

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 4, 2002 MINUTES

PRESENT: Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair
Councillor Sloane
Ms. May Lui
Mr. David Khokhar
Mr. Michael Paul
Mr. Tom Rissesco
Mr. Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton

ABSENT: Councillor Blumenthal (regrets)
Ms. Sylvia Parris (regrets)
Mr. Haji M. Amari (regrets)
Mr. Sid Chedrawe
Mr. Shawn Lahey (regrets)
Cst. Cedric Upshaw (regrets)

STAFF: Ms. Charla Williams, Diversity Program Coordinator
Ms. Lynne Le Boutillier, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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Meeting called to order by the Chair at 5:10 p.m., Conference Room 1, 3rd Floor Duke Tower.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was adopted, as circulated, on motion of Mr. Rissesco and Ms. Lui.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the June 5, 2002 meeting previously circulated with the August agenda package, were adopted on motion of Mr. Khokhar and Mr. Canales-Leyton. Notes of the August 7, 2002 meeting were provided in the agenda package.

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES/NOTES

3.1 COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS POLICY/ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - UPDATE ON PRESENTATION TO REGIONAL COUNCIL

The Chair will coordinate.

3.2 MULTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF NOVA SCOTIA - REMEMBRANCE EVENT 9-11, 2001

Information related to this event had been previously circulated. It was an information item.

Mr. Canales-Leyton felt attending events such as this should not be used in lieu of regularly scheduled meetings.

3.3 NEW STRATEGY FOR THE COMMITTEE

The Chair referred to discussions at the August meeting that it would be worthwhile to set aside the October meeting to brainstorm for new suggestions on the future direction of the Committee, given its role in implementing the Policy has essentially been completed. She noted that at the August meeting, Ms. Williams had suggested that the Committee may wish to delve into, for example, why immigrants are not coming to HRM and if they do, not staying. Ms. Thomas encouraged the members to think about a new strategy in the intervening time, so an in-depth brainstorming session can be held.

Ms. Williams, in retrospect, felt the Committee had got off track when it assumed an administrative role in relation to the Policy's implementation. She stressed the Committee's input is valued and where its input would be most valued needs to be identified.

Ms. Williams questioned whether the Committee would like a facilitator for the October meeting. This suggestion was received positively. Ms. Williams will pursue.

Mr. Khokhar, reflecting upon his experience, felt that there is a lot of immigration to the area. Ms. Lui and Mr. Rissesco felt similarly. Considerable discussion followed on whether the statistics being used are up-to-date or accurate. It was felt that MISA might be able to provide more accurate information. While this subject was going to be raised under item 5, Community and Race Relations Policy Implementation Committee Update, Ms. Williams noted that an event is being held September 16th, 10:00 a.m., associated with Diversity Week. A panel discussion is proposed on immigration to which MISA is one of the invitees. Betty MacDonald, HRM's Manager, Financial Planning Services will discuss the economic benefits of increased immigration. Ms. Williams encouraged the members to attend the session in Halifax Hall. She felt the information would be useful for the October session. Ms. Williams felt there may be more events to discuss in greater detail. These events might be something the Committee may consider sponsoring in future.

There was a discussion of funding, or lack thereof, for refugees versus immigrants.

Ms. Williams remarking on the Committee's role, noted there are a lot of issues reported in the media and discussed at Council that don't come to the Committee's table. She felt it was the Committee's role to identify coming issues and identify areas the Municipality should focus on. The session in October would be an opportunity for the Committee to review and focus on what issues the members want to concentrate on. She felt the Committee's focus had been too narrow to date and needs to encompass issues of the broader community.

Councillor Sloane identified issues within the workplace associated with firefighters and her community related to the treatment of immigrants from Africa, who were residing in Uniacke Square, which concerned her greatly. Ms. Williams noted that the issue(s) associated with Fire Services is being addressed.

The Chair noted that the latter matter should be discussed under item 8, Issues Affecting Diverse Communities.

Mr. Canales-Leyton reflecting on his experience, on another Committee, noted that twelve years ago it was suggested to the Provincial Government that a deal be struck with the Federal Government to establish incentives to keep immigrants in the Province. He suggested that Provincial Government and Greater Halifax Partnership representatives be invited to the October meeting. He noted that the province used to have an advisory committee and provincial legislation requires a Multi-Cultural Committee but they don't have one.

It was not felt necessary to invite individuals outside the Committee to the October meeting. Ms. Williams felt the members may be misinterpreting the purpose of the

brainstorming session. Essentially it is a strategic planning session to map out the direction the Committee wishes to go. The subject of immigration was just given as an example. She felt the October session should be used to refocus via a strategic planning session versus holding an issue session.

The Chair emphasized the need to refocus within the realm of the Committee's mandate. She felt the session could consider the following:

- C what has the Committee accomplished
- C what has the Committee not accomplished

Both these points could be referenced against the Workplan(s) contained in the members green folders. In particular, she noted that communication to the broader community has not been accomplished.

- C how we got there
- C where we are now
- C where do we want to go in future - strategic plan
- C what should we be doing in the next year in terms of the Committee's mandate.

The Clerk will provide new members with work plans from the last couple of years.

Essentially the main focus of the October meeting would be on items 3.3, New Strategy for the Committee and 7.0, Workplan.

