

Metuchen Human Relations Commission
 Tuesday, September 7, 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 Zellej |

Review & Approval of July minutes: Nadia Tariq - approved by all whom were present except those that were not present

Report from the Council Liaison: Sheri-Rose Rubin - nothing urgent to report at the moment

Comments sent from the public: There was an incident at the Metuchen Pool in August where community members were having a birthday party. The majority of the guests and the host family were Black. During the party, Metuchen pool staff announced a second adult swim, which the party hosts were not made aware of as it is not the norm. When the host of the party asked the staff about the adult swim, they were told it would be okay for the children from the party to stay at the shallow end of the pool. However, shortly after, another announcement was made that all children had to come out of the pool and that all visitors should “show respect and listen to the pool staff.” Then staff members came and spoke to the members of the party in a rude, accusatory manner and requested that the party leave the premises. The Mayor, Council, Borough Administrator and the Pool Commission were informed about the incident and followed up with an investigation. The Metuchen Pool will improve training for all of its staff and include implicit bias training going forward and will make sure there aren't arbitrary adult swims and things of that nature. As a result of this incident and the investigation, pool policies at the Metuchen Pool have been changed.

- The HRC will check in with the Pool Commission in March of 2022, prior to the beginning of the pool season to ensure there are proper guidelines in place for staff to avoid incidents like this in the future.

Old Business:2021 Event Planning

- **Hispanic Heritage Month is from Wednesday September 15 - Friday October 15**
 - The MHRC will highlight individuals from the community once a week during Hispanic Heritage Month. There will be a subcommittee for Hispanic Heritage Month which will consist of **Reena**, Asela, and Nadia. Some community members we may want to highlight are the owners of Pastry Lu, Hatch 44, Creative Twist, Leonardo Jewelers and the Metuchen police chief.

- o Bobbie reported that the MDA will be planning a special event at New Market that the HRC can cosponsor.
- **Thomas Mundy Peterson Day Saturday, 10/9** - Another Thomas Mundy Peterson Day is being planned to inform others about voting rights and to help register as many voters as possible. The MHRC can co-sponsor this event. MHRC may be able to have a table at the farmer's market for a few hours (10-1?). Andrea has volunteered to sit at the table. More volunteers will be needed once Hazel-Anne confirms the details with the Farmer's Market representative.
- **Indigenous Peoples Day is Monday 10/11**
 - o The MHRC can put out information on how community members can observe Indigenous People's Day - **Nadia** and Amanda can put some resources together to share
 - <https://www.firstnations.org/>
 - <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/11-things-do-indigenous-peoples-day>
 - o The emblem on the Metuchen police cars was not found to be offensive by Reverend Norwood.
- Human Rights Day Friday 12/10 - **Reena**, Michelle, Andrea, Amanda, Asela and Nadia will be in the subcommittee to plan this event.

New Business

- **Metuchen Human Relations Commission Scholarship Discussion** [Willie F. and Mary Fenton Williams Equality and Inclusion Award](#)
 - o Scholarship Guidelines & Sub-Committee - Ed Porowski shared that the guidance office is contacted in January before the award is given in June. Students can fill out a common application to be considered for the scholarship. We may want to require an essay and resume. Another suggestion in lieu of a common application is to require students to come up with an application specific to the scholarship so that they can show their strengths in regards to this particular scholarship. The MHRC should think about what prompt/question we are asking students to answer. Asela shared that on top of the common application they also have open ended questions for students to be able to share their talents and strengths. We may want to consider asking questions that help us get a clearer idea about the students' lives so that we can ensure we are giving the award to someone who truly deserves it.
 - o Metuchen High School's Scholarship page: <https://www.metuchenschools.org/o/mhs/page/scholarships>
 - o Subcommittee for scholarship: **Hazel-Anne**, Asela, Ed Zellej, and Michelle (to help develop the application) as well as Reena and Nadia (to help read essays).
 - September to December - MHRC will think about what question / application process they will require students to complete.
 - January - Guidance offices are notified of the scholarship
 - March - Information about scholarship is shared with students

- April-May - The committee reviews applications, ranks them and makes a decision on the winner(s).
 - June - The scholarship is given to the chosen student(s).
- Liaison updates -
 - New Liaisons Recommended to the Mayor & Council
 - Dylan Jaques (Junior HS Liaison) - will join us in October
 - MDA - Bobbie Theivakumaran (Metuchen Downtown Alliance): Asbury Park had an event where traditional photographs were taken with individuals of diverse backgrounds. This would be something the MDA in conjunction with the Metuchen Arts Council can help do with diverse members of our community in Metuchen. This is a long term project that the MDA will continue to update the MHRC on.
<https://apboardwalk.com/news/2019/08/22/art-lives-here/>
 - Board of Ed - Hazel-Anne: Preparations for the start of the school year are well underway, guidance about ensuring that students who are quarantined due to exposure will still be allowed to participate in class via Google Classroom as long as they are well enough to do so. Governor Murphy's executive orders mandates mask-wearing in all of our buildings and that all teachers and staff are vaccinated or tested weekly. There was a very informational webinar hosted on 8/23 that is available for viewing on the website.
- Other New Business
 - The Metuchen Farmers' Market has asked if we wanted to have a table at the farmer's market to raise awareness about our commission and events. The MHRC will choose one Saturday a month to have a table at the farmer's table where members can rotate shifts. Hazel-Anne will contact the farmer's market representative to convey the MHRC's agreement and get further details.

Upcoming Meeting/Important Dates

- September 15 - October 15: Hispanic Heritage Month
- October 5: Metuchen HRC Meeting at 7:30 pm
- October 9 : Thomas Mundy Peterson Day
- October 11: Indigenous People's Day

2021 Metuchen HRC Meeting Schedule

Oct. 5 | Nov. 2 | Dec. 7 |

Adjourned: 8:56