



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

Community Relations Committee
March 9, 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 and Myra Oyedemi. Members arriving shortly after the start of the meeting: Jon Norman, Ebenezer Afarikumah. Ebenezer Afarikumah disconnected early.
3. Approval of Minutes. No further minutes have been proposed as of this time.
4. Announcements. Rebecca reported our receipt of an e-mail from David Detmold, a coordinator with changethemassflag.com in association with the Boston-based maindigenousagenda.org. He is interested in our help bringing a resolution before the Easthampton City Council in support of changing “the racist state flag and seal of Massachusetts.” Rebecca further reported that another e-mail received through the CRC e-mail address was for Easthampton committee chairs. Angelique Baker, the Chair of the Commission on Disability is suggesting or asking whether there is a way to have a meeting of all committee chairs in order to introduce themselves to each other. Ms. Baker wants to be able to open lines of communication and suggests something like a picnic at the park. Rebecca indicated she would e-mail the correspondence to the committee and work with the Co-chairs on these being included on a future agenda.

Myra announced that, this evening, there is to be a City meeting on appointments and, if it comes to a vote this evening, we may be joined by a new committee member.

Secondly, Myra announced that International Women’s Day was observed yesterday (March 8, 2022). Margaret pointed out that March is also Women’s History Month. Myra also thanked all the committee members for sharing their time the other evening when we got to know each other a little bit more. Jon mentioned learning about International Women’s Day when he was young and continuing to do something at the school to observe it. Eben seemed to be in favor of observing such days, perhaps promoting excellence and inspiring others by honoring Easthampton women who have distinguished themselves through their leadership or service.

A “parking lot” document was also announced as Rebecca showed through a screenshare, mentioning the first item as the distribution of paper copies of the CRC survey; the second being a meeting of the CRC members for coffee; and adding as a third item the idea of honoring special days such as International Women’s Day.

5. Public Speak. No one appeared for “public speak.”
6. Report from Forum Subcommittee, including but not limited to dates for the proposed Undoing Racism workshop. Margaret reported that she, Myra and Rebecca had met for an hour prior to the CRC’s meet and greet on Sunday. Margaret had also corresponded with the Mayor and sent out a copy of those communications to the committee, about the Undoing Racism trainings, the CRC’s money and the 2023 budget. Her sense of where we’re at right now is that the CRC needs to consider a couple of choices about the Undoing Racism trainings. One choice would be (i) for the CRC not to do the Undoing Racism trainings; (ii) to lead planning for this one training for 2022 prior to July 1st; (iii) to plan debriefs for people who attended the first two; and (iv) the fourth issue is considering creating a survey from the Easthampton people who have taken the training, especially if indeed the People’s Institute hasn’t already assembled some or all of this data. Margaret realized that we haven’t asked about data from the Undoing Racism trainings except from Dr. Campbell.

Myra referred to Margaret’s correspondence with the Mayor, reading over some of the remarks including: “If the CRC can, wants to be the convener or lead recruiter for future training, [m]y office will need dates and costs for the training. If not, my office will work directly with Dr. Campbell to schedule debriefs and new training on a timeline that my office can adequately organize. Let us know when you can. Given the City Charter, CRC should propose a budget for the fiscal year, July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, with expenditures ...”

The question from Myra’s perspective was whether this is something the Mayor is still doing, since she was the initiator of the Undoing Racism workshops and if it was something that she wanted to continue doing within the scope of her office. Margaret’s feeling was that if the CRC wanted to pick up this work, that would be okay and, if we don’t want to pick it up, the Mayor will continue doing what she’s doing. The cost is going to be via the Mayor’s Office and not out of the funds allocated to the CRC. Emily mentioned hearing through one or more community members that they would not necessarily recommend it, and that her own hesitation has been whether anyone in our community could really dedicate three full days to the three-day training.

Myra’s sense was that the workshop was helpful to some people, it was educational to some people. In the end, however, what we do should be an entry point for the community, whereas the Undoing Racism workshop seems to be a mismatch at this time. Who can attend during all working hours of the day, for three days, who would that be? Will we be providing child care and/or meals for the attendees? Will we be providing lodging for the presenters and can we get this together prior to the end of June with an adequate number of people attending?

Myra would like us to keep thinking: we set a course of how we were going to get community buy-in; that we were going to start building community; we were going to have neighborhood gatherings; we were going to start being able to discuss -- as the beginning step -- with the end step being a workshop and educational which talks about deep issues. It seems, rather, that we’re considering jumping over those steps and have the workshop without having attained the community, and it seems like a false start.

Rebecca mentioned the survey begun at WinterFest and, with the warmer months coming, Myra suggested our beginning our outreach by reaching out to survey respondents. We could then begin to set up a calendar for neighborhood gatherings, avoiding summer holidays and travel plans. Our survey is not exhaustive, but at least it has some data we can work with.

Margaret volunteered to create a draft letter to the Mayor, which she would first share with the forum subcommittee. She agreed to include bullet points we discussed, for example, that the CRC is willing to collaborate on the Undoing Racism workshops or be a collaborative partner; that Dr. Campbell proposed some dates and what they are; that the CRC had some concerns regarding people being underrepresented; and that the CRC feels there is an ongoing need for debriefings for all workshops.

7. Outreach Committee. Emily reported that the Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition, led by Anne Talley and Rebecca Edwards, need to meet during the business day which is not easy for Emily. They can't attend our meeting of March 23rd but would be interested in hearing about our April meeting.

Myra reported hearing from the Vice Chair of the Easthampton Commission on Disability, in line with the correspondence we received from Chair Angelique Baker. Their meetings are during the day, but he thought perhaps some of their members could attend one of our meetings in the future. That would be a great collaboration that we could reach out to in the future. A next step would be to discuss the e-mail, respond, and decide how formal we want our introduction to be. We may like to reach out by telephone in the first instance. Their joining a future meeting would also be nice.

8. Finance. Margaret reported on her view that the CRC should begin considering its budget for Fiscal Year 2023, along with projected budget for the neighborhood get-togethers. Margaret agreed to look into the acceptability of purchasing gift cards from local businesses to support our work going forward. Purchase suggested included one or more coolers, a tent and some announcement signs.
9. Next regular meeting dates: March 23, 2022; April 27, 2002. Discussion ensued of our meeting schedule and the workload that we have. Rebecca recently attended an Open Meeting Law training and agreed to forward some questions to the Mayor that confused her with regard to the definition and roles of subcommittees.
10. Adjourn. On a motion made by Jon with a second by Myra, the committee voted unanimously to adjourn with all five present in favor, Dr. Eben Afarikumah having disconnected early. Adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca L. Passa, Secretary