

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

HELD AT 7:00 P.M. ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

A. CALL TO ORDER *meeting was called to order at 7:04 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

Rita Chevalier

Michelle O'Neill

AJ Kiernan

John Vajda

Tovah Kopan

Michael McMahon - Verona Recreation

Christine McGrath - Council Representative

Absent:

Roxanna Tirado

Wesley Tahsir-Rodriguez

Claudine Pascale - Verona Public Library

Diane DiGiuseppe - Superintendent of School

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Augst 28th Meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

REPRESENTATIVE UPDATES

- Recreation Update: M.McMahon provided an update on the Verona Inclusive Playground and Fitness Center and stated that the finishing touches are being done this week and that the ADA accessible bathroom will be delivered shortly. The ribbon cutting ceremony will be held on 10/7 at 6pm. M. McMahon sent an invitation to R.Tirado inviting all MIAAC members to the ribbon cutting ceremony. M.O'Neill provided feedback to M.McMahon on inclusive recreation programs, specifically related to communication and transparency around the programs being inclusive. M.McMahon was very receptive in working with the public to ensure that the communication is available for all and received feedback on collaborating with groups, including CHILD, to ensure information gets to the community. M.Gruet also gave a suggestion of utilizing the "Friday Folder" that goes to all Verona public school students.
- C.McGrath: C.McGrath stated that she did not yet introduce an attendance policy for volunteers but will circulate once this is in progress. C.McGrath also echoed the ribbon cutting ceremony M.McMahon provided an update on regarding the Inclusive Playground and Fitness Center. C.McGrath stated that she planned on also inviting former MIAAC members to this event. C.McGrath stated that Verona applied for a grant to make Verona more "age friendly." The next update was on traffic and safety, specific to Linden. The goal is to make Verona more walkable and accessible. Additional updates will be provided. C.McGrath encouraged all to complete the pool survey and stated that there were additional grants that Verona can apply for which would make the pool more accessible, specifically discussing the gazebo. R.Chevalier asked about the art tent and C.McGrath stated that this has also been identified as an area of opportunity in regard to accessibility. C.McGrath provided an update on the affordable housing in Verona, stating that the applications are coming out soon and that an email just went out to those on the waiting list. C.McGrath reminded committee that there are ADA accessible units available.

NEW BUSINESS

- Blue Envelope Program: M.Gruet gave an update to the committee about the letter that she drafted and sent to Chief Kiernan regarding having Verona adopt the Blue Envelope Program. The letter was sent (via email) on 9/12/24. M.Gruet is waiting for a response. C.McGrath mentioned following up with an additional email.

- Hispanic Heritage Month: R.Chevalier provided an update on Hispanic Heritage Month that kicked off September 15th and that goes through October 15th. An email was sent out on 9/19 with the announcement. An event will take place (co-sponsored with the Library) on 10/5 from 3p to 4p in the library. There will be a listening party with Cocotazo Media, in addition to crafts and appetizers available for attendees. Delcampo pizza is another sponsor. Flyers were posted on social media to publicize the event. The flyers were available in English and Spanish.
- Other Q4 Events: J.Vajda provided an update on the Diwali event stating that there was is a Zoom meeting scheduled for tomorrow with Toral Patel and other members of the subcommittee to determine a date for the Diwali event. C.McGrath reported that C.Pasquale will be in attendance, as well. J.Vajda also stated that he will be in attendance of the Hanukkah event and J.Vajda will reach out to E.Northrope to ask if any assistance is needed of MIAAC. M.Gruet and M.O'Neill provided an update on Fair in the Square and the special photo session with Santa. The date is 12/7. Other information will be finalized, including ensuring that water and candy canes are available and in order to ensure the communication goes out to the community. M.O'Neill will reach out to Elisa to finalize plans and will provide an update to the committee next meeting.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Meeting was adjourned at 7:34pm.