



**Human Relations Commission
Meeting Notes**

July 25, 2022, 7:00 PM

In-person and Zoom Meeting

66 Main Street

West Orange NJ 07052

*Building Our Awareness. Engaging Our Community. Creating Change for Greater Inclusion.
West Orange Township Human Relations Commission*

This is to inform the general public that this meeting is being held in compliance with Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, Public Law 1975. The annual notice was emailed to the Star Ledger and filed in the Township Clerk's office on November 17, 2020 and published in the West Orange Chronicle on December 10, 2020.

1. Call to order 7:08

[HRC Attendance 2022](#)

Commissioners: Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones, Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens, Caroline Harris, Dawn Adams, Asmeret Ghebremicael, Elizabeth Milhim, Reji George, Patrecia West.

Volunteers and Community Guests: Jasmine Hicks, Peter Kolbe, Natacha Clesca, Miyoshi Lee, Kanene Henry, Carl Brister

2. Commissioners Check-In - "Rose and Thorn of the Month"

3. Acceptance of minutes of the last regular meeting of the Commission

Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens motions

Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael seconds

No discussion

1 Abstain

Motion passes

3a. Acceptance and *(if necessary - discussion)* of Subcommittee Reports

4. Report - Chairperson Update

- Rabbi Rob Tobin has resigned as Commissioner.
- Commissioner Caroline Harris has been appointed by Mayor Parisi and will serve until the end of his term.

5. Old business

- Retreat planning- Some time in the Fall to allow more participation.
 - Commissioner Patrecia West's survey- see below
- Diwali Fest- UAV looking for some support from HRC. "Sponsorship" to help get access to the HS facilities. Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael said there is a new Hindu Temple in town near Barton Rd. Perhaps they would want to partner? Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael will reach out to her contact.
- Haitian Prayer Vigil Update- This will be put on hold for this year. May revisit towards the end of the year but it will not be happening Aug 5th.
- Community/Resident engagement-
 - Commissioner Dawn Adams: Welcome letter to new sign-ups to initiate engagement.

- Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens: Previously sent welcome letters and could find email form. Suggested community newsletter that could be posted on social media that lists upcoming events that may need volunteers; will work on the Fall newsletter.
- Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones: Monthly community mixers; offered to coordinate.
 - Natacha: Skeptical if people will turnout in-person if monthly, but perhaps if more scarce. Took some time to understand the HRC after she joined as a volunteer. Newsletter could be a good way to communicate with the community and help shape it.
 - Found HRC through the Mayor's office when she was planning the vigil for Haiti.
 - Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens: Open meetings with HRC mission as a reminder and introduction to the purpose of the HRC.
- Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones: Conversation with incoming leadership – how do we engage the community and market the existence of the HRC and other commissions?
- Miyoshi Lee: First joined an HRC meeting several years ago following a diversity survey sent out by the town. Attends meetings if there is something specific on the agenda that is of interest. Suggestion to add an “agenda theme,” e.g. Heritage Months, might draw more attendance. Post agenda on social media.
- Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens/Commissioner Caroline Harris: Solicit volunteers for agenda items ahead of meetings.
- Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones: Center the meetings on resident engagement; think about how time is split up between resident topics and tasks.
- Natacha: Volunteers can join subcommittees; Miyoshi volunteered to work on a subcommittee, themes, and communication ideas.
 - Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens: Revisit [subcommittees](#) at the retreat.
 - Peter: Would like to visit churches, community centers (e.g. library), and small businesses to help build exposure to HRC and foster better community relations.
 - Create a show-and-tell opportunity for those locations to have their function thought about by the committee and the members of that location.
 - Commissioner Patrecia West: Perception of what the HRC “should” be focused on may not match with the actual agreed purpose of the HRC.
- Commissioner Patrecia West- Survey to help prepare for retreat:
 - Two-part strategy:
 - 1. 1:1 interviews with partner organizations and HRC volunteers
 - 2. Community survey: Pose simple questions at community events
 - Commissioners to provide feedback on Commissioner Patrecia West's survey document; track changes: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hnQH76etE17w_K9U2XnaQw0l8MCt85P/edit?usp=sharing&oid=117199647194033304380&rtpof=true&sd=true
 - Commissioner Elizabeth Milhim: Considered posting polls on social media as long as responses of all kinds can be controlled/considered.
 - Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones: Deadline for feedback 8/25.
 - Miyoshi Lee: Begin surveys with HRC mission statement.
- HRC Community Award- Hold for next meeting.
- Back-to-school event in a park- Commissioner Dawn Adams/Commissioner Elizabeth Milhim
 - August 28th instead of the 27th. Dept of Health not available on the 27th. Need to confirm with Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael.
 - Goal is to collect 100 backpacks and supplies for K-6.
 - Location could either be at Colgate Park or O'Connor Field; recommend Colgate because there is more foot traffic.
 - Food trucks are being explored. Checking on DJ availability.
 - Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens: Would we want to co-sponsor with the Shillelagh Club with their backpack collection (9/21)? Commissioner Dawn Adams/Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens will coordinate if the dates work.

- Natacha Clesca: Women's Club also running a backpack drive for the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation.
- Carl Brister: Suggested collecting items that could help children relate to one another as well as cope with difficult situations at school. Commissioner Dawn Adams will explore this idea.
- Additional volunteers: Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens, Natacha; Commissioner Dawn Adams will set up a subcommittee meeting.

6. New business

- 2023 MLK Event
 - Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones: Approaching planning season for the HRC's signature event to be held in January 2023.
 - Aspiring to bring people from across the community and organizations together to collaborate on the event; represent the diversity of the town.
 - Identify potential partners over the next month
 - Volunteers: Jasmine Hicks, Commissioner Dawn Adams, Commissioner Caroline Harris/UAV, Natacha/NJ Women for Haiti, Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens, Commissioner Patrecia West/WOAHO
 - Commissioner Patrecia West: Need to bring in other organizations to collaborate because many have the desire to do something for the holiday.
 - Carl Brister: Will communicate his availability and ideas.

7. Other/Public Comment

Carl Brister - Love+Unity Festival:

- Official thank you from Music Village to the HRC for their support behind the Love+Unity festival.
- Largest event this year with a bike race in addition to the music festival with vendors.
- On break now, but will reach back out for feedback and ideas.
- May 20th, 2023 will be the next event in partnership with the Township and BOE.

Miyoshi Lee:

- Expressed appreciation to the HRC for engaging with the community and participants, as well as the good work coming out of the Commission.

Commissioner Patrecia West:

- Touched by recent athletic events around the world that exemplified diversity and inclusion beyond the U.S.

Commissioner Elizabeth Milhim:

- Two posts going out for the end of the month; compiling August's posts.

8. Executive Session (if necessary)

9. Adjournment at 8:43pm

Commissioner Elizabeth Milhim motions

Commissioner Dawn Adams seconds

All in favor

10. Future Meeting Dates: August meeting break; will resume meetings on 9/26

~ Fostering good will, cooperation and conciliation among groups in the Community ~