



Human Relations Commission Meeting Notes

July 26, 2021 7:00 PM

Zoom Virtual Meeting

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 at 7:05pm

HRC Attendance 2021

Dr. David E. Jones, Chair; Commissioners Shannon Gattens, Patrecia West, Elizabeth Milhim, Shakira Adams, Dawne Adams, Dr. Joyce Harley, Dagmar Hobson, and Reji George

Guests: Peter Kolbe, Natacha Clesca, Tammy Williams, Rev. Dr. Forrest Pritchett, Carl Brister, Beverly Brister, Secretary Caroline Harris, Lynda Gaspard Craan

2. Commissioners Check-In: "Rose and Thorn" sharing to build trust across Commissioners

- Commissioner Dr. Joyce Harley: Thorn- Lost friend and mentor Dr. Steve Freeman, first Black dentist licensed in NJ; Rose – Had the honor to know Dr. Freeman and his wife.
- Commissioner Shannon Gattens: Rose- Seeing HRC Commissioners and Tammy Williams at The Rock.
- Commissioner Patrecia West: Rose and Thorn- Last Downtown Thursday watching people attracted to interact with those like themselves; Thorn- Watched young boy and his father, and wondered how they could have been engaged.
- Commissioner Dagmar Hobson: Thorn – Health issues last week; Rose – long-term quest to improve health and lost some weight.
- Dr. David E. Jones, Chair: Rose- HRC gathering a highlight; Thorn- Gearing up for another academic year kicking off in the next few weeks (not so much a thorn, just busier).

3. Acceptance of minutes of the last regular meeting of the Commission – Commissioner Dr. Joyce Harley motions, Commissioner Shannon Gattens seconds, all in favor

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

- Business Access and Opportunity Subcommittee Update: Commissioner Dr. Joyce Harley, Commissioner Shakira Adams, Erik Lemons (volunteer)
 - o Small Business Bloc Party event planning commenced; aiming for w/o Sept 13th
 - o Met with Council. Williams, who provided lists of businesses, offered to work to identify venues and speakers, etc.
 - o Reached out to WO Library as a possible venue; Megan from WO Downtown Alliance; Chamber of Commerce
 - o New Purchasing Agent in WO who has been responsive
 - o Event will lay out other activities to help enable small businesses to operate within the town more effectively

- o Small women and BIPOC-owned businesses will be the target audience
- o Will be fully compliant with COVID safety protocols
- o Next steps: Commissioner Dr. Joyce Harley to reach out for volunteers
- Heritage Months Subcommittee: Commissioner Rabbi Tobin
 - o Looking for volunteers to help plan the following:
 - September Hispanic/Latino Heritage
 - October Italian Heritage
 - November Indigenous Peoples
 - o Commissioner Shannon Gattens/Secretary Caroline Harris to reach out to volunteer list; include blurb about time commitment
 - o Commissioner Dr. Joyce Harley: WO Arts Council is organizing event for Lantinx Heritage month; coordinating with Commissioner Rabbi Tobin
 - o MLK Program coming up as well
 - o Delta variant may impact the type of events HRC plans
- Community Issues Subcommittee Update: Commissioner Patrecia West, and Volunteers Shelley Slafkes, and Secretary Caroline Harris
 - o Commissioner Patrecia West shared a proposal on how to keep people engaged and focused on what it means to be a resident in an inclusive community + break HRC of the event-based mold
 - Commit to a 15-min moment of Diversity and Inclusion; some regular cadence
 - Capture those moments on the website to act as a behavior model for others
 - Ex. Commissioner Dagmar Hobson is always sharing materials on the subject of DEI
 - Commissioner Shannon Gattens: <https://mlpp.org/21-day-racial-equity-challenge/>; <https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/-/media/files/wexnermedical/about-us/diversity/finalantiracism21daychallenge.pdf>
 - 21-day anti-racism challenge example
 - Commissioner Dr. Joyce Harley: Nothing wrong with being event-driven because Lambertville HRC indicated that their events are the draw to getting people involved
 - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair/Commissioner Patrecia West: HRC can be both event-driven and...
 - Secretary Caroline Harris: Engage with the Social Media subcommittee to make it a social campaign
 - HRC behind this idea

4. Report - Chairperson Update

- HRC August Meeting Discussion
 - o Westfield and Lambertville joint HRC meeting this month
 - o Great conversation; proud to share work WO HRC is doing
- August Meeting
 - o Proposal to pause in August and use the time to do the behind-the-scenes work
 - o No one in opposition

5. Old business

- Farmer's market HRC tabling
 - o No fee for the first tabling; awaiting confirmation from organizer
 - o Dr. David E. Jones, Chair to reach out with dates in Sept/Oct for volunteers to sign up for table
- Bloc Party: Small Business Event – see above notes under Subcommittee updates
- Music and movie night: Community Engagement
 - o Commissioner Dawne Adams gathered information; spoke to Edwin from Parks and Rec Dept. who sent forms to fill out
 - o Move forward with an August date or September? Dr. David E. Jones, Chair to review forms and proposed

budget

- Movie night cost: popcorn and water
- Music cost: DJ
- 8/1, 9th, 11th, 26th pending availability, then Commissioner Dawne Adams can reach out to DJ for avails
- 3-4 different vendors for people of all ages
- Colgate or O'Connor Park
- Commissioner Shannon Gattens: Request to see a doc with all the details, then she can help fill in add'l needs; Commissioner Dawne Adams will send
- Communication/Slack (Secretary Caroline Harris)
 - All in favor of using Slack as an additional communication tool; email will still be used
 - Slack will not be required
 - Secretary Caroline Harris to invite HRC Commissioners to Slack and will be available to help troubleshoot

6. New business

- Prayer Vigil for Haiti (8/7 or 8/14)- Natacha Clesca, Guest
 - Resident of WO since '99; here with Lynda Gaspard Craan
 - Lynda and Natacha of Haitian descent; Haitians played a significant role in forming the United States
 - Requesting WO HRC's help in organizing a prayer vigil in support of the recent brutal assassination, violence, and turmoil
 - Where? 9/11 Memorial at Highlawn Pavilion; faces NYC which holds the 2nd largest Haitian population
 - Needs: help securing site, subsidizing candles and other materials, solidarity
 - Commissioner Dr. Joyce Harley: Offer to reach out to County Exec and Director of Parks for Essex; agrees this is important
 - Dates picked for historical significance; evening is preferred
 - Commissioner Shannon Gattens: more difficult to support from a facilities perspective since it's Essex; megaphone could be used
 - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair to follow up after Exec Session vote
- Love and Unity Fest, Sept. 25th - Request for HRC Co-Sponsorship, Carl Brister, CEO/Founder of Music Village
 - Music as a way to bring people together
 - Day of music performances across genres
 - Special guest was Robert Kool Bell from Kool and the Gang
 - Edison Field on Main St on Sept 25th from 12-6pm
 - Joined by Dr. Rev. Forrest Pritchett and Beverly Brister who manages social media
 - Inviting HRC to co-sponsor/donate funds for the event
 - In addition, looking to build a scholarship fund for children that can't afford their own instruments
 - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair to follow up after Exec Session vote

7. Other/Public Comment

8. Executive Session

Vote on items under new business.

8. Adjournment – Commissioner Shannon Gattens motions, Commissioner Reji George seconds at 8:28pm, all in favor

9. **Future Meeting Dates:** No August Meeting, September 27th (waiting on confirmation on if meeting will be in person)

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