



## RACE RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Zoom Meeting

September 13, 2021

6:00 p.m.

### MINUTES

<b><i>Attendance:</i></b>	
<u>Committee</u>	<u>Regrets</u>
Darius Sookram, Chair Nayani Nandakumar, Vice Chair Claudette Rutherford Danielle Russell Edward Choi left the meeting at 6:24 PM Madge Logan Sujane Kandasamy Tamarie Warner Mohamad Mtairek Hamza Sivanathan left the meeting at 7:30 PM Faiz Mohyuddin left the meeting at 7:35 PM Suat Kenar Councillor Isa Lee	
<u>Guests</u>	
Alicia Lauzon, York Regional Police (YRP)	
<u>Staff</u>	
Joanne Kinya Baker, Staff Liaison (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Specialist) Mona Nazif, Staff Liaison (Senior Manager, Human Resources) Hristina Giantsopoulos, Election and Committee Coordinator	

## **1. Chair's Opening Remarks**

Vice Chair, Nayani Nandakumar called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM and read the City of Markham Indigenous Land Acknowledgement. Vice Chair, Nayani Nandakumar, presided as Chair for this meeting for Darius Sookram as he lost his voice and was unable to speak.

## **2. Adoption of Agenda**

**Moved by** Suat Kenar

**Seconded by** Councillor Isa Lee

That the September 13, 2021 Race Relations meeting Agenda be adopted.

**Carried**

## **3. Approval of Minutes from the June 7, 2021 Race Relations Meeting**

**Moved by** Danielle Russell

**Seconded by** Mohamad Mtairek

That the June 7, 2021 Race Relations Committee Minutes be adopted.

**Carried**

## **4. Introduction to the City's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Specialist: Joanne Kinya Baker**

The Committee welcomed Joanne Kinya Baker to the Race Relations Committee and indicated that they are looking forward to working with her.

Joanne Kinya Baker addressed the Committee and thanked members for the warm welcome. She stated that she is of African Kenyan origin who is Canadian and also looking forward to working with the Committee to help learn and advance understanding of diversity, equity and anti-racism.

## **5. Anti-Racism Resolution Update**

Staff advised that this resolution was presented as part of the June 7, 2021 Race Relations Committee Meeting Minutes at the July 13, 2021 General Committee Meeting and was referred to staff. Joanne Kinya Baker indicated that it is being reviewed by staff and will be placed on a fall General Committee Meeting Agenda.

## **6. Update on the City's diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism activities:**

### **a. September 30- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**

Joanne Kinya Baker noted that the City is taking steps towards truth and reconciliation with organized events for staff and the public and that information on these events will be available on the library website. Staff are working towards diversifying communications and have retained an Indigenous consultant to assist with focusing on the truth piece as the City moves forward to reconciliation. She also noted that when we know better, we do better.

The Committee indicated that they would like to see an increase in City communications relating to domestic and global events related to diversity, equity, inclusion and racism.

b. Mayor's Black Youth Liaison Committee

Staff indicated that the Mayor's Black Youth Liaison Committee has begun to meet and are working on shaping their vision and direction.

c. Diversity Action Plan and Anti-Black Racism Action Plan

Joanne Kinya Baker advised that there will be a focus group approach to determine actions going forward and that members of Council and all advisory committees will have the opportunity to participate in this process. The objective will be to use the findings to generate discussions with members of the Black community and the community at large. Additionally, the Race Relations Committee will have a role to review the online survey questions that will be used to create an evidence based, community focused and flexible plan as things evolve.

Staff further noted that the process for the updated Diversity Action Plan and Anti-Black Racism Action Plan will soon be presented at an upcoming General Committee meeting and that the Ted Rogers School of Management Diversity Institute was selected as the vendor to undertake this initiative.

Claudette Rutherford inquired whether the Diversity Action Plan Update and Anti-Black Racism Action Plan will be addressed together by the Diversity Institute and expressed that the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion are different and should be treated independently of one another. She further noted that consideration be made to the process and framework as they differ for both initiatives and the importance of having the work done by Black people.

Darius Sookram expressed concerns that the Race Relations Committee be permitted to participate in the process sooner, and that the process reflect all identities to ensure that all voices are heard. Staff confirmed that this will occur.

Staff indicated that these two initiatives will be addressed as part of this strategic process and that the City and the consultants have developed shared language and are including intersectionality as part of the process. The objective through the sharing of community member experiences is to continue to create a community where everyone has a sense of belonging.

d. Other

Committee members were advised that there may be opportunities to offer mentorship and career shadowing to youth members of the community. The Committee indicated that they would be happy to assist in this regard.

