



CITY OF EASTHAMPTON
50 Payson Avenue Easthampton, MA 01027
413-529-1400

Community Relations Committee
February 23, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Meeting held remotely due to COVID 19 Pandemic Restrictions.

1. Start Recording/Call to Order. 6:05 p.m.
2. Roll Call. Members present: Rebecca Passa, Emily Britton, Margaret Kierstein, Ebenezer Afarikumah, and Myra Oyedemi. Members absent: Jon Norman.
3. Approval of Minutes. Minutes had been proposed for the CRC meeting of January 26, 2022. On motion by Margaret and seconded by Ebenezer Afarikumah, the minutes were approved unanimously.
4. Announcements. Rebecca reported that we successfully arranged a meeting time with Dr. Lomax Campbell and we also arranged a time as a “getting to know each other” gathering. Myra remembered Black History month and expressed the hope that everyone had a chance to observe it in some fashion throughout the month.
5. Public Speak. No one appeared for “public speak.”
6. Follow-up meeting with Darryck Dean of the Department of Justice Community Relations Service, including discussion of strategic planning, updates on progress made, current thinking, current goals, resources needed and available, program priorities and materials presented. Darryck Dean met with the committee, first being introduced to our new member, Dr. Ebenezer Afarikumah, and he congratulated our new Co-chairs, Myra and Emily. Rebecca’s continuing service as Secretary was also noted.

Darryck invited us to be informal with him as we provided updates. After noting the changes in leadership, he asked about the current status of funding available to the CRC. Emily reported spending some \$68 on cookies and \$30 on printing for our first outreach event: our participation in Easthampton’s WinterFest. She then described WinterFest and the survey form the CRC offered to people stopping by the CRC table. She suggested we received a small percentage compared to the 125 cookies that were given out, but she thought it was a success. Myra added that online survey responses had been increasing and then took a look. So far, the highest number of respondents were in favor of having educational opportunities, with the second highest in favor of promoting strong neighborhoods and connections. Most expressed interest in attending future CRC-sponsored events. Dr. Eben indicated that he tried to forward the survey link and/or Q Code to other Easthampton platforms in order to encourage responses from a variety of platforms within the community. He suggested allowing a sufficient timeframe for the

survey so that community members will be able to respond and expressed concern about those who do not have Internet. Ensuing remarks suggested that we may take steps to improve the survey in the future, along with suggestions regarding strategic locations where we could consider for placing paper copies.

Darryck then asked whether we had a program we're planning (a dialogue, program or event). Myra reported on our near-term project, aided by survey results, being a "gathering of neighbors". A timeline will need to be created for these. Additional short-term goals mentioned were developing liaisons in the community and creating subcommittees to support these efforts. Margaret mentioned the Undoing Racism effort and CRC support for that effort, which Myra saw as in line with our mid-term goal of having an educational event.

Emily mentioned the Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition, and the Easthampton Film Festival as organizations with whom the CRC could develop a liaison. Darryck offered ideas lending to youth inclusion: sponsoring youth to participate in, for example, Undoing Racism and offering them a camera in order to create a small mini-film, perhaps about inclusion or a welcoming Easthampton from their perspective.

Darryck complimented us for our reports, gave positive feedback and a virtual high-five. He indicated that he would be sending information to us regarding the "Massachusetts Human Rights Coalition," which is a consortium or coalition of the Human Rights Commissions in the state. They meet monthly and discuss issues that come up. He recommended them as a resource in case we would like to be in touch with who's out there doing this work in the state.

We were also reminded of the draft Plan of Action that Darryck proposed to us following our training with him. Darryck took a few minutes to provide an overview to our newest member of what we did. If the CRC agrees to sign off on it, Darryck thought that would be great. This is something the CRC can decide as we deliberate further.

Finally, in perhaps another 90 days Darryck will ask about checking in again.

7. Reports and follow-up from CRC subcommittees and/or other CRC members, as follows:

A. Winterfest. Follow-up re: CRC participation, survey and survey results. Emily expressed interest in responding to Anne of the Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition, whom she met at the CRC event. Rebecca suggested that approaches to this outreach could be considered by subcommittee which, by nature, includes a greater flexibility with regard to meeting.

Also regarding Winterfest, Myra reported on the web page the CRC has with the City. More specifically, the WinterFest survey has been posted to the website in lieu of a previous questionnaire that had been on the CRC page.

B. Subcommittee list (this was item E on the agenda). The subcommittees proposed were:

Forum – develop and execute community events and educationals

Outreach – create liaisons to existing committees, organizations, and community (building community network and trust)

ByLaws – create a living document in relation to policy, procedures and practice

Onboarding – ongoing welcome of new members, orient them to strategic planning, ByLaws, current and historical CRC events.

Finance and Budget – project an annual budget as well as budget for specific events, track and document spending

Digital Communication – create digital content (and maybe even paper content) and liaise with content distributors, or applicable city personnel for purposes of informing and publicizing ongoing CRC initiatives, platforms, etc.

Rebecca shared the CRC Subcommittee Interest Form that is on the CRC Google account, although members' responses were not showing.

Committee members advised us of their interests as follows:

Eben Afarikumah: Digital Communication and Outreach

Margaret Kierstein: Forum, ByLaws and – if no one else will do it – Finance and Budget

Emily Britton: Outreach, Digital Communications

Myra Oyedemi: Forum, Outreach, and Onboarding

Rebecca Passa: ByLaws, Digital Communication, and Forum

Rebecca mentioned, for the Onboarding subcommittee, a notebook that new members can get from Lindsy at the Mayor's Office. Myra offered to meet with Eben, at least to get him up to date.

- C. Forum Subcommittee (was B). There was no update other than the planning session scheduled for Friday with Dr. Lomax Campbell and hear some of his proposals, thoughts and vision. Emily mentioned that she loved Darryck Dean's suggestion re: CRC sponsorship of people to go to the next Undoing Racism workshop. Margaret indicated her interest in asking whether the People's Institute collects data or whether there would be a way to discover what the attendees from the City of Easthampton felt about the training. Emily also wondered about the follow-up Dr. Campbell expressed interest in organizing and whether it would include a chance to share what those attendees thought about it. Myra suggested CRC members send questions to Rebecca for forwarding to Dr. Campbell in advance of our meeting.
- D. "Getting to Know You" session for CRC members (was C). Sunday, March 6th at 4:00 p.m. Myra noted that Rebecca had sent out an article about getting to know people more authentically. Margaret suggested sharing credentials – where we work, what we do, etc. Some discussion ensued regarding ways to share information about ourselves, including whether some improv would be interesting and helpful.
- E. Statement re: Native American Heritage Month. Report from Myra with regard to the proposed letter or letters (was D). Myra effectively asked for an extension of time, as

she would like to spend another 20 minutes with it. Myra indicated she would reach back out to the committee members who had originally worked on the statement.

F. Initiatives/Strategic Ideas spreadsheet. Myra reported on the idea of creating a sort of “parking lot” for good ideas, perhaps including a budget and perhaps including under what strategic category it would fall. This would be in order to keep these items in are planning and avoid overlooking a valuable idea. An example was the idea of having signs for our gathering(s) of neighbors.

8. Next regular meeting date: March 23, 2022, with a work session on February 25, 2022.

9. Adjourn. On a motion made by Emily with a second by Margaret, the committee voted unanimously to adjourn with all 5 present in favor. Adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca L. Passa, Secretary