

**Metuchen Human Relations Commission**

Tuesday, October 3, 2023 Meeting Minutes

**Metuchen Borough Hall**

**Start Time: 7:30 pm**

✓	1. Suneet Bhatt (Member)	✓	2. Joel Branch (Council Liaison)		3. Joanne Cruz (Member)
✓	4. Khalila Cruz (Member)	✓	5. Laura Hermans (Secretary)	✓	6. Jacqueline Ho (Member)
✓	7. Carol Johnson-Fish (HS Junior Liaison)	✓	8. Hazel-Anne Johnson-Marcus (Chair & BOE Liaison)		9. Wayne Karalevich (MPD Liaison)
✓	10. Amanda Lin (Member)	✓	11. Tara Matisse (Member)		12. Andrea Orlando (Member)
✓	13. Edward Porowski (School District Liaison)	✓	14. Cantor Emily Simkin (MEA/ICA Liaison)	✓	15. Emma Staal (HS Senior Liaison)
✓	16. Nadia Tariq (Vice Chair)		17. Bobbie Theivakumaran (MDA Liaison)	✓	18. Bhavi Vyas (Member)

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

*Colleen Libertz*

*Shailen Gandhi*

*Alex Reisig*

*Melinda DiBenedetto*

**Review & Approval of September 2023 minutes:** Laura Hermans

- Approved

**Old Business:**

- Metuchen Land Acknowledgement Statement
  - The commission reviewed the current draft as a group
- Table at Farmers Market this Saturday 9:00 am - 2:00 pm
  - Spin the Wheel of Fun, featuring questions to prompt neighborly conversation
  - QR code display with links to MHRC website and social media
- Indigenous Peoples Day (October 9)
  - Social media post
  - Potential release of Land Acknowledgement if final draft is ready for release
- Human Rights Day (December 10)
  - Subcommittee: Nadia, Hazel-Anne, Bhavi, Mo, Jackie, Laura
  - Target date: Sunday, December 10 @ 2:00pm in the Metuchen Library Multi-purpose room (if available)
  - Story time for children with an emphasis on human rights
  - “Open mic” to share meaningful stories/poems
  - Art contest for youth up to age 18, art will be on display
  - 2023 theme: Consolidating and Sustaining Human Rights Culture into the Future
- Wellness Day Cancellation and Future Plans
  - Regretfully, this event had to be canceled due to inclement weather, but will

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be placed on the calendar in 2024

- Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 - October 15)
  - Social media posts featuring local business owners of Hispanic heritage are underway
- Thomas Peterson (October 6)
  - The middle name “Mundy” seems to have been the name of the people who enslaved Mr. Peterson. As the Borough moves forward they will use the name “Thomas Peterson.”
  - MDA event on Democracy and Voting Rights is scheduled for 10/14 from 11-1p at the new Thomas Peterson park on Main Street..
- Winter Festival Parade (4:00 pm on November 26, gather at 3:30 pm)
  - Laura, Jackie, Emily, Carol, and Hazel-Anne
  - Tentative: Khalila and Amanda

### **New Business:**

- Discuss 2024 Subcommittees
  - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. service at New Hope Baptist Church on Sunday, January 14, 2024.
  - Black History Month (February)
    - Member of the public, Colleen, shared a concept from another town where community members decorated luminaries with meaningful messages, and is happy to share more information.
    - Khalila will be on this committee, but we need more members.
    - Brainstorm event ideas
  - Lunar New Year (February 10th)
- Laura shared information about a new parents of LGBTQ+ Youth Support Group which will meet on October 9 @ 7:00pm at St. Lukes Church
  - The purpose of this group is for parents to meet each other, share experiences and ideas on how to support our LGBTQ+ children.
- Laura also shared that planning is underway for the Metuchen Family Pride Ball and the group is currently looking for an event space.

### **Liaison Reports:**

- *Cantor Simkin (MEAICA Liaison):*
  - Indigenous Peoples/Thanksgiving Service will be held on November 21 (location to be determined). This could be a potential opportunity to publicly introduce the land acknowledgement statement.
- *Ed Porowski (School District Liaison):*
  - High School activities are in full swing and student groups are up and running. The School District is excited for construction to begin at all schools.
- *Emma Staal (HS Senior Liaison):*
  - This week is the “Week of Respect”. The GSA will have an ID badge decorating station during lunch periods.
- *Joel Branch (Council Liaison):*
  - The Borough is very excited about the opening of the Thomas Peterson Park.

**Adjourned: 8:36pm**