

Metuchen Human Relations Commission

Tuesday, July 7, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Call To Order: 7:36 PM

Attendance:

✓	Nicole Blankiet	✓	Robin Brown	✓	Richard Green III
✓	Lorraine LeSter	✓	Hazel-Anne Johnson-Marcus		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: Shannan Gelber

Review & Approval of Minutes:

March Minutes - Approved by Nicole Blankiet, Asela Mourao, Reena Wade, Robin Brown, Hazel-Anne Johnson-Marcus, Ben Small, Richard Green III, Jordan Valiquette

Council Liaison Report:

- Council planning to meet in person but still hold meeting via zoom
- Mayor has announced the formation of an Equity Commission that will examine use of force by the Metuchen Police Department
- The Borough and its residents continue to be faced by uncertainty of the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Black Neighbors and LGBTQ+ Neighbors Ally Series were very well received. Suggests that HRC consider other creative ways to address issues in the future.

Public Comments:

- Peter Hofstra emailed the commission his involvement with local Black Lives Matter rallies. Hazel-Anne will reach out to invite him to our next meeting.

Old Business:

Continuing Ally Conversation Series

Focus on marginalized communities as well as intersectionality. Conversations will be open ended, continuing and evolving as needed. Upcoming Conversation Series:

- **Asian-American Neighbors:** Subcommittee lead is Reena Wade
- **Disabled Neighbors:** Subcommittee leads are Sheri-Rose Rubin and Robin Brown. Will partner with the Accessibility Committee
- **Latinx Neighbors:** conversation during Hispanic Heritage month

Mayor's Presentation:

Mayor Busch discussed his decision to take [President Obama's Commit To Action Pledge](#) in response to the recent examples of excessive force by police against Black citizens across the United States. The

goal of the pledge is for each town to form a commission that will review their police department's use of force, engage residents, report findings, and make reforms based on findings and recommendations. The caveat is that New Jersey's Use Of Force policies are created by the Attorney General's office and universally apply to all NJ municipalities, including Metuchen. The AG's office is looking to establish a feedback session, similar to President Obama's pledge.

Mayor Busch expects that the Metuchen Police Department will be open to any constructive concerns that the commission brings to their attention. The goal of the commission is a holistic approach to seek input and get feedback from residents. The ultimate goal is to make reforms where needed and improve the lives of all Metuchen residents and visitors.

This is an opportunity to build a stronger relationship between residents and the Metuchen Police Department.

New Business:

Board of Education Report: Ben Small

The BOE has been focusing on many goals. Some that apply to our ongoing conversations include:

- Students are being trained as mentors to help other students when they see problems occurring
- Student Advisory Board focusing on microaggressions and how to teach, address, and intervene
- Expansion of restorative justice
- Extensive training for Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying since many cases go under reported
- The Curriculum Committee is looking to develop and incorporate impactful anti-racism efforts that can be used on-the-fly for students and educators.

There is a great deal of uncertainty regarding how schools will operate as we go forward in the pandemic. BOE is determining how summer and fall programs will "evolve."

Busing services are performed by a third party. The BOE is limited in what can be controlled in terms of student health and safety. Waiting for more expansive guidelines by the Governor. Currently considering eliminating bus services.

Community Pandemic Photo Book

Resident Audrey Hausser is working on a Community Pandemic Photo Book and invited HRC to include an advertisement. Deadline is July 14. Richard Green will work with Reena Wade to design an appropriate ad.

Student Liaison

Metuchen HRC would like to recognize and thank Jordan Valiquette for her service and contribution to the commission. We wish Jordan well on her next step in college. The commission will now be looking for a high school junior liaison as Max Rubin replaces Jordan as the high school senior liaison.

Upcoming Meeting/Important Dates

Metuchen HRC Book Club: So You Want To Talk About Race, July 28 @ 7 PM on Zoom

2020 Metuchen HRC Meeting Schedule

August 4 | September 1 | October 6 | November 3 | December 1

Adjourned: 9:43 PM