

COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January 2, 2002

MINUTES

PRESENT: Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair
Councillor Sloane
Ms. May Lui
Ms. Sylvia Parris
Mr. Shawn Lahey
Mr. Haji Amari
Mr. Thomas Rissesco
Mr. Sid Chedrawe

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. Charla Williams, Coordinator, Diversity Programs
Cst. Cedric Upshaw, Police Black Youth Liaison Office
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

REGRETS: Mr. David Khokhar

ABSENT WITHOUT REGRETS: Councillor Colwell & Mr. Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton

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1.0 **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

An e-mail from the Centre for Conflict Resolution International dated December 27, 2001 was added as an information item.

2.0 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Rissesco advised that he had either attended or sent regrets for the December 5, 2001 meeting. The minutes of the November 7, 2001, were adopted, as circulated, on motion of Councillor Sloane and Mr. Lahey.

A typo was identified in the notes of the December 5, 2001 meeting on page 4. Mr. Chedrawe is referred to as Ms. in item 5.

3.0 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

3.1 **COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS POLICY/ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - UPDATE MS. WILLIAMS ON PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL**

Ms. Williams had no further update. She reiterated that it is the intention of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities to make a joint presentation to Regional Council with the Committee. When the report is ready for Council, regarding their endorsement of the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee Policy, they will undoubtedly be in touch with the Committee.

4.0 **COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE UPDATE**

In her update Ms. Williams noted that in the last HRM newsletter an announcement was made of the contest for diversity recognition material in which staff is encouraged to put forward ideas which could be developed into a brand. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2002. Ms. Williams circulated posters which will be posted as reminders.

Due to a conflict, Ms. Williams was unable to attend the last Policy Implementation Committee meeting.

FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES ROUND TABLE OCTOBER 2001 - OTTAWA

Ms. Williams provided copies of a summary of discussions which took place at the above noted conference for the members' information. The Chair suggested the members take home and read.

Ms. Williams felt the notes would give the members an insight into what other municipalities raised as issues. She felt it was very interesting to obtain an insight into the variety of roles other municipalities have. Roles vary from coast to coast. For instance, HRM has no responsibility for housing, while other cities do. Referring to the unpreparedness of municipalities to respond to the events related to September 11th, she felt municipalities, in general, will have to become more culturally competent.

Referring to page 2 of the Identified Race Relations Issues, Housing and Poverty, Councillor Sloane referred to Council's endorsement to try to help in some way, shape or form problems related to poverty and housing. An example given was the sale of a property on Wentworth Street, Dartmouth for \$1.00. She could find out more on such initiatives for the Committee. Ms. Williams noted that in this instance the HRM is supporting a community agency.

5.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

As the Chair was not at the December meeting, she was asked to report from her perspective on how the **presentation to Council** December 4th went.

Councillor Sloane remarked on how well the presentation of the Chair, Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton and Betty Thomas was received by Council. She felt the three members did a wonderful job in alerting the Councillors of what has taken place in the community since September 11th. She thanked and congratulated the presenters.

Councillor Sloane referred to an incident in which a gentleman spoke to her about his concern for the welfare of his children in public schools. He was enquiring if there were private schools where he might send his children. Mr. Amari gave Councillor Sloane a business card with the Centre of Islamic Development's telephone number on it.

Ms. Williams emphasized that perhaps the best route would be through the School Board. She indicated that she was aware they are dealing with some of these issues. She reiterated the need to direct people to the right people so their issues are dealt with immediately. Ms. Williams suggested a list of contact numbers be developed and added to the Web site. She volunteered to draft one up.

Mr. Chedrawe referred to the experience of his family with schools in Clayton Park. He referred to the diversity represented in this neighbourhood and suggested the gentleman might wish to look into transferring his children to schools in this area. Ms. Lui agreed that she has observed positive attitudes in these schools. Mr. Chedrawe noted that Duc d'Anville School was recognized nationally for multi-culturism.

Reflecting on her experience at Regional Council, the Chair felt that she had the Councillors' attention. She referred to people thanking her and the Committee for the

work the Committee is doing in awareness. She was still hearing accolades from the community which she felt was a very good sign.

