



RACE RELATIONS COMMITTEE FOR THE CITY OF MARKHAM

**Ontario Room, Markham Civic Centre
April 3, 2017**

MINUTES

Attendance <u>Committee</u> Astra Josie Rose, Chair Osman Akhtar Edward Choi Bobbie France Salman Hassan Sujane Kandasamy Aamer Mohammed David Quintero Surinder Razdan Herleen Sayal Sara Siddiqui Andrew Yu <u>Staff</u> Cheryl McConney-Wilson Diversity Coordinator John Britto, Committee Secretary (PT)	<u>Regrets</u> Rina George-Alexander Faiz Mohyuddin Maggie Quirt Regional Councillor Joe Li Councillor Logan Kanapathi
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The Race Relation Committee convened at 7:10 pm with Josie Rose presiding as Chair.

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

Josie Rose, Chair welcomed the Committee. She advised that the John Britto, Acting Clerk will assume the Chair for the duration of the election of Chair and Vice Chair.

2. Election of the Chair and Vice Chair

The Acting Clerk declared election for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair for 2017. He advised the members that the Clerk's Department confirmed that Telephone Voting is not permitted.

The Acting Clerk advised that only one nomination, that of Astra Josie Rose, was received for the position of Chair, and called for further nominations for the position of Chair.

As no further nominations were received, Astra Josie Rose was acclaimed Chair of the Race Relations Committee for 2017.

It was

Moved by Salman Hasan

Seconded by Bobbie France

That Astra Josie Rose is acclaimed Chair of the Race Relations Committee for 2017.

CARRIED

The Acting Clerk advised that nominations for Vice Chair were received from Sara Siddiqui and Andrew Yu and called for further nominations. As no further nominations were received, the Acting Clerk advised that as there was more than one nomination, elections for the position of Vice Chair would need to be conducted by the show of hands.

Some members advised that they would abstain from voting, as they are new to the Committee. Responding to a question from a couple of committee members, the Acting Clerk advised that votes will be counted

Responding to a question from a Committee member, the Acting Clerk advised that only one position of Vice Chair of the Race Relations Committee is approved by Council.

Astra Josie Rose, Chair requested the two nominees for the position of Vice Chair to give a brief background of themselves and the reasons why they would like to be Vice Chair of the Committee. Sara and Andrew complied with the Chair's request.

The Acting Clerk advised that any member who does not feel comfortable being in the room during the election process is welcome to leave the room. Sara and Andrew chose to leave the room during the election process.

Results of the election for the position of Vice Chair:

Sara Siddiqui = 2 votes

Andrew Yu = 2 votes.

There was extensive discussion about the potential and capabilities of the two nominees for the

position of Vice Chair.

The Acting Clerk advised that if the members were not ready to elect a Vice Chair, and considering that the outgoing Vice Chair and the two Councillor representatives were not present at this meeting, it may be advisable to defer the election of Vice Chair to the next meeting.

The members decided to have a second round of election for the position of Vice Chair.

Results of the second round of election for the position of Vice Chair:

Sara Siddiqui = 1 vote

Andrew Yu = 4 votes.

It was

Moved by Salman Hasan

Seconded by Surinder Razdan

That Andrew Yu is elected Vice Chair of the Race Relations Committee for 2017.

CARRIED

Astra Josie Rose and Andrew Yu assumed the role of Vice Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

3. Changes or Additions to the Agenda

There were no changes or additions to the Agenda.

4. Approval of the Minutes

Vice Chair, Andrew Yu advised that the spelling of the last name of former Markham Mayor, late Don Cousens be corrected in the minutes of the Race Relations Committee meeting held on March 6, 2017.

It was

Moved by Andrew Yu

Seconded by Surinder Razdan

That the minutes of the Race Relations Committee meeting held on March 6, 2017 be adopted, as amended.

CARRIED

5. Markham Human Resources Update

Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Coordinator advised that staff will be reviewing the Terms of

Reference of the Race Relations Committee ensuring due consideration is given to the Committee's mandate/focus, roles and responsibilities, etc. She further advised that a draft document will be provided for review/comments by the Committee. The Committee requested a timeline for the Terms of Reference document. Cheryl also advised that the new Corporate Communications Manager will be invited to a future Race Relations Committee meeting to talk about how Corporate Communications can work collaboratively with the Race Relations Committee. The Committee requested a timeline for the Terms of Reference document.

Cheryl advised that a member of the Accessibility Committee was featured on the Weather Network and a video has been prepared about the accessibility features of the Pan Am Centre in Markham.

Cheryl advised that the City is discussing the potential for having gender-neutral washrooms in new community centres. There has been some discussion about cultural communities and the terminology "gender-neutral" and what that might mean. The City is in consultation with people from different LGBT communities on this initiative to seek their perspective on the use of the proper terminology in an effort to provide an inclusive place to live.

Responding to a question from a Committee member, Cheryl advised that not all washrooms will be identified as "gender-neutral".

Discussion ensued on the City's efforts to work with Rainbow Health, PFLAG and various other groups that cater to the needs of the transgender community. She advised that staff will share their findings with the Race Relations Committee, considering the diverse composition of the City of Markham.

Cheryl suggested that the Committee consider inviting a representative from the transgender community to share their experiences with the Committee.

