

Human Relations Commission
Meeting Minutes
September 18, 2019 5:00 p.m.

Please note that the transcriber stopped functioning permanently during the meeting, and there is no recording of the meeting.

Attendance: Justin Carbonella, Ed Ford, Ava Hart, Precious Price, Debbie Ruimerman, Howard Thody, and Faith Jackson, Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management

Excused Absence: Brandie Doyle

Absence: Jeanette Blackwell, Henry Fernandez, Evan Davis, Youth in Government Representative, and Ani Zakarian, Youth in Government Representative

QUORUM: *Yes:* X *No:*

Call to Order: Chairperson Carbonella called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m. Councilman Gene Nocera was present. Nyaunu Stevens of NCCJ was in attendance via conference call. Betsy Morgan and Beverly Lawrence of the Racial Justice Coalition were also present.

Public Session: None.

Regular Meeting:

Approval of Minutes: Chairperson Carbonella asked for a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of August 21, 2019. Commissioner Ruimerman indicated two changes the minutes. She clarified that she had offered to provide food for one of the focus groups. The second change was that the food had to be prepared at a licensed facility, not by a licensed facility. Commissioner Price motioned to approve the Meeting Minutes of August 21, 2019, with the noted correction and Commissioner Ford seconded it. The chairperson called for a vote. The motion was properly carried.

Old Business:

Chairperson Carbonella asked Director Jackson to speak on the progress of the coordination of the focus groups.

Director Jackson said that the office has secured a space at the Russell Library for Tuesday, October 1st. One session will be from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., and the second session will be from 6:15 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. A mailing, which includes an invitation letter and an informational flyer, will go out Friday, September 20th. She further added that she followed up with NCCJ regarding amending the scope of work to four focus groups and two community conversations.

Chairperson Carbonella asked Nyaunu Stevens of NCCJ to provide an overview of how the focus groups will be run. According to Director Jackson's notes, NCCJ opens the groups by setting the space and making sure the environment is relaxed so people don't experience any fear in talking about their

lived experiences. Two people will conduct the session, and one will serve as the note taker. For the first ten minutes, NCCJ will set the guidelines, explaining that there will be no names and total anonymity for the notes. No one's name will be connected to the notes taken about his or her lived experiences.

NCCJ will then move to lived experiences. The questions will be developed around the points of view the Human Relations Commission was interested in knowing and capturing. Nyaunu Stevens indicated that they were all on the same page as far as the information they wanted to obtain. The facilitators will be neutral. The facilitators will ask what is positive about being a person of color in Middletown, and what the challenges are. The facilitator will ask for recommendations for facilitating change, for supporting people of color, and for being a part of the solution. The facilitators will be using a timer and keeping the group on topic. The talk will be specific to City Hall and lived experiences in Middletown. The goal is to create an emotionally healthy space for capturing important data that can be used for developing a plan. Also, people will be told that they can follow up with Director Jackson if they have questions.

Director Jackson went on to discuss the planning steps for the next two focus groups. They will try to schedule the last two for November. The youth session will be held at 2:15 p.m. on the specified date, and the last adult one can be held around 4:00 p.m. on the same day.

Director Jackson reminded Commissioner Price that she would be working with Evan Davis on getting the students who will be participating in the youth session and the best date for the session.

New Business:

Review: The commission reviewed the 2019 attendance.

Announcements The next meeting of the commission will be October 16, 2019 at the Youth Services Bureau.

Adjournment: Commissioner Ford motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Thody seconded. The chairperson called for a vote. The motion was properly carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Kasey Maurice,
Administrative Sec. III