple of trips a year to train or bring resources and continue to help them with a municipal structure
- C Gave the Guyanese Ethnic Relations Committee a copy of HRM's Community and Race Relations Policy

Ms. Williams responded to questions from the Committee.

The Chair thanked Ms. Williams for sharing her experience of her trip to Guyana and

advised that she was pleased that she had provided them a copy of HRM's Race Relations Policy.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Chair noted a typographical error. Page 3, item 3 the seconder to the motion should read as Ms. *Gail* Wilson, and not Susanna Wilson.

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Hum the minutes of March 3, 2005 be approved. MOTION CARRIED.

Councillor Hendsbee - Information Announcements:

- C At the Atlantic Mayor's Congress the Mayor will host an Immigration Conference to be held May 15-17;
- C Councillor Hendsbee noted that Council members received a letter from the Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia concerning an organization's plan to host an event which would compete with the Nova Scotia Multicultural Festival. This organization plans to hold an Arts and Crafts festival on Dartmouth waterfront on the same dates as the Multicultural Festival. Councillor Hendsbee noted that it is his understanding that the Mayor and municipal staff were able to find an alternate site for this organization.

Councillor Hendsbee advised that he had another meeting which he had to attend, and he retired from the meeting at 5:20 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

- 5.1 Asian Heritage Month - May Lui
- 6.1 Regrets for Next Month's Meeting

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES:

4.1 Review of Community & Race Relations Policy

The Chair requested the members to review the policy and, at the next meeting, bring forward any comments or suggestions of changes to the policy. She asked the Legislative Assistant to note this on the agenda as reminder for the Committee members.

4.2 Future Work Plans

A discussion ensued with regard to the focus the Committee should take. It was noted that

there were various initiatives going on with regard to immigration, such as the Greater Halifax Partnership immigration initiatives and the Mayor's Conference on Immigration. Councillor Hum pointed out that this was something the Committee would appreciate being involved with and she expressed some concern that the Committee may be overlooked on these initiatives.

Ms. Williams suggested the Chair may want to consider making an appointment with the Mayor, along with Councillors Hum and Hendsbee to advise him of the Committee's willingness to be involved in this issue and to ensure it is not overlooked.

The Chair noted that when Councillor Streach addressed the Committee with regard to the Greater Halifax Partnership's initiative on immigration, he advised that he would keep her informed. She added that she is still waiting to hear back from him.

The Committee held a brief discussion on the various issues surrounding the topic of immigration and the Chair advised that she would take immediate action with regard to ensuring the Committee is not overlooked.

4.3 Committee Members Biography on the Web

Ms. Williams advised that she was working on editing the biographies to four or five lines, and will have this work completed by the next meeting.

4.4 Draft Recommendation RE: HRM Procurement and Race Relations Policy

Ms. Williams noted that at the last meeting, Councillor Hendsbee provided information which showed that the concerns were addressed in the Procurement Policy.

The Chair advised that this item can be removed from the agenda.

At 6:05 p.m. Mr. Rissesco retired from the meeting.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Asian Heritage Month - May Lui

Ms. Lui advised the Committee of Asian Heritage Month and the activities which are scheduled. She noted that it will start with an official opening ceremony on Sunday, May 1, 2005 at 3:30 p.m. at Saint Mary's University Theatre Auditorium.

Ms. Williams offered congratulations to Ms. Lui for the work she has done, noting that she has been involved with the Asian Heritage Month Planning Committee since its inception.

6. ADDED ITEMS

6.1 Regrets for Next Month's Meeting

Councillor Hum and Ms. Lui advised that due to a conflict, they would not be able to attend the May meeting.

A brief discussion was held with regard to determining whether the Committee will have a quorum or not for the May meeting. The following suggestions were put forward for the Legislative Assistant:

- C clarification on the agenda to respond if they are going to attend, rather than asking to send regrets.
- C canvass by e-mail in advance to see who intends to attend the meeting.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next regularly scheduled meeting is May 5, 2005

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

Sheilagh Edmonds
Legislative Assistant