Referring to last month's notes, she noted that it was suggested that the three presentations be added to the Committee's Web page. Ms. Williams confirmed there is a spot on the Web Page for Committee activities.

MOVED BY Councillor Sloane and seconded by Mr. Chedrawe that the presentations be added to the HRM web site. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Chedrawe had electronic copies of all three presentations. A discussion evolved on how to proceed. He volunteered to reformat the documents so there would be less work for the Web Master to upload/download them. It was concluded that once reformatted Mr. Chedrawe should provide to Ms. Williams and she will have the Web Master add them to the Committee's site.

A general discussion followed on procedures for getting materials posted on the Website. Ms. Williams noted that there is a desire for uniformity of design and issues such as readability for persons with disabilities have to be taken into consideration by the Webmaster. She felt that information for the Website should be directed through her.

Reference was made to the taping of the Regional Council meeting. It was confirmed that a copy was provided to the Corporate Library.

The Chair, in closing, expressed appreciation to everyone involved in getting the presentation to Regional Council. They had been very accommodating. In particular she thanked Mr. Chedrawe and Mr. Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton for their participation.

Ms. Williams felt the Committee may wish to take this tact in future if another issue arises, either to respond to a sudden event or identify something is building.

The Chair relayed to the members that **Mr. Massicotte** had resigned. It is her intention to write him on behalf of the committee and personally.

The Secretary was asked if any new members were appointed to the Committee. To date she was aware of one. There are still a number of vacancies on the Committee and she noted that applications can be received throughout the year and are dealt with periodically when the Selection Committee meets. The Chair noted that she had received an e-mail from an individual involved with MISA expressing interest in joining.

6.0 WORKPLAN - WORKING GROUP

In November a working group consisting of Councillor Sloane, Mr. Canales-Leyton, Ms. Parris, Ms. Williams and Mr. Rissesco was formed. The Chair was to be informed of their endeavours. The working group was to deal with diversity as it related to the HRM Websit and the media.

Councillor Sloane referred to an e-mail she had sent to the sub-committee members following formation of the sub-committee. Copies were circulated at the meeting.

Further work will be done by the Committee over the next month.

7.0 **ISSUES AFFECTING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**

7.1 **ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION - BILL C-36**

Copies of a News Release from Government Canada entitled Anti-Terrorism Act Receives Royal Assent were circulated at the meeting.

The Chair questioned whether pursuing this subject fit within the Committee' mandate.

Ms. Williams referred to the discussion of Bill C-36 which took place at the December meeting. She noted that a lot of people, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, are concerned about how the police will enforce the legislation. At the time the legislation was not passed and it was felt that the police might not have a handle on how they would enforce it. Ms. Williams felt this was another opportunity for the Committee to promote awareness. She proposed a roundtable discussion with members of the Committee, Police Services (including the HRM Police Commission, RCMP and HRP) and members of the legal profession (HRM Legal Services). She proposed that this format would lend itself to privacy as opposed to a big public meeting. She reflected that society is presently split on the issue. She expected it would take years to resolve this split.

It was suggested that it might be better to have separate discussions with the police and legal profession.

Mr. Chedrawe indicated that the majority of people don't understand what the effects of the Bill will be. Mr. Amari questioned the affect it will have on freedom of speech, etc. Mr. Chedrawe reflecting on the Committee's experience with the December presentation to Council, felt this to be a good opportunity for the Committee to do something positive.

In addition to those previously listed by Ms. Williams to take part in the proposed roundtable, Ms. Williams suggested a representative from the Federal Department of Justice, as she felt the goal of the roundtable would be to obtain as much information

as possible, so the members would gain a better understanding of its implications. It was decided it would not be necessary to include Provincial Justice Department representatives. She proposed a question and answer format be used.

The Chair indicated she desired a motion to be passed and identification of who will be responsible for the various aspects.

