

Metuchen Human Relations Commission

Tuesday, February 4, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Call To Order: 7:36PM by Hazel-Anne

Attendance:

	Nicole Blankiet	✓	Robin Brown	✓	Richard Green III
	Leah Jiorle	✓	Hazel-Anne Johnson	✓	Kevin McPeek
	Asela Mourao	✓	Ozair Omarzai	✓	Max Rubin
✓	Sheri-Rose Rubin	✓	Ben Small	✓	Jordan Valiquette
	Reena Wade		Ed Zolley		

Present member(s) of the public: Melinda Wilson, Director of Centenary Early Learning Center

Public Comments: None

Review & Approval of October & November minutes:

Due to lack of quorum, members will be emailed to approve October, November, December, and January minutes.

Introduction of Student Liaison: Max Rubin - As a person who lives with a disability, Max understands the importance of inclusion and working together to create positive change in the community.

Council Liaison Report: Sheri-Rose Rubin

- A new police officer was appointed by Borough Council on February 3, 2020. This is the second female officer currently serving the Metuchen Police Department. While this is a proud moment for Metuchen, Borough Council acknowledges that the Metuchen Police Department can be better represented by people from a wider range of ethnicities and backgrounds. Borough Council plans to research methods to attract a more diverse range of applicants by working with the greater Middlesex County community (Sherif Scott, MCDO Black Caucus, etc) to aid with making Metuchen a place people want to work and one that accurately represents our community.
- A new Borough Administrator has been hired to replace Jay Muldoon, Melissa Pearlstien is an Edison resident familiar with Metuchen. She has an extensive HR background and has worked with the Edison Mayor and Council for 10+ years.
- Jay Muldoon has been appointed as Director of Special Projects and will be in charge of projects like Forum Theater, Firehouse, Pump house, Federal Dept. of Transportation \$9 million grant, etc.
- Metuchen received a grant from the Census Bureau to promote 2020 Census Activities. Allison Inserro has been named Chairperson of Metuchen Census Committee. This grant will provide materials to educate the public about the importance of being counted in the 2020 Census.

Old Business:

Metuchen HRC Webpage - all changes with members,, terms, and minutes have already been confirmed by Susan Jackson and are just waiting to be uploaded at the same time as updates are made for other commissions.

New Business

Board of Education Report: Ben Small

- BOE is currently reviewing the school budget and will be reviewing all teaching contracts, which are set to expire on June 30.
- April board meeting will include student representatives to present their findings to BOE. Student representatives meet with BOE four times a year, instead of the previous once a year meeting.
- Several student deaths outside of Metuchen caused a number of Metuchen counselors to go out of district to neighboring communities to act as grief counselors for students, families, and teachers.
- BOE has noted a record number of homeless students attending Metuchen schools. It is not clear why this is occurring but BOE is looking into ways to best help the students in these situations.
- A District Safety Coordinator has been hired by BOE. This is an unarmed position and its purpose is to ensure that buildings and grounds are secure, as well as teachers, students and staff are educated and trained appropriately to handle emergency situations.

Metuchen World Day

Reena Wade did not attend this meeting and will provide an update at the March 3 meeting.

Drag Queen Story Hour

Event will be held at the Metuchen Library and occur Sunday, March 1 from 2:30 - 4:00pm. The subcommittee for this event is planning a strong emphasis on education leading up to and at this event. A Q&A session will occur after Drag Queen Story Hour to allow anyone attending to ask questions and get clarification on elements they may not understand that relate to the LGBTQ community. Councilwoman Rubin will reach out to the Metuchen Police Department about the event so safety precautions can be taken.

Collaboration and joint projects with Accessibility Committee

- Councilwoman Rubin proposed the idea of an “Ed Camp” that is structured differently than most presentations. Instead of having a speaker, the event would focus around several predetermined areas of interests and allows for participants to interact with each other to organically learn and understand new areas - a community conversation of sorts. The idea is to partner/collaborate with other HRCs in the county. This event has the potential to be incorporated with World Day or can be an individual standalone event.

Metuchen HRC / Accessibility Committee Book Club Event

Event will be held at the Metuchen Library and occur Saturday, March 29, 2:30pm. Robin Brown will facilitate the event and the book will be The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb.

Upcoming Meeting/Important Dates

- Drag Queen Story Hour – Sunday, March 1, 2:30pm, Metuchen Library
- Metuchen HRC/Accessibility Book Club - Sunday, March 29, 2:30pm, Metuchen Library

2020 Metuchen HRC Meeting Schedule

March 3 | April 7 | May 5 | June 2 | July 7 | August 4 | September 1 | October 6 | November 3 | December 1

Adjourned: 8:42pm