

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

AUGUST 2, 2000

MINUTES

PRESENT: Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair
Ms. Sylvia Parris
Mr. Haji M. Amari
Mr. Andre Massicotte
Ms. Seeman Asad Khan
Mr. H. A. J. Wedderburn
Mr. David Khokhar
Ms. May Lui

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. Charla Williams, Coordinator, Diversity Programs
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

REGRETS: Mr. Canales-Leyton, Councillor Blumenthal and Mr. Gillis

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Meeting called to order by Chair at 4:55 p.m., Conference Room 1, 3rd Floor, Duke Tower.

1.0 **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was approved on motion of Mr. Massicotte and Mr. Khokhar.

2.0 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the June 7, 2000 meeting were adopted, as circulated, on motion of Ms. Parris and Mr. Massicotte.

3.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

3.1 **WEB SITE**

As Mr. Canales-Leyton was absent, this item was deferred. He has not been in contact with Mr. Massicotte.

3.2 **UPDATE ON PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED WITH INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

While the concerns identified by Mr. Canales-Leyton at the May meeting were forwarded to the Internal Communications Committee by Ms. Williams, she has yet to hear from them. She will follow-up.

3.3 **CONFERENCE ON DIVERSITY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

In her update, Ms. Williams noted that the conference she had attended was sponsored by the National Multi-cultural Institute, a not for profit organization. The conference focused on multi-cultural training. The four day session concentrated on developing cultural competency. Ms. Williams advised that she will be conducting a pilot session next Wednesday with the staff of her department. Hopefully, an ongoing training session will be initiated for HRM.

She listed the nine characteristics associated with being a culturally competent person, which are essentially associated with a mind set. She identified four key skills which would be addressed during the two day training sessions she envisages. The first day will focus on what cultural competency is and the second day the skills will be worked on. She envisaged the course being available to all employees, but it was more important that managers take the Day 2 training.

4.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair referred to the Chinese Dinner which was to be arranged in lieu of the July meeting in celebration of the Year of the Dragon. Unfortunately, May Lui did not have the time to coordinate it last month. It was proposed that the dinner/meeting be held in September at the Great Wall Restaurant, Bedford Row. It is anticipated that the cost per person, including tips would be in the order of \$20.00 a person. In consultation with the Chair, May Lui will arrange.

5.0 2000 - 2001 WORK PLAN

COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE BROCHURE

Mr. Massicotte was thanked by the Committee for his efforts in producing the first draft which was reviewed at the June meeting. Several suggestions to modify the draft were made at the meeting, but neither the Chair or Ms. Williams have had an opportunity to make the revisions.

The members reviewed the brochure once again to see if there were any additional suggestions. Ms. Williams circulated a brochure entitled "Welcome to Human Resources - FOCUS on Services", which was recently completed. The brochure was produced with the assistance of resources in Shared Services. Once the wording of the Committee's brochure is finalized, Ms. Williams was confident that some assistance could be obtained on formatting. The members indicated they particularly liked the use of contrasting color, associated with obtaining more information. However, Mr. Wedderburn felt that the pictures included were a bit small. Ms. Williams reflected that the font is a bit too small in her opinion, as well.

It was felt that some graphics should be added to the Committee's brochure. Ms. Parris noted that Helen Desmond might be able to lend a hand in this regard. Ms. Khan noted that assistance might also be obtained through Dalhousie's Computer Science Department.

Various members expressed support of the comments made at the June meeting but felt there should be emphasis on where and when the Committee meets and how to become a member.

The Chair referred to the 1999/2000 Workplan and encouraged everyone to bring their green folders to each meeting.

She noted that the above noted brochure had been included in the Workplan. The Workplan will be reviewed at the next meeting. The importance of the Committee focusing on the Workplan was emphasized.

Mr. Massicotte referring to the implementation of policy process, asked for an update from staff. Ms. Williams reported that a Diversity Week for HRM is proposed for September. An event will be held each day of the week to highlight diversity. She outlined planned presentations and events, including the Multi-cultural Potluck Lunch which is seen as a positive way for employees to share their diverse backgrounds. These events are seen as the kickoff to the roll out of the Policy within the organization.

Ms. Williams noted that the Implementation Committee has been meeting every two weeks and George McLellan, Deputy CAO kept abreast of its work. Mr. McLellan attended a recent meeting and he stressed that senior staff feel this initiative to be very important and he intends to acknowledge the work of the members in writing.