## **7. RRC support for Indigenous Children Victims and Survivors.**

The Committee suggested that members share any resources that support community organizations to support Indigenous Victims and Survivors via email. The Committee made a friendly edit to the previous resolution.

Moved by Danielle Russell  
Seconded by Mohamad Mtairek

**That the friendly amendment in the first line be reflected in the June 7, 2021 version of this resolution.**

**Carried**

**Moved By** Danielle Russell  
**Seconded By** Mohamad Mtairek

*Whereas Indigenous Children were found at the mass grave sites at residential schools across Canada; and,*

**Whereas truth and reconciliation has been an important national narrative and that the City of Markham is committed to all 94 Call to Action items; and,**

**Whereas Call to Action item #75 calls for all levels of government to work together which includes the City of Markham; and further,**

**Whereas on January 31, 2017, the City of Markham signed an historic agreement of cultural collaboration with the Eabametoong First Nations:**

**Be it resolved that the City of Markham, the Race Relations Committee, and its communities take the time to listen and observe and actively seek out the truth and advice of Indigenous communities; and,**

**Be it resolved that the Race Relations Committee will make itself available to support Indigenous communities; and further,**

**Be it resolved that the Race Relations Committee is mindful of anti-racism and will support ongoing conversations with the City, the Mayor's Office and Indigenous communities.**

**Carried**

## **8. Many Faces of Markham**

### **a. 2021 Debrief and lessons learned**

Staff indicated that the event was an overall success and noted that there was constructive feedback from a community member wanting to ensure that a lens of equity and inclusion be used in terms of promotions, submissions and evaluations.

The Committee engaged in a round table feedback discussion on the following:

- Not all members had familiarity with Many Faces of Markham;
- That there be consideration to increase communication and public reach to all students and schools in the community;
- A suggestion that Many Faces of Markham be included as part of the school curriculum;
- That there be consideration for the City to attend schools to describe the objective and market the event to students;
- That the Committee learn more about the school curriculum and identify opportunities to include Many Faces of Markham;
- Identify the goals, objectives and deliverables of Many Faces of Markham;
- Create a goals and success matrix to accompany the objectives;
- That the topic of Anti-Black Racism may be uncomfortable to discuss;
- Open the event to all members of the public, not just students;
- That the Committee partner with the library to promote the event in the future;
- Increase marketing of this initiative across the City;
- Better ways to engage school and student participation;
- Discuss whether the school boards are the right place to reach out to for participation; and,
- That mini focus-groups be considered to engage and increase participation of children and not parents in the future.

Staff advised that Many Faces of Markham was initiated by former Councillor Tony Wong in support the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racism held annually on March 21.

The Committee will review goals and objectives of this initiative for 2022.

b. 2022 – Theme and approach

The Committee consented to set up an electronic form to collect ideas for 2022 themes to be discussed at a future meeting. It was noted that the theme deadline is October/November to ensure that there is enough time to prepare communications. The Committee further suggested that a theme may evolve out of the identification of the goals for Many Faces of Markham.

The Committee consented to bring forward ideas for objectives, increasing community engagement and potential themes to an upcoming meeting.

## **9. Brainstorm Session Follow Up**

This item was deferred to the November 2021 meeting.

## **10. Other**

The Committee discussed increased communication by the City regarding events of racism, such as Islamophobic incident in London, Ontario and the importance of the provision of education on anti-racism to the public.

There was additional discussion on the following related to anti-racism:

- That there be increased communication and education on the City website;
- That there are concerns by members of the Muslim community who are living in fear;
- That the City provide links to resources on anti-racism, Islamophobia, Indigeneity etc.;
- Consideration to include information on how to de-escalate situations;
- Inquiries into what can be done to combat white nationalist extremism and those that are not amenable to taking courses or education to gain understanding of each other; and,
- Inquiries into ways the Committee can respond to issues similar to the London Ontario attack on the Muslim family.

There was a brief discussion on municipal elections, what role the Race Relations Committee may have, and how might hate be addressed by a candidate or voter in a municipal election.

Staff suggested that the Deputy Clerk be invited to a future meeting as needed to lead this discussion.

#### **11. Business Related to Previous Minutes (June 7, 2021)**

There was no business related to the previous minutes.

#### **12. New Business**

There was no new business.

#### **13. Next official meeting date: November 1, 2021 at 6:00 PM**

#### **14. Adjournment**

**Moved By** Madge Logan

**Seconded By** Danielle Russell

That the Race Relations meeting adjourn at 8:09 PM.

**Carried**