



Amherst Community Diversity Commission

Tuesday, May 14th, 2024, at 5:30 PM
On Zoom

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

ATTENDEES: Dr. Mohan Devgun, Chairperson, Gul A. Rahman, Vice Chairperson, Zhen Liu, PhD, Secretary, Angela Marinucci, Amherst Town Councilmember and Liaison, Commission Members: Anne Rohrer, Dr. Mohammad Asghar Khan, Annette Herrman, Purnima Srinivasan Mohan, Yanhong Baranski, Della Gray-Hailey, JoAnn Balazs. Martha Taggart, Amherst Town Secretary to the Supervisor.

ABSENT: Cynthia Bass, Danessia Scott-Warren, Esq., Heidi Nicklaus Lefebvre.

GUESTS: No guests were present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS:

MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENTS: No update from the members

OLD BUSINESS:

APRIL 9th MEETING MINUTES:

The motion to approve the minutes was moved by ___ Dr. Devgun___ and seconded by ___Zhen Liu___. Unanimously approved. JoAnn Balazs, Della Gray-Hailey, Yanhong Baranski recused themselves from voting for not being present at the meeting.

JUNETEENTH PROGRAM REVIEW:

The Commission discussed the concerns regarding who would be in charge of crafts and vending of food, as mentioned in the flyer. Since Danessia is the lead of the planning and was not present, Dr. Devgun planned to meet her next week and ask her about the process. If needed, the Commission will meet again afterwards.

PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR 2024:

Anne Rohrer reported that she had talked with Heidi about holding library programs again in the Fall and next Spring. She would like to know about the fund available for these programs. Anne also reported that her synagogue was organizing cross-community healing events in response to the current development in the Palestine-Jewish situation. She proposed to share the resources from her synagogue if the Commission wishes to plan something similar, in order to bring people together and accepting their differences. She emphasized that as the Commission for Diversity, the expression should incorporate everybody. Dr. Devgun, Gul and Zhen discussed and agreed that the Commission could try doing it. The Commission also discussed the potential cost and strategy of organizing such events (such as demonstration using colorful jellybeans, the public library's summer reading list, book display, webpages, etc.).

SCHOOL BOARD LIAISON REPORT:

School board liaison Danessia Scott-Warren was absent. Zhen proposed that the Commission may have JoAnn Balazs as the second school board liaison. The Commission members like the idea and JoAnn reported that all school districts are doing well in diversity, independently and collectively, and agreed to be responsible for communicating with the Sweek Home School District. Dr. Devgun recommended that JoAnn to communicate also with Amherst Central School District, while Danessia is responsible for communicating with the Williamsville Central SD and other private schools. JoAnn agreed to do so.

TOWN LIAISON REPORT:

Liaison Angela Marinucci reported that the Town Board's work is continuing and is keeping up with the Juneteenth planning via emails.

Dr. Devgun asked about the motion at the Town Board meetings that the town employees cannot serve on the Town's boards and committees. Angela Marinucci reported that there is no such resolution. Anne said that there was a suggestion that the town employees could only be resource persons instead of members of the boards and committees. Angela said it was not something that she had heard or voted on, and she was happy to look into it.

Annette asked if the Town Liaison has a budget for printing the flyers of the Juneteenth Festival program, as well as the brochures of the Commission. Angela agreed to find out if the budget exists.

Dr. Devgun asked Angela if she would be available to provide the proclamation for the program. Angela provided her availability and Marty agreed to assist with last year's version.

NEW BUSINESS:

COMMUNICATION, IF ANY:

FUTURE MEETINGS: Next Diversity Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday June 11th, 2024, at 5:30 PM via Zoom.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: First motion to adjourn the meeting by__ Dr. Devgun__ and seconded by __Zhen Liu_. Unanimously approved. The meeting concluded at 6:30 PM.

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 by

Zhen Liu, PhD

Secretary of Amherst Community Diversity Commission