



Amherst Community Diversity Commission

Tuesday, October 8th, 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, Purnima Srinivasan Mohan, Annette Herrman, Heidi Nicklaus Lefebvre. Martha Taggart, Amherst Town Secretary to the Supervisor.

ABSENT: Cynthia Bass, Yanhong Baranski, JoAnn Balazs, Danessia Scott-Warren Esq., Della Gray-Hailey.

GUESTS: No guests were present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS:

MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENTS: No update from the members

OLD BUSINESS:

June 11th MEETING MINUTES:

Annette Herrman pointed out that the next meeting's schedule in the minutes was September 10th, but the date of the actual meeting was October 8th. Zhen agreed to update it.

The motion to approve the minutes was made by __ Anne Rohrer__ and seconded by __Zhen Liu__. Unanimously approved. Annette Herrman, Heidi Nicklaus Lefebvre recused themselves from voting for not being present at the meeting.

JUNETEENTH PROGRAM REVIEW:

The Commission discussed the Juneteenth program. Dr. Devgun invited Angela Marinucci to update the meeting afterwards. Angela reported that Danessia had resigned from the Commission. At the Zoom meeting after the event, she, Dr. Devgun, Danessia, and Marty met to discuss issues such as that Danessia felt she was not sure who was to represent the Commission at the event with the news reporters. The meeting also discussed the option of having a chairperson for the event in the future.

Dr. Devgun commented that the organization of the event was between Danessia and the Town office, while the Commission was much less involved. For example, when Dr. Devgun wanted to talk to the Channel 2 reporter, Danessia told him that he was not supposed to do so. Dr. Devgun asked why no one told him about that before the event.

Gul Rahman commented by recalling when she started at the Commission, every member was involved and worked as a team. She then recalled the then-member Maria Rosario Cala, who took over the event for Hispanic Heritage Month, while leaving the others of the Commission behind. And once the event was over, Maria no longer showed up at the meetings of the Commission. Then, Gul mentioned that she felt like a guest at the Juneteenth event as she was not able to be involved. She hoped the Commission would address the issue afterwards. Also, she felt shocked upon the resignation of Danessia.

Anne reported that she felt it was Danessia's event instead of the Commission's, as the Commission was not well represented. She felt not allowing the Chair of the Commission to talk to the news reporter was not acceptable. She did not understand why Danessia resigned.

Angela suggested that the major problem was miscommunication. She felt that smaller meetings could have helped with the preparation for the event.

Heidi praised the success of the event and was grateful for the effort of Danessia. She invited the Commission to reflect on the Commission's purpose and mission and asked how to promote diversity as broadly as we could. She also felt the Commission was not involved and it was unfortunate that Danessia was having a difficult time as her family member was sick.

Gul and Dr. Devgun agreed to wrap up the matter positively by writing to Danessia a thank-you letter.

PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR 2024:

Heidi reported that back in August the display case at the Audubon library was already reserved unfortunately for December 2024, so she reserved it for December 2025.

She reported that Anne and she planned with the library to organize another event called "Books from Around the World", where the same child story would be read in different languages, such as Ukrainian, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Yiddish, and so on, using the books from the library, to educate young children about different cultures. A planning meeting with the librarian was scheduled for Tuesday October 22 4:15 PM at the Audubon library and the Commission was invited. The Commission discussed how to assist the event.

Dr. Devgun also announced that there would be an informal planning meeting of the Commission on Oct. 29, at 6pm at Tim Horton's on 870 Maple Rd.

SCHOOL BOARD LIAISON REPORT:

Dr. Devgun asked if anyone could be the school board liaison. Zhen proposed that Purnima could be the one as she already knew all superintendents.

TOWN LIAISON REPORT:

Liaison Angela Marinucci reported the town was finalizing the budget for Year 2025. The town will hold a townhall meeting at the Amherst Senior Center on Oct. 24th at 10 am. November 28th is the date to finalize.

Angela also reported that the Commission's spending for the Juneteenth event was around \$340. Heidi asked if the remaining \$600+ could be rolled over to the next year. Angela answered that it cannot.

Annette mentioned the Commission's brochure's printing cost could be covered by the remaining balance of the budget.

NEW BUSINESS:

COMMUNICATION, IF ANY:

Zhen proposed to have a rule that if any new member of the Commission was to lead any future event, there should be some other member senior than this member to be the chair of the planning committee and while the new member be the deputy chair, in order to keep the information flowing.

Gul proposed that in the coming year the members need to attend certain percentage of the meetings to comply with the attendance requirement of the Commission.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Next Diversity Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday November 12th, 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