

Metuchen Human Relations Commission

Tuesday, February 2, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Call To Order: 7:38 PM

Attendance:

Members		Liaisons		Student Liaisons	
✓	Nicole Blankiet	✓	Sheri-Rose Rubin	✓	Max Rubin
✓	Richard Green III	✓	Robin Brown	✓	Michelle Tang
✓	Hazel-Anne Johnson-Marcus	✓	Edward Porowski		
✓	Lorraine LeSter	✓	Ed Zellej		
✓	Asela Mourao				
✓	Ozair Omarzai				
✓	Reena Wade				

Present member(s) of the public:

Bobbie Theivakumaran, Dan Cea, April Salazar, Caitlin Mollison

Reorganization

Due to the absence of a member at the January meeting, the commission voted to hold the reorganization meeting in February. Councilperson Rubin presided over the reorganization process.

Chairperson

Hazel-Anne self-nominated for the position of Chairperson. Nomination was seconded by Richard. No other nominations were made. Nomination process was moved to close by Father Zellej. Abstention by Nicole. Motion carried by all other members present.

Vice Chairperson

Ozair nominated Richard for the position of Vice Chairperson. No other nominations were made. Richard withdrew his name for consideration. Commission agreed to proceed without a Vice Chairperson at this time.

Secretary

Hazel-Anne nominated Richard for the position of Secretary. Nomination was seconded by Ozair. No other nominations were made. Motion carried by acclamation.

Review & Approval of Minutes:

January Minutes - Approved by acclamation

Council Liaison Report:

There will be a second reading of Ordinance 2021-02 at the February 8th Borough Council meeting which will permit the appointment of 4 new members to the Human Relations Commission. Mayor Busch is expected to appoint the following residents to the commission: Nadia Tariq, Amanda Lin, Andrea Orlando, Shannan Gonzalez

Public Comments:

Caitlin Mollison spoke on behalf of the First Presbyterian Church to promote the "Famine" event taking place on February 27. It is a one day event and will be partnering with Temple Emanu-El with the goal to raise money for food insecurity and poverty. The overall goal is to raise \$15k. The theme for this year's Famine event is food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic and aims to teach children about poverty, how to cook meals on public assistance allowances. She asked that individual commission members spread the word and consider becoming sponsors for the event. Those interested are asked to visit: <https://www.classy.org/campaign/2021-famine/c319432> to sponsor a child for the event.

OLD BUSINESS

Windows of Understanding Project

A subcommittee meeting was scheduled with the Metuchen Arts Council and artists to discuss and plan the February 24 presentation focusing on Public Health and Trauma & Recovery. Reena will provide Zoom Link for meeting. Tentative meeting date of February 16.

Partnership with Metuchen Youth 4 Equity & Racial Justice

After attending the Rutgers University presentation of A Dream of Kikeokàn/Kuponya: Black and Native American Healing, Hazel-Anne recommended that the Commission reach out to one of the guest speakers - Rev. Dr. J.R. Norwood, the Principal Justice of the Tribal Supreme Court of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation. HRC has an opportunity to make a significant impact in the community if someone with the knowledge and background of Rev. Norwood is willing to speak to Metuchen residents about the indigenous people who once inhabited the land we call Metuchen.

Such a presentation will also offer an opportunity to partner with Metuchen Youth 4 Equity & Racial Justice, a group of young Metuchen residents committed to promoting equity and racial justice in the Borough.

Hazel-Anne will discuss with Mayor Busch and report back to the commission and subcommittee formed to develop an event for Indigenous Peoples Day, October 11. April Salazar has agreed to help provide resources for the event as a community member.

NEW BUSINESS

Partnership Opportunity with Temple Emanu-El for a Black Neighbors Ally Conversation

Event details below. Richard will work with Dana Sheckman at the Temple to provide resources from the previous HRC conversation on being a Better Ally to our Black Neighbors and also work to help provide a flyer for the event. Temple Emanu-El will host and work with Hazel-Anne to develop the event.

Board Of Education Update

Hazel-Anne has been appointed as the chair of the newly-formed BOE Equity Committee. The committee will look into equity of school policies as well as work to fix smaller issues.

Free food distribution for all eligible Metuchen children has been made possible under a grant. All eligible children in the district can receive breakfast and lunch.

Mayor's Equity Commission Update

Chief Irizarry met with the Mayor's Equity Commission in the past month. He will continue to work to provide more information in response to inquiries from the Commission..

Metuchen Schools Liaison Update

Mr. Porowski has begun the Black History Month Principal's Challenge where during his evening bedtime stories he shares a word that students must record each night. At the end of the month, students will rearrange the words to form a quote from a famous Black American to be eligible for a prize..

2021 Event Planning

HRC has previously discussed developing 2021 events focused on anti-semitism, mental health, and other social justice issues, while still continuing successful programs such as Metuchen World Day, the ongoing Ally Conversations, Indigenous Peoples Day, Human Rights Day, and a LGBTQ+ Pride event.

During this conversation, April Salazar suggested a workshop focusing on nonviolent communication and being a better ally on Social Media. Although HRC's World Day event has always been focused on celebrating our cultural diversity through song, dance, food, and art, the United Nations' main goal for this day is to focus on Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. The Commission will continue to discuss how to adapt this event for the remote environment.

Richard and April Salazar will work together to develop an updated LGBTQ+ event for June (Pride Month).

Social Media Strategy

The commission has been asked to review its social media strategy with an aim to be more engaged with our community and to continue to improve its social media presence in 2021 and beyond.

Richard proposed developing an "Event Checklist" that subcommittees can use as a guide to the frequency of social media posts as well as contacting traditional media outlets.

Upcoming Meeting/Important Dates

Feb 24 - Windows Of Understanding - Public Health and Trauma & Recovery Conversation @ 7:30 PM

Mar 18 - How To Be A Better Ally To Our Black Neighbors presented by Temple Emanu-El @ 7:30 PM
<https://www.edisontemple.org/event/how-to-be-an-ally-to-our-black-neighbors.html>

Apr 21 - Windows Of Understanding - Climate Change Conversation @ 7:30 PM

May 21 - Metuchen World Day, details TBD

2021 Metuchen HRC Meeting Schedule

Mar. 2 | Apr. 6 | May 4 | Jun. 1 | Jul. 6 | Aug. 3 | Sep. 7 | Oct. 5 | Nov. 2 | Dec. 7

Adjourned: 9:10 PM