



**Human Relations Commission  
Meeting Agenda  
Sept 27, 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 7:10pm

HRC Attendance 2021

Commissioners: Dr. David E. Jones, Chair, Commissioners Shannon Gattens, Asmeret Ghebremicael, Patrecia West, Dawn Adams, Dagmar Hobson, and Secretary Caroline Harris

Guest: Community Volunteer Natacha Clesca

2. Commissioners One-Word Check-In

- Commissioner Shannon Gattens – Tired
- Commissioner Patrecia West – Concerned
- Dr. David E. Jones, Chair – Overwhelmed
- Commissioner Dawn Adams – Grateful
- Secretary Caroline Harris – Exasperated
- Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael – Happy
- Commissioner Patrecia West: Experience with Rose/Thorn at a recent conference was very helpful and impactful; suggested a time limit for an update

3. Acceptance of minutes of the last regular meeting of the Commission – Commissioner Shannon Gattens motions, Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael seconds, vote at October meeting/Executive special session (no quorum)

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

- Subcommittee reports (none)

4. Report - Chairperson Update

- Acknowledgement of the Jewish holidays and to be thoughtful of how we can support our Jewish neighbors
- Recognize that September marked 20 years since 9/11. The HRC is available to the community to offer support.
- Love and Unity Festival was a success
  - Thank you to volunteers
  - HRC sign-ups
- Haiti and the Haitian community still experiencing ongoing turmoil. The vigil was in August, but HRC will not lose sight of continued work to support our Haitian neighbors.

- Acknowledgement of accomplishments
  - Thankful for HRC Commissioners' leadership
  - AAPI Vigil, Community Award, Juneteenth, Vigil for Haiti, Pride Flag raising, etc. were all good events and provide good momentum into the Fall and rest of year.
- Farmer's Market table won't happen – need to focus resources differently. Commissioner Dawn Adams suggested having flyers and handouts prepared to pass out in more highly trafficked areas.
- Reminder to attend monthly meetings and to notify Dr. David E. Jones, Chair/Commissioner Shannon Gattens in advance if unable to attend. Dr. David E. Jones, Chair, will send a follow-up email.
- Secretary Caroline Harris to speak with the library about using their community room for our meetings.

## 5. Old business

- Prayer Vigil for Haiti
  - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair: thankful to volunteers for a beautiful event.
  - NJ Women for Haiti were integral to the planning and execution.
  - Community Volunteer Natacha Clesca of NJ Women for Haiti thanked the HRC for their help and wisdom. Thanked Commissioner Shannon Gattens for coordination with WO Facilities, and Dr. David E. Jones, Chair for introductions to town officials. Planning a collection of items to send to earthquake victims.
  - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair – suggestion to connect with local schools to help with collections.
- Love and Unity Fest, Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>
  - Commissioner Patrecia West: Suggestion to display pictures of other HRC events to show the community; have music to draw people to the table.
  - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair: Make a list of what we need at HRC table. Reimbursement of purchases to go to vote either email or the next meeting. Up to \$300 was budgeted for the event.
- Bloc Party: Small Business Event: Update from Joyce
  - Table discussion until October
- Music and movie night: Update from Commissioner Dawn Adams
  - Table discussion until October

## 6. New business

- HRC Commissioner Social Media Representatives
  - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair: Need help posting on Facebook; give Commissioners access to the FB page.
  - Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael can post if told what to post. Secretary Caroline Harris to help with social media outreach.
- Latinx Heritage Month Flag Raising – October 1<sup>st</sup> at 5pm. All are invited to attend.
- Acknowledging October 11th
  - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair: Acknowledges many may not celebrate Columbus Day because of the genocide committed by Christopher Columbus. 10/11 unofficially renamed Indigenous People's Day. WO Columbus statue removed after outcry, and Mayor Parisi responded. UNICO agreed to not use the Columbus name in relation to Italian Heritage Month and their flag raising ceremony. However, this renaming does not give recognition of the Indigenous community. Question: will the HRC support the Italian Heritage Flag Raising or will the HRC do something separate to focus on Indigenous peoples?
  - Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael: Is there a way to support both the parade as well as the Indigenous community? The HRC should be inclusive of all communities in WO.
  - Commissioner Shannon Gattens: Believes her work on the HRC is to support marginalized residents. Would rather put resources behind marginalized community rather than a community that has many resources.
  - Commissioner Patrecia West: If we say we are inclusive, we don't always have a choice.
  - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair: Historically, Black History Month/heritage month was created to give voice for the Black community that were experiencing various layers of oppression. These months are opportunities to shine a light on communities often overlooked. Inclusion is about being mindful of groups that are not always included and giving them a voice in the context of a white-dominant society that we live in.

- Commissioner Dagmar Hobson: There will be a UNICO flag raising on October 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Commissioner Shannon Gattens: Suggestion to HRC Commissioners to split up and support the event they want to get behind.
- Dr. David E. Jones, Chair: HRC should be unified and vote on the way forward.
- Community Volunteer Natacha Clesca: Are there specific ways the HRC could show different levels of support? Vote on ways the HRC *can* support and leave it up to the HRC members to volunteer and give their time.
- Dr. David E. Jones, Chair: Rob wants to know if HRC will affirm/reject support of A) UNICO flag raising on 10/7 and B) Affirmation and proclamation of Indigenous People's Day on 10/11.
  - Commissioner Shannon Gattens supports both
- David to send Secretary Caroline Harris language to send to commissioners to vote via email.
- 2022 MLK Celebration
  - Separate from Heritage Month committee; this is an all-hands on deck event.
  - Last year, virtual; 2019 was at the High School. Prefer a location that is free of charge. HS and Liberty Middle School have large auditoriums and offer parking/near public transportation.
  - Identify a committee of Commissioners, volunteers are welcome, to start brainstorming a theme, programming layout, and engage other WO organizations.
    - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair, Commissioner Shannon Gattens, Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael, Community Volunteer Natacha Clesca, and Commissioner Dawn Adams volunteered to start organizing.
    - Secretary Caroline Harris to set up Doodle and meeting invite.
    - Committee Considerations: virtual/in-person, vaccination requirements, location, programming, resources, speakers, etc.
    - Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael: Suggests a vote on whether to combine with nearby townships.
    - Commissioner Dagmar Hobson: Would like to coordinate with WO African Heritage group.
- Native American Heritage Month –
  - Dr. David E. Jones, Chair, to touch base with Rob and Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael to discuss what programming HRC would like to organize in November.
- Upcoming Spiritual/Religious Holidays: Kwanzaa, Hanukkah
  - Make sure HRC publicly acknowledges these holidays. Commissioners encouraged to share events they are aware of surrounding these holidays.

## 7. Other/Public Comment

- Dr. David E. Jones, Chair: Thanked commissioners for constructive and honest discussion.
- Commissioner Patrecia West: Addressed topic of resegregation of schools raised at a recent Building One America event; Commissioner Patrecia West will share slides with statistics from BOA. Suggests HRC to discuss how to respond and/or how to engage with other nearby school districts.
- Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael: The HRC website should be updated so a link/QR could be provided at HRC-attending events; Commissioner Shannon Gattens: It has been updated and can only use the existing template. Suggests adding photos to site and update FB page. Commissioner Asmeret Ghebremicael: Post every week or month highlighting Commissioners.

8. Adjournment – Motions to adjourn at 8:51pm

9. **Future Meeting Dates:** October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021

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