



RACE RELATIONS COMMITTEE FOR THE CITY OF MARKHAM

**Ontario Room, Markham Civic Centre
February 6, 2017**

MINUTES

Attendance: <u>Committee</u> Astra Josie Rose, Chair Maggie Quirt, Vice Chair Osman Akhtar Edward Choi Rina George-Alexander Salman Hasan Sujane Kandasamy Faiz Mohyuddin David Quintero Surinder Razdan Amer Mohammed Herleen Sayal Sara Siddiqui Andrew Yu <u>Council</u> Councillor Logan Kanapathi <u>Staff</u> Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist Bev Shugg Barbeito, Committee Coordinator	<u>Regrets</u> Bobbie France Regional Councillor Joe Li
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The Race Relations Committee convened at 7:03 PM with Astra Josie Rose presiding as Chair.

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

Chair Astra Josie Rose welcomed new members to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Changes or Additions to the Agenda

The agenda was accepted as distributed.

3. Approval of the Minutes

Adoption of the minutes of the Race Relations Committee meeting held on January 16, 2017 was deferred to the next meeting.

4. Board and Committee Orientation

Laura Gold, Council and Committee Coordinator, Clerk's Office, made a presentation designed to help familiarize Committee members with their volunteer role on the Committee. Topics included Municipal governance, roles and expectations, Code of Ethics, Accessibility considerations, Diversity considerations, Privacy & Confidentiality considerations, media relations, procedures & meeting management, conflict of interest, and meeting effectiveness.

It was noted that because the Race Relations Committee is a public entity, members could expect their affiliation with the committee to be a matter of public record. Additionally, the minutes of Race Relations Committee meetings are available to the general public via the City of Markham's website.

Committee members were advised that if they miss three (3) consecutive meetings without a reasonable explanation, the RRC might reassess the member's involvement as the successful functioning of the committee depends on the active participation of its constitutive members.

Committee members were advised that they are NOT to use cell phones or any other recording devices to record other members' comments or take photographs of RRC members without the express permission of the individual(s) in question.

Ms. Gold requested that new members read the Accessibility Guide in their orientation package, since providing accessible customer service is required by law.

5. Markham Human Resources Update

Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist, reported that the City is focusing on its Older Adult/Seniors Strategy, which may offer opportunities for collaboration with the Race Relations Committee. As well, Emergency Preparedness training is proceeding, along with the second stage of Race Relations training (regarding recognizing implicit bias).

6. Race Relations Business

A) Statement related to Quebec mosque

Cheryl McConney-Wilson reminded Committee members that the City is responsible for making any public comments regarding this or any situation that could or has impacted the City's residents, visitors and staff. Some Committee members felt that the Committee should get involved while others felt the City should make public statements since it represents all City residents. Committee members were advised that the City had already issued a press release condemning the attack; it was suggested that the Committee could use similar wording in a motion to Markham Council.

It was

Moved by Surinder Razdan
Seconded by Maggie Quirt

That the Markham Race Relations Committee strongly condemns the attack on the mosque in Quebec, a gruesome attack on innocent people, and sympathizes with the victims and their families.

CARRIED

It was suggested that the Committee develop a general statement, e.g. keeping Markham harmonious or engaging community so hate does not take root, which could be used in the future to respond to similar situations.

B) Many Faces of Markham – Youth Conference

For the benefit of new members, Herleen Sayal reviewed the background of the event. At the October 2016 meeting, Committee members agreed to focus on one theme during the year, but possibly conduct many events supporting that theme. For the coming year, education was chosen as the theme.

The first activity, a re-envisioned version of the Many Faces of Markham (MFOM) event, is the L.I.G.H.T. Change Starts Today Conference. The Committee has partnered with L.I.G.H.T., a York region social justice organization of 45 racially diverse high school students working to empower and motivate youth to become involved in issues affecting the community and the world. The event has been scheduled for Saturday April 29, 2017.

The intent of the conference is to raise awareness among York Region high school students about the ways in which racism impacts feminism, LGBTQ communities, mental health, disabilities, environmental issues and homelessness. The focus will be on youth rather than elementary school children and will be linked with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as MFOM has been. The role of the Committee is to provide coaching to the members of L.I.G.H.T. to learn about planning a conference, to provide connections in regards to securing the logistics of the event, and to serve as mentors for planning workshops on each topic.

