

**MEETING MINUTES FROM A REGULAR MEETING OF THE
MULTICULTURAL INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

HELD AT 7:00 P.M. ON FEBRUARY 24, 2024

VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

A. CALL TO ORDER *meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm by Michele Gruet.*

B. STATEMENT REGARDING PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT - read by Michele Gruet.

The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been satisfied with respect to this meeting of the Multicultural Inclusion & Accessibility Advisory Committee which is being held via Zoom video conferencing. This information, along with the public internet link and telephone call-in information was posted in the Municipal Building, and sent the official newspapers of the Township, the Verona-Cedar Grove Times and the Star Ledger and MyVeronaNJ.com, TAPinto and the Patch, the official online news source(s) of the Township, at least 48 hours preceding the start time of this meeting. A public comment period will be held in the order it is listed on the meeting agenda and instructions on how to comment will be provided at the appropriate time.

C. ROLL CALL

Present:

Michele Gruet
Kathleen Francis
Carla Buglione
Kristen Dunleavy
Roxanna Tirado
Rita Chevalier
John Vajda
Michelle O'Neill
Christine McGrath - Council Representative

Absent:

Wesley Tahsir-Rodriguez
Claudine Pascale - Verona Public Library
Elisa Northrop - Public Information Officer
Diane DiGiuseppe - Superintendent of School
David Rowbotham - Interim Director of Community Services & Recreation

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the January 24th meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

REPRESENTATIVE UPDATES

- Christine McGrath – C.McGrath discussed a DEI event, called Speak Up, occurring at Verona High School on 3/7/24, from 6:30p-8:30p. The event will discuss how to address challenges. M.Gruet to look into if this event is open to all or just parents of students. C.McGrath gave an update on the discussions with town council on budget. C.McGrath stated that there is a clear budget process in place for 2024 (E.Northrop can provide additional context). Any police presence or grounds crew would require additional approval.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion:

Volunteer Recruitment

- K.Francis, K.Dunleavy, & M.O'Neill gave an update on efforts made on volunteer recruitment. K.Dunleavy shared that there were 13 individuals that expressed an interest in volunteering. K.Francis circulated a draft of the response to go to all who applied to volunteer to ensure all applicants were aware of receipt. K.Francis asked the committee to weigh in on the amount of volunteers for each event and whether there should be a limit. The committee was also asked if individuals were needed in the planning portion of the events and the consensus was no. M.Gruet stated that she felt it was best to only have help the day of. K.Francis & K.Dunleavy to update form to clarify volunteer roles focused on event support. M.O'Neill stated that she would follow up with guidance at the high school to see if the committee can engage those high school students with interest to join the committee or volunteer some hours.
- Two events were recognized: Lunar New Year (supportive) and Black History Month. Committee shared that it was great to see diverse Verona residents supporting these events that were incredible. Committee shared that the collaboration with the library was great. Congressman Payne highlighted Mr. Brown as an honoree for his annual Black History event.
- The upcoming Women of Impact Panel event will be Sunday, March 10th, at 3pm, at the Verona Community Center. A large number of nominations were reported as being received. This made for a robust selection discussion by the subcommittee. Six women were reached out to and five agreed to be on the panel.

The Library will do the first public announcement and the town will make their announcement. The chosen women were C.McGrath, Kristen Donohue, Sarina Knoetig, Alison Mackey, and Kate Hardwyck. C.Buglione will moderate. Each individual will receive questions to make it more intentional versus every panelist answering every question. All panelists will be asked to submit a bio. The theme was discussed, "Women who advocate for equity, diversity, and inclusion."

- New ideas were discussed for Older Americans Month and this included an Art Therapy event. Subcommittee to further discuss and bring back to committee.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Meeting was adjourned at 8:23pm.