



Amherst Community Diversity Commission

Tuesday, March 14th 2023
5:30pm online meeting on Zoom

WELCOME & ROLL CALL: Chairperson Dr. Mohan Devgun welcomed all the attending members of Amherst Community Diversity Commission.

ATTENDING: Chairperson. Dr. Mohan Devgun, Deborah Bruch Bucki, RN, PhD, Amherst Council Member/Commission Liaison. Commission Members: Melissa Abel, Dr. Mohammad Asghar Khan, Dr. Zhen Liu, Anne Rohrer, Dr. Joseph Sankoh, Thomas Lucia, Heidi Nicklaus Lefebvre.

ABSENT: Gul A. Rahman, Secretary, Maria Cala, Prachee Samant, Cynthia Bass

ELECT THE OFFICERS-RULES OF ORDER:

1. CHAIRPERSON – Dr Mohan Devgun.
Nomination: First motion made by Anne Rohrer, second motion by Dr Joseph Sankoh.
Approved unanimously.
2. VICE CHAIRPERSON – Gul A. Rahman
Nomination: First motion made by Dr Mohan Devgun, second motion by Dr Joseph Sankoh. Approved unanimously.
3. SECRETARY – Zhen Liu
Nomination: First motion made by Dr Mohan Devgun, second motion by Dr Joseph Sankoh. Approved unanimously.

Congratulations to the newly elected officers. Yay and hurray! by Deborah Bruch Bucki.

NOVEMBER 14TH 2022 MEETING MINUTES AND FEBRUARY 14TH 2023 MEETING (UNOFFICIAL)

NOTES: Minutes approved unanimously by the board. Melissa Abel abstained from voting due to absence in the October Diversity Commission meeting.

PLAN OF JUNETEENTH PROGRAM: This is discussed extensively. Cynthia Bass leads the organization of the event but was absent at the meeting. Heidi Nicklaus Lefebvre reported that the Amherst Senior Center preferred to hold the event in the evening since Friday lunch time is busy for the staff to prepare for the weekend Meals on Wheels. She also suggested a change to Thursday June 13th at 6:30 PM, as well as collaborating with the libraries to bring more youth to the event. Deborah Bruch Bucki reminded all that two years ago, Town Supervisor delegated the celebration event to the Commission.

Heidi also mentioned the option to hold the event at the Erie Community College this year. But Melissa Abel suggested holding the event at the Senior Center, while making it a community event by keeping the event open up for all ages. Conclusively, it should be advertised as community event not only a senior event. Melissa Abel will communicate with Cynthia Bass regarding the change of schedule. Anne Rohrer volunteered to contact Tops and Bj's store for sponsorship. Dr. Devgun volunteered to write a letter to the sponsors and Deborah Bruch Bucki will ask the IT department for a letterhead of the Commission.

Anne will work on the flyer for the Juneteenth event to be published by Amherst Bee.

Dr. Joseph Sankoh moved to approve the date of the celebration as Thursday June 13th, pending approval by Cynthia, seconded by Anne Rohrer. Unanimously approved.

DISPLAY/PUBLICITY MATERIAL: Anne Rohrer reported that the office supply for the Commission, including the table covering and the banner, are now kept by Thomas Lucia. Anne reported that she made the name tags for the members that she will bring to the next meeting in person.

DISPLAYS FOR DECEMBER 2022 AND NEW YEAR CELEBRATION: Heidi Nicklaus Lefebvre reported that the display at Clearfield Library was open to the public for 6 weeks, and the event had 75 children participating. She thanked the library for doing a wonderful educational job and Deborah Bruch Bucki for reaching to the town highway department to provide speedy snow cleaning outside the library after the record-breaking snowstorm. Anne complimented the international tables displays and variety of snacks. Deborah Bruch Bucki complimented the timeliness of the event after the lockdown due to snowstorm. Board members donated snacks, water etc. Great teamwork!

FINAL REVIEW OF 2023 DIVERSITY COMMISSION CALENDAR: Heidi Nicklaus Lefebvre moved to approve the calendar, seconded by Dr Joseph Sankoh. Although the Calendar is approved by the Commission, the final copy of Diversity Calendar will be posted on the Town of Amherst website after the April meeting, if any amendment is to be made by Gul Rahman. Unanimously approved.

PLANNING EVENTS FOR 2023: Heidi Nicklaus Lefebvre reported that the commission will hold an event, titled “We All Bake Bread”, at the Clearfield Library on April 6th. She and Thomas Lucia will organize the event with the assistance of the library director Mary Lou Kinyon. The event will present fresh bread representing different cultures, for participants of ages 5 and above. Dr. Devgun will also attend the event. Multiple members contributed money to the event.

TOWN LIAISON REPORT: Deborah Bucki’s Liaison report covered the requirement of 2023 annual report of the commission. Dr. Devgun agreed to prepare the annual report with the collaboration of Board members.

SCHOOL BOARD LIAISON REPORT: Thomas Lucia reported that the Sweet Home Central School District now has a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, with 100 members and 5 subcommittees including school student leaders. They have 42 different languages & cultures in the district. More information is available on their website. JoAnn Balazs, their Assistant Superintendent, is in charge of the DEI Committee and will be invited to share more details at the Commission’s future meeting.

Tom Lucia also reported on the public information session of the Williamsville Central School District’s DEI committee. The Superintendent, a teacher as the DEI person, and 3 people from Buffalo, worked together on the DEI initiative. They recommended us to watch the video “Equity, Excellence, and Access” ([link](#)) by the State Education Department. The district uses the CRS (Culturally Responsive-Sustaining) framework by the State too. They have one committee in each school. Their contact person is Mrs. Linda Ruest.

The State has made a goal for every school district to submit a DEI plan. Both aforementioned school districts already submitted their plans, and it looks like they have been approved. The Williamsville’s plan is very comprehensive.

Tom Lucia reported no info on Amherst Central School district since he has not been in contact with the district so far.

OLD BUSINESS: No New Old business report.

NEW BUSINESS: No New Old business report.

COMMUNITY MATTERS: No New Old business report.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Next Diversity Commission meetings will be held on the second Tuesday April 11th, 2023 at 5:30pm (in person) Amherst Town Municipal Building.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: First motion to adjourn the meeting by Dr Joseph Sankoh and second by Tom Lucia. Unanimously approved.

MISSION STATEMENT: The purpose of this coalition is to enhance and increase cooperation, understanding, and dialogue among residents of diverse cultural, religious, socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, and to promote inclusion throughout the town. Some of the responsibilities of the coalition will be to study the demographics of Amherst; promote town-wide events that foster cultural minority participation on governmental boards and committees and in the Town's workplace; and to facilitate meetings designed to promote a better understanding of who Amherst is as a community.

Respectfully submitted,

Zhen Liu, PhD
Member of Amherst Community Diversity Commission
Acting Secretary