Chair Astra Josie Rose reported that she, Maggie Quirt, Herleen Sayal, Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Councillors Kanapathi and Councillor Li participated in a teleconference with members of L.I.G.H.T. to discuss communication materials. Further updates will be reported to Committee members each month. Surinder Razdan will provide information about a possible speaker in the area of mental health for the conference. Committee members were asked to consider helping in planning the conference.

7. New Business

A) Community Awards

Chair Astra Josie Rose reviewed the idea of creating an award to honour a Markham resident or community group using inclusion and equity to bring about ethno-cultural harmony and peace. Discussion will be planned for the March meeting.

B) York Region District School Board

Chair Astra Josie Rose reported that, at the December meeting, Committee members had discussed the media reports of alleged systemic discrimination not being taken seriously at YRDSB. It also discussed the possibility of passing a motion recommending that Markham Mayor Scarpitti send a letter to the YRDSB to express concern over the media reports regarding how matters relating to diversity are being handled at the YRDSB, and to affirm the City's desire that all Markham residents are able to live, work and study in an environment that respects Canada's diversity and multicultural nature. It was also reported that Regional Councillor Li planned to confer with Councillor Kanapathi about the possible motion, and will report back to the Committee. Provincial adjudicators will listen to residents' concerns on this issue; Chair Astra Josie Rose will send Committee members information about this.

C) Community Engagement Talks

Chair Astra Josie Rose reviewed the introduction of Chai Chats, relaxed informal opportunities to initiate dialogues and further understanding about issues such as racialized youth, presented in a variety of formats such as panel discussions, video presentations, or group discussions. Committee members have agreed to change the name from Chai Chats to Community Engagement Talks.

It was reported that the City of Toronto had held an event entitled "Living in a Trump World". Committee members agreed that the Committee should host such an event but also agreed that it would need to be well thought out so as not to create discord. Chair Astra Josie Rose will send a request for volunteers to plan the event.

D) Paint A Smile

Discussion of this item was deferred to the next meeting.

E) Open House

Chair Astra Josie Rose distributed a draft letter inviting community members to an open house to be hosted by the Race Relations Committee at the Markham Civic Centre in May 2017. The intent is to provide an opportunity to network and build relations with individuals and groups who are working to foster understanding and inclusion in Markham. Sara Siddiqui is leading a sub-committee to plan this event. Chair Astra Josie Rose will send a list of community groups to Committee members so they might add other groups to the list.

8. Aboriginal Initiative

It was reported that, on January 31, 2017, the City of Markham signed an agreement of Cultural Collaboration with Eabametoong First Nation, also known as Fort Hope. Eabametoong is an Ojibway First Nation located 360 kilometres north of Thunder Bay, Ontario. This new urban-First-Nation Cultural Collaboration serves as a model for other municipalities and may provide an opportunity for the Committee to host an event for aboriginal youth.

9. New Business

Meeting with City Staff and Councillors

It was reported that Chair Astra Josie Rose and Vice Chair Maggie Quirt will meet on February 27 with Councillor Logan Kanapathi, Regional Councillor Joe Li, and Cheryl McConney-Wilson to discuss Committee initiatives, the Committee name and whether to have youth representation on the Committee.

Women Offering Wisdom (WOW)

Herleen Sayal reported that she is working with York Region District School Board, *Educators for Students of South Asian Heritage* (ESSAH) and *Educators for Tamils Student Success* (ETSS) to seek support to fund Women Offering Wisdom (WOW), a South Asian female youth conference in York Region. WOW is a student-focused conference created to support the health and well-being of South Asian females between the ages of 14 to 16 years old across York Region. The conference will be held during South Asian Heritage Month on Saturday May 6, 2017 at Milliken Mills High School in Markham.

York Region Police presentation

A presentation about York Region Police practices relating to spot checks will be made to the Committee at a future meeting.

Election of Committee Chair and Vice Chair

It was reported that elections for the positions of Committee Chair and Committee Vice Chair will be held in April 2017.

10. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Race Relations Committee will be held on Monday, March 6, 2017 in the Ontario Room at 7:00 PM.

11. Adjournment

It was

Moved by	Maggie Quirt
Seconded by	Surinder Razdan

That the Race Relations Committee adjourn at 9:02 PM.

CARRIED