



Human Relations Commission
Meeting Notes
Nov 28th, 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 at 7:20pm

[HRC Attendance 2022](#)

Commissioners: Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones, Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens, Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael, Commissioner Dawn Adams, Commissioner Patrecia West, Commissioner Dagmar Hobson, Commissioner Elizabeth Milhim, Secretary Caroline Harris, Commissioner Reji George, Commissioner Shakira Adams
Town Official(s): Councilwoman Tammy Williams, Councilwoman-elect Susan Scarpa
Volunteers and Community Guests: Natacha Clesca

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

- Commissioners shared their rose and thorn of the month

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

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

- Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens motions to approve; Commissioner Dawn Adams seconds; all in favor and motion passes

4. Report - Chairperson Update

- Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones
 - Acknowledged the HRC's work and accomplishments in the community.
 - Stepping down at the end of the calendar year to be able to foster energy in places that are more impactful for him and his family moving forward.
 - Thanked Secretary Caroline Harris for volunteering to step into the position of Secretary; thanked Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens for partnering to advance the mission of the HRC and elevate the work in the community.
 - Hopes the remaining Commissioners will continue to advance the HRC.
 - Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens will provide a recommendation form for new HRC Commissioner nominations.
- Councilwoman Tammy Williams
 - New commissioners can be appointed by Town Officials or can be nominated through the online form.
- Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens
 - 4 open positions: Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones, Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens, Secretary Caroline Harris, and Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael
 - Commissioners may need to be reappointed if the Town Official that appointed them is no

longer in Office.

5. Old business

- MLK Event
 - Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones:
 - High School Involvement
 - Auditorium: Touched base with administration to reserve the HS auditorium.
 - Timeline: Program will run from 10-11:30am; set up will start at 8:30.
 - Student Speakers: Five (5) students are being selected to speak for 3-5 mins about an MLK quote. They will replace a keynote speaker. The hope is that each speaker will bring at least 5 people with them.
 - HRC cannot give out money from the budget; but we can think about how we recognize the students with a certificate.
 - Permit: Filled out the form and sent it in on 11/28.
 - Livestream
 - Joe Fagan booked and confirmed for livestream.
 - Commissioner Elizabeth Milhim: Posted nomination form and save-the-date on Facebook and Instagram. Deadline is December 9th.
 - Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens/Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones: Nominations can come from HRC members and a vote can take place.
 - December 10-14th - Secretary Caroline Harris will send an email with suggested nominations and set up a meeting around the 15th/16th to discuss nominations and finaCommissioner Elizabeth Milhime logistics.
 - Commissioner Dawn Adams: Needs 2-week lead team to order the trophies.
 - Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones: Will reach out to Choir and Step Team leads for performance request; ask Dr. Farley about A/V needs. Will also reach out to Mayor-Elect McCartney and HS Principal to provide remarks.
 - Secretary Caroline Harris: St. Cloud Elementary school 4th graders confirmed to sing “An African Wish.”
 - Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens: Run of show shared from previous years; will need to revise for upcoming event.
 - Commissioner Dawn Adams: Identify someone to do the invocation; Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones: we can invite Rabbi Tobin.
 - Secretary Caroline Harris will set up another subcommittee for w/o 12/5. Agenda:
 - Program design
 - Nominations
 - Run of show
 - Logistics
 - Catering
 - Volunteer needs

6. New business

- HRC leadership changes
 - Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones: Changes will take place at the end of the year to coincide with changes in Town leadership.
 - Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens: Part of the HRC for a long time and worked with others through “Provocative Conversations.” It has become a busy time in her life and also acknowledged that leadership may have changed anyway with the change in Town leadership. Hopes to continue this type of work in a different capacity and will still be very active in the community.
 - Secretary Caroline Harris also shared sentiments regarding her term with the HRC.
 - Natacha Clesca: Reached out to the Mayor’s secretary and got connected with Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones during a time of upheaval for the Haitian community. Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones and Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens helped organize the vigil for Haiti and offered support. Sad to see the outgoing Commissioners go and thanked them for their work.
 - Commissioner Patrecia West: Commended the outgoing Commissioners for leaving the HRC in a

better place than it was before. Left with challenges but prepared to face the challenges.

- Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens: Outgoing Commissioners will provide a transition plan and roadmap as well as links to relevant documentation.

Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa

- December meeting date
 - Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones:
 - HRC should do its part to acknowledge the holidays celebrated by many in the community.
 - Last year, there was a great partnership with the library to celebrate Kwanzaa. Need to reach out to Joyce. (Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones)
 - Commissioner Patrecia West:
 - Reach out to the new president of WOAHO to find out what they are planning for Kwanzaa. (Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones)
 - Will reach out to Megan Brill about Holiday Bazaar and Santa Breakfast.
 - Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens:
 - Food pantry/church-based collection. Post about a specific church service.
 - Joyce: Cynthia Cummings.
 - Secretary Caroline Harris: Will cross-post the UAV/Holy Trinity pantry holiday collection.
 - Commissioner Dagmar Hobson:
 - Christmas tree lighting at Town Hall.
 - Table at Dec 20th menorah lighting at Town Hall. (Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael)
 - WAOHO Kwanzaa will be Dec 30th.

7. Other/Public Comment

HRC Retreat:

Commissioner Patrecia West:

- Discussed with Mayor-Elect McCartney, Joyce, and outgoing Commissioners.
- Felt it was appropriate to delay the retreat until the new administration and HRC leadership are in place.

Susan:

- Asked what criteria may look like for an ideal Commissioner.
- Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens:
 - Active participant
 - Team player and share thoughts
 - Open minded
- Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones, regarding leadership:
 - Someone who can be a transformative leader
 - Encourage team effort and collaboration
 - Shared responsibility to promote equity and inclusion in WO
 - Knows WO and can advocate among Township leaders
- Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones, regarding challenges:
 - Financial resources
 - Navigation of Township politics
 - Polarizing time
 - Recognition of volunteer work
- Vice Chairperson Shannon Gattens, regarding challenges:
 - Equal representation
 - Pre-planning
- Commissioner Patrecia West:
 - Mindset for a need for equity.

8. Executive Session

9. Adjournment at 8:31pm

- Chairperson Dr. David E. Jones motions to adjourn; Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael seconds; all in favor

Next meeting: December 19th at 7pm

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