Astra Josie Rose, Chair advised that Pflag has shown interest to meet with the Race Relations Committee.

Cheryl discussed the diversity training that was provided to members of the Race Relations Committee, however, the new members may not have had the opportunity of receiving this training. She further advised that the 3-hour diversity training is mandatory for City staff.

Cheryl also advised the committee of a \$500 neighbourhood grant available for City of Markham residents and community groups undertaking neighbourhood projects that encourage participation in marking Canada's 150th anniversary. The deadline for applying for this grant is May 5, 2017. Cheryl will send details of this program to the Committee members.

Responding to a question from a Committee member, Cheryl advised that she is prepared to facilitate an abridged diversity training for the new Committee members. Cheryl agreed to find out if the 3-hour mandatory diversity training can still be provided to interested Committee members.

6. Race Relations Business

- **Proposed Motions – YRDSB and General Response**

Consideration of this matter was deferred to the next meeting.

- **Sub-Committees**

Consideration of this matter was deferred to the next meeting. Chair Astra Josie Rose will email members the composition and membership of the different sub-committees.

7. Annual Conference

- **Visions Via Voices/Many Faces of Markham – Youth Conference**

Chair Astra Josie Rose reported that preparations for the event are progressing well. She sent out the conference details along with the poster and a link to the Eventbrite website. Some members expressed difficulty accessing the link to the website. Herleen Sayal to resend the link.

Herleen Sayal provided an update from the sub-committee. The goal is to have 80 high school students participate from York Region. Currently, 50 students from Richmond Hill are attending. Efforts are being made to get more students to attend. Herleen encouraged the members to reach out to their networks and contacts to publicize the event to get larger participation.

Chair Astra Josie Rose advised that the event is scheduled to be held on April 29, 2017, and has encouraged all members to volunteer to assist at the event. She further advised that the police department has agreed to provide transport for attendees from the north for the conference.

Chair Astra Josie Rose advised that the Mayor's Youth Task Force has agreed to assist through their networks.

Responding to a question from a Committee members, Herleen advised that she has contacted schools in the York Region and they have agreed to reach out to their networks. She has also reached out to the different youth councils in York Region, including the York Region Newcomers Network.

Chair Astra Josie Rose advised that it has been decided to award the organizer of the Youth Conference with the 2017 Many Faces of Markham Award for her exemplary efforts in organizing this event. Some members expressed concerns that the organizer is not a Markham resident, however, Chair Astra Josie Rose advised that the decision was made considering that she is actively engaging with the youth from Markham.

8. Community Engagement

- **Community Engagement Talks – Islamophobia and YRP Street Checks**

Chair Astra Josie Rose reviewed the introduction of Community Engagement Talks, relaxed informal opportunities to initiate dialogues and further understanding about issues such as concerns facing racialized youth, presented in a variety of formats such as panel discussions, video presentations, or group discussions. Committee members have agreed that such an event would need to be well thought out so as not to create discord. It was agreed to host a workshop focusing on Interfaith, Belonging and combatting the “ism”s, as well as workshop on the topic of police checks presented by York Region Police. Chair Astra Josie Rose will send a request for volunteers to plan the event.

- **Open House**

Sara Siddiqui advised that she has prepared a draft invitation for the Open House initiative, which will be sent to organizations across the City of Markham that represent different cultural groups.

Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Coordinator advised that any communications proposed to be sent on behalf of the City, needs to be routed through the Corporate Communications Department.

- **Paint A Smile**

Aamer Mohammed provided an update on the Paint-A-Smile initiative. He informed that a couple of churches and mosques are interested in sponsoring the event. He advised that the workshop to be held in the Markham Civic Centre will focus on new immigrants. It is anticipated that 40 children will be participating and there will be 10 Student Ambassadors helping these participants, along with 2 facilitators from the Paint A Smile Foundation. The YMCA have also shown interest in supporting this initiative and will also be sponsoring the event. Aamer advised that he is hoping to reach out to a few synagogues to seek their support as well.

Chair Astra Josie Rose advised that anticipating support from the Race Relations Committee, Aamer took the initiative to organize the event. She sought the indulgence of the Committee with respect to supporting Aamer with this initiative. She further advised that approval from the Committee is being sought for \$200 to support this initiative to defray cost of supplies and materials for the kids.

The Committee discussed the possibility of partnering with the Paint A Smile Foundation and providing financial support of \$200. One member questioned if this could be considered a personal initiative and whether the Committee would be creating a precedent if it was agreed to provide financial support for the Paint A Smile event.

It was

Moved by Salman Hasan

Seconded by Andrew Yu

That the Race Relations Committee approve the expenditure of \$200 for the Paint a Smile event.

CARRIED

- **Highway of Heroes Tree Planting initiative**

Consideration of this matter was deferred to the next meeting

9. Race Relations Committee Work Plan

Chair Astra Josie Rose advised that the next meeting to discuss this matter is scheduled to be held on April 11, 2017.

10. Community Awards

Consideration of this matter was deferred to the next meeting.

11. New Business

There were no items of New Business.

12. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Race Relations Committee will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, May 1, 2017 in the Ontario Room.

13. Adjournment

It was

Moved by Andrew Yu

Seconded by Surinder Razdan

That the Race Relations Committee adjourn at 9:10 p.m.

CARRIED

* As amended by the Race Relations Committee on May 1, 2017.