



RACE RELATIONS COMMITTEE FOR THE CITY OF MARKHAM

**Ontario Room, Markham Civic Centre
June 5, 2017**

MINUTES

Attendance: <u>Committee</u> Astra Josie Rose, Chair Andrew Yu, Vice Chair Osman Akhtar Edward Choi (teleconference) Bobbie France Aamer Mohammed Faiz Mohyuddin David Quintero Maggie Quirt Herleen Sayal Sara Siddiqui Guests Rashmee Karnad-Jani (Markham resident) Graham Seaman, Director, Sustainability <u>Staff</u> Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist Bev Shugg Barbeito, Committee Coordinator	<u>Regrets</u> Rina George-Alexander Salman Hasan Sujane Kandasamy Surinder Razdan Councillor Logan Kanapathi Regional Councillor Joe Li
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The Race Relations Committee convened at 7:05 PM with Astra Josie Rose presiding as Chair.

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

Chair Astra Josie Rose welcomed members to the meeting.

2. Changes or Additions to the Agenda

The agenda was accepted as distributed with the addition of:

- Pridefest on June 17
- Canada 150.

3. Approval of the Minutes

It was

Moved by Sara Siddiqui
Seconded by Osman Akhtar

That the minutes of the Markham Race Relations Committee meeting held on May 1, 2017 be adopted as distributed.

CARRIED

4. Deputation by Markham Resident

The Committee discussed its role and the support it is able to give. Committee members were reminded that, while Race Relations Committee meetings are open to the public, they are not the appropriate place for Markham residents to discuss race relations complaints currently under investigation by city staff. If residents have issues, their first option should be to discuss the matter with their Ward Councillor, and then if the matter is not resolved, to discuss it with the appropriate City supervisor.

5. New Signage for Gender Neutral Washrooms

Graham Seaman, Director, Sustainability, informed committee members that the city has installed new signage for the washrooms outside the Canada Room and the Clerk's Office. The new signs include tactile Braille and the new 'active wheelchair' sign to denote accessibility. Where possible, single stall washrooms with gender neutral signage (e.g. an image of a toilet) will be the preferred option in municipal spaces. Mr. Seaman also noted that there has been some negative feedback regarding gender neutral signage, since some residents do not understand why it is necessary. The question remains as to how Markham can be neutral, mindful, and clear with communications around sensitive issues.

6. Markham Human Resources Update

Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist, reported that issues of inclusion are also relevant with respect to new civic spaces, such as the opening of the Aaniin Community Centre and Library at Middlefield Rd and 14th Ave. For instance, are territory acknowledgements with respect to Indigenous lands inclusive and do they reference the right groupings of Indigenous peoples?

Cheryl McConney-Wilson suggested Committee members consider how best the Committee might resolve underlying causes of race relations issues in order to help the most people. Committee members noted that focusing on welcoming people and encouraging residents to "learn, unlearn, and share" are important first steps. Cheryl McConney-Wilson also noted that the Committee needs clarity with respect to both the extent of its public role and the processes governing its work. The Committee's Terms of Reference are currently under revision by City staff; the revisions will be shared with the committee in fall 2017.

Committee members discussed adding an education piece, such as a community conversation, as a condition of various types of municipal funding (e.g. Canada 150). Members were reminded that recipients for such grants are determined by Council so any such provision would have to first be approved by the Councillors.

7. Community Engagement Talks Race Relations Business

A) Canada 150

Chair Astra Josie Rose reminded committee members that the Canada150 celebrations are not universally welcomed by all Canadians. For instance, many Indigenous peoples see the past 150 years as an era of colonial practices and policies that have caused great damage to their communities. It was therefore suggested that the Race Relations Committee convey these concerns to the Canada150 committee to assist them with considering the views of diverse residents in their planning.

B) Pridefest 2017

Chair Astra Josie Rose noted that the planning committee for PFLAG York --York Region's support, resource, and education network for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, and/or two-spirited (LGBTQQ2S) people – is seeking more diverse representation of racialized peoples at its June 17 event. The Chair noted that racialized LGBTQQ2S youth have few role models to look up to, and this often intensifies their feelings of alienation and despair. Chair Astra Josie Rose noted that mental health issues, including suicide, are a big cause for concern among LGBTQQ2S racialized youth and that more representation by racially diverse role models could help counteract that. The Chair asked members to consider leveraging their contacts to assist PFLAG in diversifying its membership. It was noted that not all committee members were in agreement with this request, citing concerns about gay pride events in other jurisdictions. Diversity Specialist Cheryl McConney-Wilson noted that the legal rights that LGBTQQ2S individuals have by virtue of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code should be the baseline for committee discussion.

C) York Region Police Street Checks

Chair Astra Josie Rose reported that York Region Police Officer Ricky Veerapan has advised that the presentation is ready and he would like the Committee to be the first to review it. Chair Astra Josie Rose will contact subcommittee members to select some possible dates. She also reported that the Hate Crime Unit presentation will help inform the Committee about what to focus on.

D) Open House

Sara Siddiqui will send information to the subcommittee; meetings may take place during the summer in order to plan the event in time for October.

E) Paint A Smile

The Committee plans to partner with Paint A Smile, a charitable organization which provides opportunities to create art to children who otherwise would not have such an opportunity, to host events for such children. The event will involve 40 disadvantaged children, their parents, and 15 youth ambassadors from church and mosque communities, as well as Markham Council members in an art workshop experience to create a large mural so that they feel part of the community. The theme of the mural is a large tree with branches, and will be signed by everyone participating. The York Region Police Diversity will also attend in order to promote good community relations. A date in July is being considered for the event which may be held at the Pan Am Centre.

8. Race Relations Committee Work Plan

Chair Astra Josie Rose advised that discussion of the Race Relations Committee work plan would be tabled to the next meeting.

9. Community Awards

It was reported that December 10 (Human Rights Day) and March 21 (International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) are being considered as potential dates for the ceremony to give community awards for activities taken to promote race relations in the community.

10. New Business

York Region Pop In Event

It was reported that York Region is hosting the following pop-in events for residents to share thoughts on building a more welcoming and inclusive York Region:

June 24, 2017 - Music in the Streets Festival, Town of Georgina

June 25, 2017 - Farmers Market, Town of Richmond Hill

July 1, 2017 - Strawberry Festival, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

Many Faces of Markham

It was reported that, if the Committee wished to hold this event in 2018, a subcommittee will need to begin planning over the summer. Chair Astra Josie Rose will send a poll to Committee members to determine interest.

11. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Race Relations Committee will be held on Monday, September 11, 2017 in the Ontario Room at 7:00 PM.

12. Adjournment

It was

Moved by Andrew Yu
Seconded by Bobbie France

That the Race Relations Committee adjourn at 9:00 PM.

CARRIED