

## Minutes from Cultural Connections Committee Meeting February 16<sup>th</sup> 2016.

**Members present** : Tom Lopez ( past chair), Bernadette Melton- Plante ( secretary), Lavone Colon, Mike Welch, Karen Emis- Williams, Mark Hastbacka, Kim Kleiner, Patricia Piecuch ,Fouad Mahfuz, Gerardo Zayas, Rafael Caldgron, Jenn Hoskings, Andrew Smith ( Facilitator for February's meeting ) and Jean Adie.

**Absent Members** : Sharon Dalton, Elias Muchuma Niva, Janeth Orozco Sanchez, Mary Ann Melizzi- Golja, Bruno Soares, Maria Bola-Ferriero and Dendrea Smith.

Andrew Smith was the facilitator for this month's meeting and has agreed to facilitate the March meeting. The past chair Tom Lopez is now an elected Alderman and according to the Bylaws can no longer chair the committee. Tom will be attending the meetings as a liaison between the Aldermanic Committee. Bernadette read the statement of purpose for the committee member." The Mission of the Cultural Connections Committee is to encourage understanding and appreciation of Ethnic Diversity in the City of Nashua and to facilitate communication between the Ethnic Community and City Government".

1. **Approval of Minutes** : No minutes were available for review, the secretary Bernadette Melton- Plante did not attend the last two meetings due to travel with her job .Patricia Piecuch the City Clerk stressed the importance of minutes been take at each meeting and that they need to be sent to her within 5 business days of the meeting so that Patricia can post them on the website.
2. Andrew Smith thanked Tom for all of his hard work as the chair and hopes we can continue as a group to move in the right direction. A discussion was held about finding a replacement for the Chair of the Cultural Connection Committee. The only members that are eligible to run for the Chair position are members who are community appointments, and not individuals who are representing different departments from the City of Nashua.
3. **Review of Bylaws and Committee Resources** : The members who attended spent time reviewing the current Bylaws of the Cultural Connections Committee and discussed Article 6.2 about Regular Meetings and how they need to be held

once a month. Patricia Piecuh reminded the group to post a schedule for upcoming meetings on the City Calendar. A discussion was held about a quorum and Article 6.5 was discussed at the meeting on Conduct of Meetings and the need to have 5 members of the Cultural Connection Committee present to have a quorum and that voting shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting business of the Cultural Connections Committee. A discussion was held additionally about the importance of order of business of all the meetings and that the same format must be used each month. The agenda needs to be developed and followed as outlined in the Bylaws under meetings article 6.6.

4. **Board Status Liaison Update** : The members reviewed the current roster and discussed which terms are due to expire and which have expired. Patricia stated she can update the roster of members so it reflects current members and terms. The Mayor's office is reaching out to individuals who had expressed an interest in the Cultural Connections Committee. Currently the website is down and Facebook page is currently being used as a tool for the Cultural Connection Committee. Tom provided the member's with an overview of the City of Nashua Website and demonstrated to the group how to access the google account and view all of the different folders he has created on various projects the Cultural Connections Committee has been involved in.

Kim Kleiner from the Mayor's office reported she was attending this meeting so she could share with the Mayor the direction the Committee is going in. A discussion was held that about the possibility of the City of Nashua looking into "My Brother's Keeper" that is an Initiative of President Barack Obama to build ladders of opportunity for boys and young men of color. Currently 49 states are involved in this Initiative New Hampshire is not one of those states. The main objective is to have your local communities' partner with local businesses and foundations to connect boys and young men to mentoring, support networks and skills they need to find a good job or go to college. This would be a huge undertaking but possibly a very appropriate project for the Cultural Connection Committee. Andrew Smith briefly spoke about the connection between "My Brother's Keeper" and "The Mirror Project" and how he felt both of these projects would possibly be a good combination for the Cultural Connection Committee to support. Andrew shared he is the State DMC Coordinator and discussed with the committee his work on ensuring fair and equal treatment by law enforcement, no matter what someone's background is, Andrew discussed how he has worked on decreasing Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) which is a term that refers to the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minority youth in the Juvenile Justice System. Andrew shared with the group his experience and how he assisted and supported local DMC Committees in

Manchester, Nashua, and Rochester. The committee members who were at the meeting all voiced an interest in finding out more information about the “My Brother’s Keeper Initiative “to determine if this is a project that the Cultural Connection Committee could lend support to. Andrew briefly shared with the group that “The Mirror Project “training is delivered with Police Officers. It provides Youth the opportunity to play the role of Police and gives them five minutes to peacefully “move the kids along “. Video is used to demonstrate what happens when things go well and what can happen when it goes badly. The Manchester School District has used this model with success.

5. **Chair/Co Chair Model vs VP Model:** Two current members stated they would consider running for the current openings on the Committee Lavonne Colon and Rafael Calderon. The committee discussed having the March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting be the annual meeting so any new officers could be voted into their positions prior to the meeting. Additionally a suggestion was made by Kim Kleiner to speak with the new members prior to the March’s meeting to see if they would be interested in running for a position of either Chair or Vice chair of the Cultural Connections Committee.
6. **Youth Ambassador Program:** Last year in November 2015 it was discussed whether to pass this program onto the PAL Program and One Greater Nashua if possible. The question presented to the Committee Members is does it still fit the Cultural Connection Committee needs and is it accomplishing what it is supposed to do. No decision was made at February’s meeting.
7. **Officer Nominations** : Two potential names were offered as possible candidates Lavonne Colon and Rafael Calderon .Andrew made a motion to accept these two names and it was seconded by Patricia Piecuch it was unanimously approved.
8. **Upcoming Meetings:** Karen reported a meeting on February 19<sup>th</sup> 2016 will be held at 10-00AM for the One Greater Nashua Committee at the Landmark Building. Karen reported the Gate City Initiative will be holding their meeting on March 2<sup>nd</sup> from 9-00AM to 11-00AM and one of the topics covered will be Refugee Resettlement this is open to the public. A forum meeting will be held on March 23<sup>rd</sup> at City Hall on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor for Festival Planning from 3-00PM to 5-00PM. The objective of the Festival Forum meeting is to give people an opportunity to meet and network on potential festivals planned for the City of Nashua and to avoid duplication and to become familiar with the guidelines of hosting a festival.

9. The next Cultural Connections Meeting will be on Tuesday March 15<sup>th</sup> from 3-30PM to 5-00PM in room 208 at City Hall in Nashua.

Respectfully Submitted

Bernadette Melton- Plante.

Secretary of Cultural Connections Committee.