



**Human Relations Commission  
Meeting Agenda  
April 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*

1. Call to order 7:02 PM

HRC Attendance 2021

Guests: Caroline Harris, Cecilia Pulmano, Kim Ramroop, Christina Helms, Maria Vera, Shelly Slafkes, Narisa Svetvilas, Caritas Ng, Lisa Batchelder

West Orange Pride Coalition Members – Gianna Akiko, Leslie Fleisher

Township Council Members- President Cindy Matute-Brown, Tammy Williams, Bill Rutherford

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

Joyce moves Pat seconds Motion passes.

3. Report - Chairperson Update

- Secretary Role
  - No commissioners accepted the role.
  - Caroline Harris, community volunteer, approved to take the role.
- HRC Vision - David
  - Conducted listening sessions with the commissioners to gather input.
  - Four (4) key areas:
    - Collaboration and Partnership
      - Shared effort; leadership and commissioners to share work along with guests and volunteers.
      - Commissioners are encouraged to invite people from within their own networks to join.
    - Build Awareness
      - Utilize webinars, professional development resources and trainings.
      - Build own awareness and knowledge around diversity, equity, and inclusion.
    - Community Engagement
      - Be an ambassador of the HRC and raise awareness around town
      - Strengthen social capital by engaging the community
    - Create Change for Equity and Inclusion
      - Grow HRC and capitalize on work that Councilwoman Williams built
      - Foster key relationships with town leadership: Council, Chief of Police, Mayor, etc.
      - Form collaborative partnerships

- Expectations of Commissioners:
  - Realizing the vision will be evolving, hard work.
  - Commissioners hold a distinguished role and should take the responsibility to actualize what the role should look like: show up and be our best selves, attend meetings, programs, and events.
- Rabbi Tobin moves to formalize vision statements for the year. David suggested including on all agendas. Joyce proposes “Guiding Principles” and Dawn proposes “Mantra.” Motion passes.
- Update on District Diversity position - David
  - Dr. Cascone update: position is tabled until next year in order to retain other positions, e.g. librarian and choral roles.
  - HRC encouraged to be advocates in support of Diversity roles since none exist.
  - Diversity, Equity, and Access Committee comprised of faculty and parents. Some initiatives have been rolled out across the district and is led by staff members for which diversity is not a full-time responsibility.
  - Dr. Cascone and his leadership team are moving forward with DEI initiatives.
  - David to investigate what other schools in the district other than St. Cloud are doing.

#### 4. Old business

- Ordinance and By Law change review - Joyce
  - This needs more time to allow for feedback on edits from parents/relatives-of and Differently Abled residents.
  - David, Shannon, Alex, and Joyce to meet with residents with a goal to come to a resolution by May.
  - Council President Matute-Brown recommends using other groups such as WOSPAC as a resource.
- Task force sub-committee updates
  - [Task Force Document](#)
  - Monthly Chats with Residents – Joyce, David
    - Joyce provided minutes of conversation.
    - There is misinformation and lack of information about the HRC.
    - Joyce and David to meet with organized groups in town, form partnerships, and understand what is important to them.
    - Get feedback from organizations and residents, and let them inform the work.
    - Develop a high quality Podcast that can be made available to the whole community.
  - Monthly Dialogue Series - Caroline provided [Group A](#) update.
  - Heritage Months – Rabbi Tobin
    - Promote productive conversations between groups and celebrate heritage months.
    - Joyce and Asmeret recommend advocating for marginalized communities, without omitting the Nationally recognized holidays.
    - Need assistance with publicity and social media, and finding contacts at heritage groups.
    - Rabbi Tobin to meet with WO AAPI group to discuss May AAPI Heritage month.
  - Social Media and Outreach - Dawn to provide Group B update.
    - Pat clarified that the social media subcommittee should coordinate with the different committees to help with communications.
  - Contract Awards and Community Businesses – Joyce, Shakira, Erik
    - Joyce presented a summary of the discussion.
    - Vendor Fair concept was shared.
    - Subcommittee to look at current bids and if they reflect equity and inclusion; ex. Bid for town pool food vendor.
    - Goal to make sure the town’s dollars circulate within the town.
    - Joyce reached out to Megan from the Downtown Alliance, who will promote the Vendor Fair.
  - SOMA Event – Dagmar
    - Dagmar invited HRC to attend the SOMA Community Coalition on Race [event](#) with Jesse Hagopian, Thursday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at 7pm: “Conversations on Race: Racial Justice in Education”

- Could HRC do something similar in WO?
- Partnership with HRC Consortium – Joyce
  - Met with Ashton S. Burrell, Chairman of NJ HRC; could be a possible speaker for future events.
  - Work in partnership to learn best practices and work-in-progress ordinances.
- Community award (Including the honoring of Coach Suriano)- Joyce, Dawn, Shakira
  - Event honoring Coach Suriano will take place May 8<sup>th</sup> at the WOHS as an in-person and outdoor formal ceremony.
  - Modern plaque option is the preference; Joyce and David suggested working with a local vendor.
  - Dawn and Shannon to confirm cost/budget and reach out to commissioners for approval.
- AAPI Vigil Review
  - David thanked commissioners and volunteers for their work on planning the event.
  - Great representation of the rich diversity in WO and provided hope during a time of hate.
  - HRC encouraged to think of more solution-oriented ways to continue to show up for victimized communities.

## 5. New business

- West Orange Pride – Gia and Leslie
  - David would like to engage the LGBTQIA community to help plan an event.
  - Gia and Leslie are the founding members of the WO Pride Coalition.
  - Spend for events and parades have been out of pocket.
  - Plans to raise Pride flag at Town Hall on June 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - David and Gia to meet about flag event and other smaller CDC-approved gatherings.
- Juneteenth – David
  - Celebration widely known in the Black/African-American community that marks the historical end to slavery.
  - Now a state-recognized holiday.
  - Will work with HRC to program a celebration.
  - Joyce serves on the board of the WO Arts Council; will set up meeting to explore a partnership. Shannon endorsed the idea of partnerships with 3<sup>rd</sup> party organizations.
- Volunteer List
  - Shannon has a list of 39 volunteers that could be tapped to help with subcommittees and event planning.

## 6. Other/Public Comment

- Councilwoman Williams to share list of state recognized commissions.
- Councilwoman Williams shared concern from a local resident regarding the approval of the Hatzolah EMS organization, that may discriminate women. David to speak with Rabbi Tobin. Council President Mutute-Brown to speak with Mayor Parisi.

## 7. Adjournment

Dagmar motions to adjourn the meeting at 8:47/ Joyce seconds. Motion passes.

## 8. Future Meeting Dates: May 24, June 28, July 26, August 23

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