



RACE RELATIONS COMMITTEE FOR THE CITY OF MARKHAM

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

MINUTES

Attendance: <u>Committee</u> Astra Josie Rose, Chair Maggie Quirt, Vice Chair Osman Akhtar Edward Choi Bobbie France Sujane Kandasamy Aamer Mohammed Faiz Mohyuddin David Quintero Surinder Razdan Sara Siddiqui Andrew Yu <u>Council</u> Regional Councillor Joe Li <u>Staff</u> Bev Shugg Barbeito, Committee Coordinator	<u>Regrets</u> Rina George-Alexander Salman Hasan Herleen Sayal Councillor Logan Kanapathi Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist
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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 with the addition of one item:

- CMARD initiative to recognize International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

3. Approval of the Minutes

It was

Moved by Andrew Yu
Seconded by Faiz Mohyuddin

That the minutes of the Markham Race Relations Committee meeting held on January 16, 2017 be adopted as distributed.

CARRIED

It was

Moved by Andrew Yu
Seconded by Faiz Mohyuddin

That the minutes of the Markham Race Relations Committee meeting held on February 6, 2017 be adopted with the following correction in italics:

Attendance:

Staff

Laura Gold, Council and Committee Coordinator, Clerk's Office
Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist
Bev Shugg Barbeito, Committee Coordinator

CARRIED

4. Markham Human Resources Update

Chair Astra Josie Rose reported on behalf of Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist, that the City is a signatory to CMARD (Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination). She distributed information about a CMARD initiative to celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21. The initiative is an invitation to signatories to challenge elected officials and their communities to post a photo of themselves on social media wearing something red against racism and holding a sign with the campaign's hashtag **#It Starts With Me**. Committee members discussed the proposal and agreed to challenge Markham elected officials and staff as well as community agencies, cultural groups, local businesses, places of worship, schools, and hospitals. Chair Astra Josie Rose will ask interested Committee members to form a subcommittee to organize the campaign and will work with Ms. McConney-Wilson to coordinate a press conference.

Committee members noted that the late Don Cousens had been a prominent supporter of diverse communities and harmonious race relations.

It was

Moved by Aamer Mohammed
Seconded by Andrew Yu

That the Markham Race Relations Committee recognize the leadership of the late Don Cousens in the area of race relations through this statement:

The Race Relations Committee would like to express its sincere condolences to Mayor Don Cousin's family and loved ones for his passing on February 23, 2017.

Mayor Cousins served the then Town of Markham and the region tirelessly for over 12 years. It is his vision, during a critical juncture in Markham's history over 20 years ago, that has helped shape the rapid growth of Markham into a diverse, inclusive, accepting and progressive community and City that has become an example to other regions. It is his vision that has seeded grass roots organizations, such as this Race Relations Committee, and it is his inspiration that has affected and empowered residents to stand together against hate, discrimination, and intolerance.

Mayor Don Cousins will be missed dearly. His vision will live on, and his legacy will continue.

CARRIED

5. Race Relations Business

A) Meeting with City staff

Chair Astra Josie Rose reported that she and Vice Chair Maggie Quirt had met with City staff to discuss challenges facing the Committee, the nature of its role, and the possibility of changing the name of the Committee. An Ad hoc Subcommittee will work on issues as they arise, such as a work plan, vision, mission, values, and terms of reference for the Committee. Aamer Mohammed and Surinder Razdan volunteered to participate on this subcommittee.

B) Election of Committee Chair and Vice Chair

Chair Astra Josie Rose invited interested Committee members to submit their name for appointment to the position of Committee Chair or Vice Chair, for a period of one year. The election will be conducted through an open vote at the beginning of the April meeting and the Committee will pass a resolution confirming the nominations. The duties of Chair and Vice Chair will be transferred at that meeting.

C) York Region District School Board (YRDSB) - Motion relating to News Release

Chair Astra Josie Rose reported that Committee members had previously 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 noted that the school board is subject to provincial legislation and it is under no obligation to address concerns expressed by the City. Nonetheless, the Committee felt strongly that it wished to go on record that it was concerned by the YRDSB actions. It was agreed that if both Councillor Kanapathi and Regional Councillor Li agree on the motion, they will discuss it with their colleagues on Council.

6. Many Faces Of Markham – Youth Conference

Chair Astra Josie Rose reported that the event has been scheduled for Saturday April 29, 2017. Plans are progressing and further updates will be reported to Committee members each month. She will send conference details to Surinder Razdan so he might recruit a possible speaker for the conference in the area of mental health.

7. Community Engagement

A) Community Engagement Talks

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.

B) Open House

Chair Astra Josie Rose reminded Committee members that Sara Siddiqui is leading a sub-committee to plan this event, intended to provide an opportunity to network and build relations with individuals and groups who are working to foster understanding and inclusion in Markham. Committee members were asked to consider volunteering for the subcommittee.

C) First Nations Markham initiative

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.

D) Paint A Smile

Aamer Mohammed proposed that the Committee 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.

It was

Moved by Aamer Mohammed
Seconded by David Quintero

That the Markham Race Relations Committee further explore the Paint A Smile initiative and establish a subcommittee which is to report to the Committee in two months its progress in making plans for an event, and report how such an event might be linked to CMARD and the Committee’s Terms of Reference.

CARRIED

E) Highway of Heroes Tree Planting

Aamer Mohammed spoke about a project to plant over 200,000 trees along Highway 401 between Trenton and Toronto, one tree for every fallen soldier. A tree planting is also being considered for the unveiling of the City's new Cenotaph in November 2017. The intent of the tree planting project is to educate the public and new immigrants about Canada's fallen soldiers and to foster community engagement. Some members wondered whether the Race Relations Committee should be associated with this initiative in light of the class action lawsuit filed in December 2016 against the Canadian Forces by Black and Indigenous soldiers alleging systemic racial discrimination and harassment during their service.

It was

Moved by Aamer Mohammed
Seconded by Andrew Yu

That the Markham Race Relations Committee further explore the Highway of Heroes Tree Planting initiative and establish a subcommittee which is to report how such an event might be linked to the Committee's Terms of Reference.

CARRIED
with 3 abstentions

8. Community Awards

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

9. New Business

Foreign Buyers tax debate

Committee members discussed whether there would be a role for the Committee in dealing with this issue, perhaps in developing posters or postcards to combat negative sentiments. Some felt that educating against racism is at the heart of the Committee's mandate and others felt that Council would be better equipped to deal with such matters.

10. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Race Relations Committee will be held on Monday, April 3, 2017 in the Ontario Room at 7:00 PM.

11. Adjournment

It was

Moved by Maggie Quirt
Seconded by Faiz Mohyuddin

That the Race Relations Committee adjourn at 9:10 PM.

CARRIED