

**THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE
RACE RELATIONS COMMITTEE FOR 2011
TOWN OF MARKHAM
Ontario Room, Markham Civic Centre
Monday, April 4, 2011 - 7:15 p.m.**

AGENDA

MINUTES

<u>Attendance:</u>	
<u>Committee</u>	<u>Regrets</u>
Theresa Coulter, Chair Councilor Logan Kanapathi Councilor Howard Shore Prashanth Srichandramohan Carla Crooks Vilvan Gunasingham Attendees from the public: Ahmed Ijaz Helene Ijaz Hayani Ibrahim <u>Staff:</u> Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist Darshika Patel – Committee Clerk	Winnie Wales, Vice Chair Darius Sookram Liliana Soengas

The thirteenth meeting of the Race Relations Committee convened at 7:15 p.m. with Ms. Theresa Coulter presiding as Chair.

1. CHAIR OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed Councilor Howard Shore and the attendees from the public to the Race Relations Committee. The Chair also announced that Ms. Sheila Desai's tenure with the Race Relations Committee has concluded and she will not be returning to this committee. The Chair and the committee will like to thank Ms. Desai for her contribution and time.

2. CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Mr. Vilvan Gunasingham suggested that the launch date of the Diversity Action Plan be stated in the agenda and all subsequent agendas.

3. MARKHAM HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

A. Diversity Action Plan Update; Launched: 2Q10

Ms. Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist, informed the committee it is uncertain to whether there will be a 2011 Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD) conference. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that this event will occur in Markham anytime soon given that the CMARD conference did recently occur in the city of Toronto. CMARD conferences are held alternatively province to province. Mr. Gunasingham suggested having a local conference in which Ms. McConney-Wilson said that she would look into it.

In the Diversity Action Plan, pages 35-45 contain comments from community members and focus groups. Recently, there were two implementation meetings that discussed how to evaluate matters of concerns of the community. The Human Resource team is interested in receiving feedback from the committee in regards to evaluating goals. They propose the question: as a community member, what would you say is success?

Examples of how the Town of Markham has acted on the recommendation include, setting up two welcome centres for better integration, creating an internal diversity website, are taking steps to create affordable housing and will be building more community centre. Ms. McConney-Wilson says that the Town of Markham have followed through with some of the recommendations, take a look and then let her know what you would say is indicative of what the town is doing to make these recommendations reality. Can an item be immediately checked off or do we need to monitor the progress for while to determine whether is effective or not and if so, for how long?

4. SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

A. Many Faces of Markham Event

The Chair announced that the 2011 Many Faces of Markham event, “Waving Flags – United We Are” was a success. Mr. Gunasingham noticed that there is an equity issue with this event. The competition garnered approximately 1100 submission, however, the participants were mainly from private schools and not public schools. Furthermore, many people from the community did not attend the event. The Chair stated that the process is equitable as invitations are sent to both private and public schools. There appears to be a systematic issue that is preventing the participation of public schools to this event. However, it should be noted that the video competition brought in a lot of public school participants.

B. Diversity Action Plan Committee

No new updates.

5. PENDING ITEMS

A. CMARD Council Representative Appointment; Open: 4Q11

No new updates. The Chair will write a letter to the mayor to request the appointment of a second councilor and a CMARD representative.

B. Race Relations Committee New Member Recruitment; Open: 1Q11

The Town is actively recruiting for the Race Relations Committee. A Councilor and the Chair will sit on the hiring committee. Ms. McConney-Wilson mentioned that a diversity survey will accompany each application.

C. Second Councilor Appointment to the Race Relations Committee; Open: 1Q11

No new updates.

D. Request to Hold CMARD Conference in Markham; Open: 3Q10

As was mentioned in the Human Resource update, Ms. McConney-Wilson will look into the possibility of having a local CMARD conference in Markham.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Communication (Race Relations Committee and Town of Markham)

No new updates.

B. Israeli Apartheid week at York University

Councilor Howard Shore was in attendance to discuss the Town of Markham's proposed motion regarding Israeli Apartheid Week. This motion was put forward after community members raised concerns over a series of events held at various university campuses relating to this matter and their use of this contentious title. Councilor Shore described the proposed motion to condemn such activities as being very similar to the actions the Town took with the Maclean's magazine article "Too Asian".

Mr. Hayani Ibrahim, a resident, expressed his discontent over the Town's involvement with this issue. He finds it offensive that the municipal government is attempting to silence universities from doing what they do best, which is to engage knowledge. He believes this action is dangerous as it undermines freedom of speech. Ms. Helene Ijaz, another resident, asked members what is wrong with a university holding such an event. She stated that universities already have mechanisms and policies to deal with such contentious issues. Hence, why is the Town getting involved? She stated that the Israeli Apartheid Week ran successfully at York University. Mr. Ahmed Ijaz, also a resident, believes that we should commend universities for looking into these issues. Ms. Ijaz believes that the upcoming

lecture series by the Town should also cover the topic of hate speech. Ms. Carla Crooks reminded the committee that the public can be in attendance at the April 11th General Committee Meeting to further discuss and debate this topic.

Mr. Prashanth Srichandramohan asked Councilor Shore why the Town of Markham has decided to become involved in this issue. Councilor Shore stated that community members have brought up this issue with their councilors and thus, this issue has been brought forward to the Town.

The Chair, reminded the committee that their position is to discuss the Town's motion. Mr. Vilvan Gunasingham, stated that it is difficult for the committee to comment on the motion without the insights from a human rights commission. Furthermore, the committee should be provided with the same background information that the Town used to come up with the resolutions stated in the proposed motion. As such, the Chair concluded that due to short notice and time, the Race Relations Committee cannot commit to a comment or recommendation at this time. However, any further requests to the Race Relations Committee by Council on this issue is welcomed and are to be directed to the Chair of this committee.

7. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Race Relations Committee will be held on May 2, 2011 at 7:15 p.m.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The Race Relations Committee adjourned at 9:10 p.m.