The Committee has revamped the original document into a check list form for the use of the business units. She emphasized the need to work with staff to recognize diversity as pertaining to many aspects, not just race.

6.0 ISSUES AFFECTING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Ms. Williams was pleased to report that the HRM has initiated **a process of consulting with the communities of East Preston, North Preston, Cherry Brook and Lake Loon regarding the provision of services, particularly Recreation Services.** Staff felt there was a need to develop some form of community partnership to identify needs and help make the enterprises a reality. It is anticipated that it may be a difficult process. She had sensed a lot of mistrust. The residents will want to see some accountability before they buy in to the process. Nevertheless, she felt this was a very positive first step. She expressed confidence that the HRM is committed to working towards the goals set out in the Community and Race Relations Policy. The Policy has set the tone for HRM and the Recreation Department has embraced it. She will keep the Committee updated.

Mr. Amari referred to the **recent murder** of a young man in the north end who he had known personally. While there are a number of witnesses to the murder, no one will come forward because of fear and he wondered if there is anything the Committee might do. As the issue is related to law enforcement, it was felt there was nothing the Committee could do. Ms. Williams felt that the members might wish to address this matter personally by speaking to members of the community to encourage witnesses to come forward or if they should meet Cst. Upshaw, express their support for the work he is doing on the case. One positive aspect of the situation is that the community is once again discussing changing things and taking back their community.

Mr. Massicotte reflected that the circumstances are not just associated with this district, but are widespread as criminals are not being prosecuted and people are afraid.

7.0 **NEW BUSINESS**

The Chair was in possession of a **newsletter from the Community and Race Relations Foundation**, Toronto. She briefly reviewed some articles in the newsletter and invited the members to contact her if they desired to read the newsletter. Referring to the web site address, Ms. Williams wondered if additional copies of the newsletter could be obtained. The Chair will look into.

Referring to the recent **Tall Ships** event, Mr. Massicotte reflected that it has been a fantastic success, particularly with regard to measures taken to accommodate those with disabilities.

Ms. Williams noted that HRM staff associated with the organizing of the event, met with the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities to discuss accommodations planned and solicit input from the members. She felt it would be nice if the Committee were to write a note, acknowledging the effectiveness of their contribution to the success of the event. It is always nice to know that ones efforts paid off and are recognized.

The Chair commented on the efficient organization of the Tall Ships event. It was first class for Nova Scotia and included something for everyone. A number of tourists and residents of HRM have expressed to her very positive comments about the event. All three levels of government ought to be commended for hosting this memorable event.

Mr. Wedderburn referred to the distinctive flavour of the community. Ms. Williams remarked on the DRUM production and the effective use of this common theme by the diverse groups who performed so well during the event. She noted that it is just as important for the Committee to recognize initiatives reflecting diversity, as point out omissions. She felt that the work of the Committee is the underlying factor in these efforts. Similarly, the efforts of the Advisory Committee on Persons of Disabilities are reflected. The two committees essentially hold HRM accountable. It was suggested that the Chair initiate a dialogue with the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities.

May Lui noted that the Chinese Society of Nova Scotia was one of the sponsors of the recent **Dragon Boat Festival**, proceeds of which go to Sports Nova Scotia.

Ms. Williams circulated copies of the **Natal Day program** to the members.

Ms. Williams referred to the **Advisory Committee on Persons with Disabilities** endeavours to develop a policy. They have been referring to the Community and Race Relations Policy as a guide and noted the reference to inclusiveness. Rather than developing

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a separate policy, they are debating meeting with the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee about going to Council jointly to propose an addendum to the Community and Race Relations Policy to address issues of particular interest to the disabled community. In response to a query from Mr. Massicotte, Ms. Williams noted that regulations pertaining to disabilities are outside the jurisdiction of the Municipality. She cited the recent controversy involving the introduction of low floor buses and the requirement that those in wheelchairs be strapped in. These regulations are provincial in nature.

May Lui referred to the '**Famous Five**' exhibit opening August 24th. The 'famous five' relate to the five women who were instrumental in overturning the BNA Act. One of the individuals being recognized, Emily Murphy, published books of a racist nature, particularly with respect to Chinese and Jews and the Chinese Canadian National Council has voiced its objection to her inclusion. They are also trying to get the Jewish community to voice its concern.

8.0 NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be held September 6 at the Great Wall Restaurant.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:30 p.m.

Betty Thomas
Chair

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk