



RACE RELATIONS COMMITTEE FOR THE CITY OF MARKHAM

**Canada Room, Markham Civic Centre
May 1, 2017**

MINUTES

Attendance <u>Committee</u> Astra Josie Rose, Chair Osman Akhtar Edward Choi Bobbie France Rina George-Alexander Councillor Logan Kanapathi Sujane Kandasamy Alicia Lauzon, York Region Police Regional Councillor Joe Li Aamer Mohammed David Quintero Surinder Razdan Sara Siddiqui Andrew Yu <u>Staff</u> Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Senior Diversity, Wellness, Accessibility Specialist Sara McMillan, Senior Manager, Corporate Communications Kitty Bavington, Council/Committee Clerk	<u>Regrets</u> Salman Hassan Faiz Mohyuddin Maggie Quirt Herleen Sayal
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The Race Relation Committee convened at 7:06 pm with Josie Rose presiding as Chair.

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

Josie Rose, Chair welcomed the Committee.

2. Changes or Additions to the Agenda

There were no changes or additions to the Agenda.

3. Approval of the Minutes

Several changes and spelling corrections were noted, and page numbers were added to the minutes.

Moved by: Andrew Yu

Seconded by: Surinder Razdan

That the minutes of the Race Relations Committee meeting held on April 3, 2017 be adopted, as amended.

CARRIED

4. Corporate Communications

Sara McMillan, the new Senior Manager, Corporate Communications and Community Engagement, was in attendance at the invitation of the Committee, to discuss how Corporate Communications can work collaboratively with the Race Relations Committee.

Ms. McMillan advised the Committee that the Corporate Communications team is undergoing an organizational and operational review. One of their objectives is to empower groups, such as the Race Relations Committee, to enable them to move forward on their own projects and communicate outward. The Committee requested assistance in launching their brand in the next few weeks, and staff noted that confirming the Terms of Reference is the first step in understanding the relationship and determining the direction of the Committee, going forward.

For collaborative projects, staff ask that Committee members contact Ms. McMillan directly by e-mail, and include the staff liaison, Cheryl McConney-Wilson in the e-mail. It is requested that as much notice as possible be given for external communications requests. Internal communications will continue to go through the Clerks office.

The Committee discussed an upcoming children's event and questioned how they could collaborate on this initiative, with respect to obtaining t-shirts for the children. The event will involve the creation of a large mural that will be placed in the Great Hall, and the event will require the involvement of Corporate Communications. Ms. McMillan recommended that the event be coordinated with the Events Manager to book the Great Hall, and then staff will sit down with Committee members to work out the details, including what costs Corporate Communications can cover. Printed t-shirts and other items will depend on the Committee's budget. A MERF form (Mayors Event Request Form – available through staff) will be required to provide information for Council members' attendance and speeches. The Committee was requested to e-mail the proposal to Sara, as well as the Canada 150 grant application.

Other discussions included the provision of materials/literature for the Committee to use for public events and communications, such as brochures; however, the Terms of Reference will need to be finalized before these items can be prepared.

The City's social media strategy, policies and procedures are currently being prepared. The Committee currently has a gmail account to reach out to the public, but would like to have a more professional twitter/facebook account and a more professional City email account (@markham.ca). Ms. McMillan suggested that a pilot project could be considered, and agreed to check with IT on getting one set up. With respect to responsibility for public commentary, Ms. McMillan advised that the Committee members have gone through a vetting process prior to being appointed by Council, and are recognized as responsible representatives and a voice for this Committee. It was noted that the Committee sometimes deals with contentious issues, so a caution was expressed that its social media will have to conform to the City's guidelines.

5. Race Relations Business

Markham Human Resources Update

Cheryl McConney-Wilson advised that City staff are reviewing the Terms of Reference for the Race Relations Committee. A draft will be submitted to the Committee's Council representatives before it is provided to the Committee Co-chairs, and then to the Committee. The document will provide direction for the Committee and provide clarification for future member applicants. While the strategic direction would remain the same in the event of a change to the Council representation, the focus may be altered. It was acknowledged that it is critical to gain the support of the Council representatives for project ideas.

The timeline was discussed. The goal is to have it finalized as soon as possible, before September, in advance of events planned for the fall. It was noted that the subject of the Terms of Reference has been brought up several times, and it is a good step forward to be getting it done at this time.

The Committee is evolving from having a focus on the *Many Faces of Markham*, to new projects, and it is important to understand its mandate, roles, and responsibilities.

6. Annual Conference

• Visions Via Voices/Many Faces Of Markham – Youth Conference

Chair Astra Josie Rose reported that the conference, held April 29, 2017, was a great success, with 80+ high school students from Richmond Hill, Scarborough, and Markham. Appreciation was expressed for the volunteers and Council members' attendance. The artist/speaker was excellent, sharing wonderful stories that resonated with the youth.

From the York Regional Police perspective, Alicia Lauzon advised that although the YRP had a booth and had provided transportation for some of the youth, no one came up to their booth to speak to them. It was questioned if it would have been appropriate for YRP to sit in on the workshops. Although the attendees were comfortable with school principals at the workshops, some may not be comfortable with the police sitting in.

6. Community Engagement

Community Engagement Talks – Islamophobia and YRP Street Checks

The objective of Community Engagement Talks is to help municipalities connect with youth through community engagement, and would include events such as basketball games. Markham was suggested as a setting for a police talk pilot project. Astra Josie Rose will send out an e-mail about organizing an event.

Aamer Mohammed explained that there have been problems at Middlefield Collegiate Institute, which is near the mosque on Denison Street, which is predominantly Tamils and Muslims, had reportedly been having problems recently, however, it was clarified that there have been no gangs involved - the issue appears to be race-related. The Mosque supports police involvement, and the Police Chief will be working with the Mosque on a solution. It was suggested that the YRP Hate Crime Task Force could give presentations at the high schools. Committee members indicated they prefer to observe the situation and formulate recommendations before becoming involved.

The Chair discussed the position of many parents that they do not want the police to connect with the students or attend the schools, because of the perception of such actions implying a criminal label, which makes the students feel targeted and discriminated against.

Alicia Lauzon advised that she had attended the Canadian Chiefs Association meeting with Durham and York Region police. The event focused on building up public trust in the police force, and they are hoping to go out to the community to build a strategy.

Open House

Sara Siddiqui thanked Committee members and staff for their input on the invitation that has been distributed regarding the Open House in October. There are a few months left to plan the event, including decisions regarding the attendees. The Mayor and Councillors will be invited, and members were asked for suggestions about additional invitees and how to approach them. The objective is to let the public know that they are welcome to attend and engage the City in their issues.

Staff suggested opportunities to coordinate with other City Open House events, such as the Accessibility Fair, and the opening of the new Aaniin Community Centre in the fall. The Committee indicated support for taking advantage of such opportunities, while recognizing the need for a Race Relations focus.

Ms. Siddiqui will work with Cheryl McConney-Wilson and Corporate Communications on this matter, and will provide updates.

Paint A Smile

Aamer Mohammed explained the Paint A Smile proposal, seeking the support of the Council members. Councillor Logan Kanapathi and Regional Councillor Joe Li confirmed they had reviewed the proposal and supported the project. Councillor Kanapathi will contact the Children's Festival with respect to their participation.

The event will take place in the next six weeks, and will involve 40 disadvantaged children, their parents, and 15 youth ambassadors from various church and mosque communities, as well as Markham Council members. The project will provide an art workshop experience to create a large mural, with the assistance of members of Council and this committee, 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. Photos will be taken of the children working with their art partners, and the photos will be provided as keepsakes, as well as being attached to the mural to illustrate the activity. A group photo will also be taken, and lunch will be provided.

The Paint a Smile organization will also be doing other workshops during the day, with oil painting and canvas, and will be giving painting lessons.

The Committee will work with staff to arrange to have the completed mural displayed in the Great Hall. Funding is being provided from the Race Relations Committee (\$200), donations from local churches and mosques, and a Canada 150 grant. It is hoped that funding will cover t-shirts for the children with the City logo and the Paint A Smile logo. YMCA is donating manpower and supplies. Committee members were requested to reach out to their church contacts to encourage participation.

It is recognized that children can easily express themselves and communicate through art. The theme of the event is Mental Health, and the children will be from war-torn areas such as Syria. It was suggested that this Committee reach out to the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee, as mental health issues can be a disability. The Chair and Aamer Mohammed will connect with the Accessibility Committee and with the Council representatives, and will provide an update at the next meeting.

9. New Business

The Committee received correspondence from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, calling for nominations for the inaugural Champion of Diversity Award. The Chair will distribute information for interested members.

The Committee was encouraged to participate in the upcoming Places of Worship Tour organized by the City of Markham. Information can be obtained from City staff.

10. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Race Relations Committee will be held on Monday, June 5, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the Ontario Room.

11. Adjournment

It was

Moved by: Andrew Yu

Seconded by: Osman Akhtar

That the Race Relations Committee adjourn at 9:05 p.m.

CARRIED