

Metuchen Human Relations Commission

Tuesday, October 5, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Call To Order: 7:36

Attendance of Commission Members & Liasons

	Robin Brown	✓	Shannan Gonzalez	✓	Richard Green III
✓	Hazel-Anne Johnson-Marcus	✓	Amanda Lin		Asela Mourao
	Ozair Omarzai	✓	Andrea Orlando	✓	Edward Porowski
✓	Sheri-Rose Rubin	✓	Michelle Tang	✓	Nadia Tariq
	Bobbie Theivakumaran	✓	Reena Wade	✓	Ed Zelle

Welcome to any members of the public/public comment: Hazel-Anne Johnson-Marcus

Review & Approval of September minutes: Nadia Tariq - Approved by all who were in attendance at the September meeting.

Report from the Council Liaison: Sheri-Rose Rubin spoke about the issues surrounding the safety of the Main St. and New St. intersection. All 200+ comments have been reviewed and the borough will make an official statement on the decision tomorrow. There were many allegations made which made it challenging.

There was an ordinance passed last week which narrowed the zoning laws so that the area being sold by private owners could not be utilized for factories or warehouses. One possible option is to develop inclusive housing for those who need assisted living.

Comments sent from the public:

- A mother in town, reached out to the HRC about a negative experience she had with a new business in town. When she arrived to pick up her food, she was asked for an order number which was never given to her. When she notified them of this she was mistreated. Her credit card was thrown back at her and the business owners threatened to call the police on her. She relayed that she felt her Asian heritage was part of the reason for the treatment she felt. She would like an apology. Many other mothers also shared that they experienced the same.

The HRC does not have the power to force a business to apologize, however, we may be able to introduce ourselves as the HRC and share some of the work we have done to help businesses. Reena shared a similar experience her husband had, however he was not disrespected like the community member who sent the email.

Reena suggested advising the Borough to conduct a training for the new businesses in town, similar to one that Hazel-Anne/HRC has done in the past. Sheri-Rose suggested making it a video training and/or perhaps offer it in person as well as an option. The MDA and Accessibility committee can participate as well.

Sheri-Rose suggested making the training mandatory for any new business that wants to open in town.

The Borough Council has a module training that all members have to take as per insurance requirements. This may be something that can be implemented for business owners. Sheri-Rose said the Borough administrator is a good person to discuss this idea with. **Sheri-Rose and Reena** will discuss how to move forward with some of the ideas discussed.

- **Breaking the Chain Club:** Hazel-Anne shared that an African American parent emailed the HRC with a concern about the language used to describe the Breaking the Chain club at Campbell Elementary School. The concern was that the description presented the children of Ghana as in need of help and does not acknowledge the richness of the culture in Ghana and that in fact many of them do not actually need the “help” of the students. While the organization has done an incredible job of raising funds and resources for children that have been trafficked in Ghana, the description is off-putting to parents of African ancestry who may not appreciate the portrayal.

Sheri-Rose recommended that we invite the club coordinator to an HRC meeting so that he can tell us more about the mission of the club. Ed Porowski was asked to invite Mr. Robbins and Mr. Barnes to the next HRC meeting to share insight about the Breaking the Chain Club.

-**Indigenous People’s Day:** There was an inquiry from The Youth for Equity & Racial Justice group about Indigenous People’s Day. However, Reverend Norwood is ill and won’t be able to attend an event in the Borough in the near future. The HRC will post information in celebration of the day and to increase awareness of issues faced by Indegenous people.

Old Business:

- Hispanic Heritage Month Event & Social Media posts - The Hispanic Heritage Day event co-sponsored with the MDA was a success with much positive feedback from the public. The Hispanic Heritage Month subcommittee has 4 profiles to share in the remaining 10 days of HHM.
- 2021 Event Planning
 - Indigenous Peoples Day acknowledgment, Human Rights Day, etc. - **Nadia and Shannan** can post information highlighting the importance of Indigenous Persons Day.

New Business

- October 9, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm: Tabling at the Farmer’s Market to promote the Metuchen HRC activities and to foster an overall sense of civic engagement. Hazel-Anne, Shannan, Reena, Michelle, and Nadia volunteered to take one hour shifts. Sheri-Rose Rubin recommended handing out a list of all the things the HRC has accomplished. **Amanda, Richard and Hazel-Anne** will work on a flyer to hand out. It will include a list of important events the HRC has contributed to and contact information. **Nadia** will prepare and bring the wheel for an interactive element for folks who visit the table. **Shannan** also recommended creating a calendar to share digitally in the future so community members have a heads up on upcoming events.
- Liaison Reports

- Board of Ed has nothing outstanding to note
- Interfaith: Father Zelley will keep us updated about the January 2022 MLK service at new Hope Baptist Church
- Other New Business

Upcoming Meeting/Important Dates

- October 6: Thomas Munday Peterson's Birthday (Social Media post & [link to the new Thomas Mundy Peterson Park in Perth Amboy](#)) - There is a new park in Perth Amboy that **Nadia** will post to let people know about.
- October 9: Metuchen HRC at the Metuchen Farmers' Market
- October 21: Metuchen HRC Scholarship Subcommittee Meeting
- November 2: Metuchen HRC Meeting at 7:30 pm

Nov. 2 | Dec. 7 |

Adjourned: 8:50