Councillor Sloane felt it would be helpful if the members were conversant with what areas HRM is responsible for. Ms. Williams suggested copies of last years Annual Report might be of use in providing a sense of what HRM does. For purposes of educating themselves, Ms. Williams felt it would be useful if the members watched Regional Council sessions.

Mr. Khokhar recalled there used to be Volunteer Appreciation nights, attended by the Mayor before amalgamation. Similarly, afternoon teas were held over the summer months, associated with tourism promotion. Ms. Lui recalled different ethnic groups hosted the teas, which showcased Halifax as a multi-cultural city. Councillor Sloane will survey the Councillors on whether they feel this practice should be reintroduced. Ms. Williams indicated funding would come from the Tourism budget. Mr. Khokhar felt these were very good opportunities for members of multi-cultural communities to raise questions with the Mayor and Councillors and members of the Senior Administration. The Committee discussed whether the Mayor and Council should be encouraged to resume these events. They were identified as events which help to 'bridge gaps'.

Ms. Williams felt if the Committee put forward a concern that the Municipality is not doing enough to promote Cultural Diversity, staff would have to consider ways to address and budget for this activity.

It was suggested that an alternative to these events might involve identifying special community events to which the Mayor and/or Councillors might wish to attend. The yearly schedule could appear on HRM's Website. It was concluded this would be a suggestion which should be brought up at the October 2nd meeting.

It was noted that a lot of the information pertaining to special events is on the Tourism Website. It was felt that a link from the Community and Race Relations Advisory Committee's home page should be established. Similarly, referring to some Districts having a large multi-cultural and ethnic community, a link to District Statistics on the Population page would be beneficial. Ms. Williams indicated she would be meeting with the Webmaster and will discuss. Reference was made to the Diversity Logo appearing on the HRM Web page and links associated with it. The Committee would be one of the links from it.

A general discussion followed on the best way to ensure the Mayor and/or Councillors attend special events in the community. It was emphasized that an invitation should be extended as soon as possible. A written invitation is not necessary, as the Mayor responds to e-mails and phone calls. It was felt that this is the kind of information which needs to be communicated to the diverse communities.

The Chair questioned whether this fell within the Committee's mandate.

5.0 COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE UPDATE - DIVERSITY WEEK/ANNUAL REPORT

Ms. Williams reported on various events associated with the 3rd Annual Workplace Diversity week.

- C Kick-off - She will e-mail a notice.
- C Panel Discussion on Immigration/Is Halifax a welcoming community for immigrants? Monday, September 16th, 10:00 a.m., Halifax Hall. Invitations should be mailed shortly. It is open to any staff. Ms. MacDonald is endeavouring to forecast things which HRM should be aware of for the future. A representative from the Centre for Diverse Cultures will discuss what new immigrants face in the settlement phase. Ms. Williams anticipated the event to take 1.5 hours and encouraged the members to participate.
- C Job for a Day Event - Gives staff an opportunity to work at another job for a day. Job shadowing will be utilized for some occupations.
- C Potluck
- C Declaration of week at Regional Council

Ms. Williams took the opportunity to officially thank Mr. Canales-Leyton for his participation in the logo contest associated with the Selection Committee for the design. Unfortunately, there was an oversight in the HRM Newsletter and his efforts on behalf of the Committee

were omitted. She will see the oversight is corrected in the next edition.

A brief discussion followed related to the design. It was emphasized that the four figures don't represent race, but diversity.

6. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair had nothing to report.

7. WORKPLAN - WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Refer item 3.3, New Strategy for the Committee

8. ISSUES AFFECTING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

8.1 PRESENTATION FROM DENISE IZZARD ALLEN

It was recalled by Mr. Paul that Mr. Lahey was to contact Ms. Allen.

Councillor Sloane provided details of the **incident associated with an immigrant family residing in Uniacke Square** which resulted in them being moved to Toronto. She expressed frustration that the circumstances had not been brought to her attention earlier. She felt there is a need for education, i.e. providing ideas and suggestions to, for example, church groups to deal with refugees and immigrants assimilating into the community. Ms. Williams noted there are a number of community resources available within HRM to deal with such situations. In particular, Cst. Upshaw's work in this area was identified.

Mr. Canales-Leyton referred to a similar situation in Spryfield. He also provided particulars involving difficulties associated with racism that a couple encountered in finding an apartment. Even though the HRM no longer is involved in housing, he felt the Municipality should make clear that racism/discrimination will not be tolerated. Proactive steps must be taken to caution people. He felt Council has to first acknowledge there is a problem.

Ms. Williams reflected that the problem identified with finding an apartment was a direct violation of the Human Rights Code. Councillor Sloane proposed that the HRM and Province needs to do something to develop a pamphlet/one pager regarding contact numbers to call in various situations and to identify a persons rights. Ms. Lui, reflecting on her work with the Human Rights Commission, recalled such material being made available at Employment Centers, etc. It was felt that provision of such materials at the Centre for Diverse Cultures would be advantageous.

Ms. Williams commended Councillor Sloane for her participation in the **Summerfest**. She felt it had been a very positive event. It was noted that the Uptown Policing Team had also been in attendance. A general discussion followed on the work of the Uptown Policing

Team and how effective they have been.

Mr. Paul referred to events associated with **Mi'kmaq Treaty Day**. Copies of the brochure were circulated to the members.

9. NEW BUSINESS

None.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next regular meeting date is Wednesday, October 2, 2002.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m. on motion of Mr. Rissesco.

Lynne Le Boutillier
Assistant Municipal Clerk