

CDICR Minutes – Town Hall, Room 2, First Floor. April 13, 2022 6:00 PM
(Commission for Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations)

Attendees: Andrea Baez (chair); Walter Connelly (sec); Suzanne Martucci-Gallo; John Morgan; John Bentley, Anthony Williams; Joined by Committee on Committees: Councilors Rogerio, Belcher and Flockhart. Public commenters: Bybiose (Bee) Larochelle

1. Roll Call 6:00 PM

2. Minutes from February and March meetings

- Minutes of February meeting passed by roll call vote.
- Minutes of March meeting passed by roll call vote.

3. Committee on Committees (Councilors Rogerio, Belcher & Flockhart)

- Here to convey the Council's decision to include non-voting members on Commission to represent the Town Manager, the School Department and the Police Department.
- Commission had previously requested the equivalent as "liaisons". Anita Preble had been appointed by Superintendent Howard to represent the School Department. Commission welcomed the development and voted unanimously to accept the proposal.

4. New members needed for Commission at the annual appointment in June.

- Suggestions can be made to the TC President whose decision it is to appoint members.
- The application is "buried" on the Town website. There is a "fillable" PDF version.

5. Non-Binding Resolution on LGBTG Youth.

- The commission endorses Councilor Honan's non-binding resolution as a mean of re-iterating the community's support for transgender youth; and requests that it be added to the next Town Councilor agenda.

6. Anti-Italian questioning of Town Manager candidate by Councilor Flockhart.

- Councilor Barbara Flockhart agreed to stay for a discussion of her questioning of the candidates.
- Councilor Flockhart explained the backstory of how she came to repeat the anti-Italian trope in questioning the candidate on his past temper in the workplace. She admitted that it was mistake to quote the biased expression and did not intend to malign the candidates Italian ethnicity.
- Councilor Flockhart did not believe that Italians needed to be protected. Commissioner Connelly cautioned that her comment could be taken as a further insult and a micro-aggression at the very least by the Italian community. Commissioner Baez added that all members of the community needed to be treated equally and respectfully, not just minorities.
- Commissioner Baez reminded her that the community expects their elected leaders to treat everyone with fairness.

- Commissioner Connelly recognized that members of the community have every right to request her resignation. However, he was more concerned that Councilor Flockhart make her decision freely without pressure from any group, including those who would urge her to stay to preserve a perceived balance of power.
- Commissioner Bentley stressed that demeaning comments should not be repeated.
- The Winthrop Transcript had asked for details of April's meeting. Commissioners Baez and Connelly said that the Minutes could not be released until approved by the following meeting, but a summary would be issued.
- CDICR issues the following statement:
During official questioning of the Town Manager candidates, Councilor Barbara Flockhart employed an anti-Italian trope. The question was heard by many as an ethnic slur, and by any accounting it constituted a micro-aggression. It was plainly unacceptable, especially coming from an elected official. The Commission for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations does not condone any commentary, questioning or behavior that disparages any group, race, religion, nationality, sexual or gender identity. As a commission and as community, we cannot pick and choose when we advocate for equity and fairness; equity is for all. We believe that Councilor Flockhart spoke in ignorance, not realizing her unconscious bias and the hurt she caused. And so, the Commission recommends the following:
 1. *Unconscious Bias training for the Town Council*
 2. *The Town Manager work with HR to craft an interview protocol.*

7. DEI Website for School Dept.

- Agenda item had been kicked to April meeting due to Anita Preble's absence, and will be kicked further to May for same reason.

8. Panel Discussion as suggested/requested by Lee Foley and Suzanne Leonard at last meeting.

- If the purpose is to educate, Commissioner Bentley suggested we begin with something more manageable like an Information Packet that can be shared.
- All commissioners want to avoid creating an event that will attract on the "converted".
- The Commission will NOT take the lead or responsibility for this proposal, but will gladly continue discussions on the topic.

9. Public Comment

- Bee Larochelle re panel discussion and like matters: encouraged linking to existing educational opportunities online. A volunteer commission cannot create resources on its own.
- Bee also concerned with Councilor Flockhart's persisting bias and believed it was in her best interest to release a written apology/statement.

Submitted by Walter Connelly, Secretary of CDICR