MOVED BY Mr. Chedrawe and seconded by Councillor Sloane that the Committee host a roundtable discussion regarding Bill C-36. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The following logistics were ironed out:

- C Ms. Williams will determine who locally in the Federal Department of Justice should attend the roundtable. A formal invitation would be sent out under the Chair's signature.
- C Meeting could be combined with the regular March meeting. Cst. Upshaw noted that March 21st is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination so it would be an appropriate month.
- C Location: Halifax Hall first preference, but if unavailable the Training Room, City Hall.
- C The members were referred to the Department of Justice website - www.canada.justice.gc.ca to obtain a copy of the bill. Ms. Lui asked that Ms. Williams provide her with a copy. It was not felt that the members could rely solely on the News Release, as undoubtedly it would reflect positively on the legislation.
- C Time and Date: Ms. Williams canvassed the members on how flexible they would be as to the time of the roundtable. She proposed it would be better to hold it earlier in the afternoon. In the event the date for the roundtable fell in the week of the regularly scheduled meeting, the Chair advised that she could not attend an earlier meeting. After the meeting, Ms. Lui advised the Secretary that March 14th was not a good date for her. Ms. Williams will check on the Justice Department representatives availability and advise the Chair.
- C It was suggested that it would be good to have someone from the Canadian Human Rights Commission in attendance, i.e. someone very knowledgeable of Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It was decided to invite such an individual to a subsequent meeting.

- C The roundtable be limited to a two hour time frame.
- C It was felt that one meeting might not be enough. It was agreed that perhaps a first meeting would be to gain information, a second to ask questions. The Chair felt it would be premature to hold the first meeting in February if this approach was taken, as so few of the members had attended the December meeting, when the subject was addressed at length. It was proposed by Mr. Rissesco that he contact Geoff Regan, an MP and member of the legal profession, who could answer questions on the legislation. Councillor Sloane suggested that any questions Mr. Regan can't answer could be submitted to the roundtable in March. They could be given to the attendees prior to the meeting. Ms. Parris noted that the members will have to do their homework on Bill C-36 and prepare specific questions. The Department of Justice website and News Release should provide sufficient background.

It was agreed that Geoff Regan could help the Committee in its preparations for the round table.

MOVED BY Mr. Rissesco and seconded by Councillor Sloan that the Committee invite Geoff Regan to the February meeting to give the members some information on Bill C-36 and answer questions. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Chair canvassed the members to see if there were any further comments. Mr. Lahey referred to the reference in the News Release that "The Anti-Terrorism Act includes measures to deter, disable, identify, prosecute, convict and punish terrorists... He interpreted this to mean government and police agencies could immediately interfere without going through due process of the law. People can be grabbed off the street and any problems would be dealt with later. He reflected on the problems the Committee has identified in HRM since September 11th, the majority of which resulted from individuals feeling that some people were a threat. He referred to the lack of understanding of diversity and he felt the bill will lead to law enforcement agencies infringing on the rights of persons. He felt the biggest need is for education and understanding is slipping.

Later in the meeting he reflected on comments related to personal freedoms. He was concerned that a lot of these freedoms could be lost under this legislation. He felt this is one of the questions which should be posed. He felt that when the police implement the legislation there will be a lot of latitude. He referred to the number of Acts changed and adjusted to accommodate the Bill. He also questioned how much the United States influenced these changes. It was felt this is another question to be asked of Geoff Regan.

Cst. Upshaw supported the suggestion of having a representative of either the Federal or Provincial Human Rights Commission attend the roundtable as they will have to respond to issues which arise from the legislation. It was noted by Ms. Lui that the Federal agency would be more appropriate as it has to deal with the Charter, especially legislation related to hate literature, for example.

Mr. Rissesco indicated he shared Mr. Lahey's concerns. He felt that the legislation must make the police forces uncomfortable.

Mr. Amari relayed to the Committee his concerns related to the passing of the legislation and he questioned if the Committee can influence its implementation. Ms. Lui noted that it is not so much the wording of the Bill, but its interpretation which is important. It is not likely to be amended, but interpretations of its meaning can change. Mr. Rissesco felt groups such as the Committee can have an influence on its interpretation, particularly from a law enforcement standpoint.

8.0 **NEW BUSINESS**

8.1 **CENTRE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION INTERNATIONAL LTD.**

A number of members received an e-mail dated December 27, 2001 from the above noted Centre asking if their services would be of benefit. It was noted that the Committee has no budget for the services offered by these consultants.

9.0 **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, February 6, 2002.

10.0 **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Lynne LeBoutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk