

Minutes from Cultural Connections Committee Meeting March 15th 2016.

Members present : Tom Lopez (past chair Aldermanic Representative), Bernadette Melton- Plante (secretary), Mike Welch, Karen Emis- Williams, Mark Hastbacka, Adelina Hernandez, Sharon Dalton ,Fouad Mahfuz, Gerardo Zayas, Erica Rivera, Jenn Hosking, Andrew Smith (Facilitator for March's meeting) Jean Adie ,Manny Espitia, Patricia Piecuch and Tina Forbes.

Absent Members : Lavone Colon, Rafael Caldgron, Elias Muchuma Niva, Janeth Orozco Sanchez, Mary Ann Melizzi- Golja, Bruno Soares, Maria Bola-Ferriero and Dendrea Smith.

Andrew Smith was the facilitator for March's meeting. Andrew agreed to facilitate the March meeting so that the officers could be elected and voted into place for the Cultural Connections Committee." 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** : Several changes were made to the minutes. On number 8 of February's meeting minutes it should be noted that Karen did not report on the One Greater Nashua Committee Meeting at the Landmark building (source unidentified), that the meeting for the Refugee Resettlement Process is not March 2nd as stated in the minutes but March 23rd. A motion was made by Patricia to accept the minutes with the changes and seconded by Sharon.

2. Andrew Smith discussed with the group the importance of electing officers immediately so the committee could move forward with business. A lengthy discussion was held on the various options available to the group and concern about the fact that the two people Lavone Colon and Rafael Caldgron who had expressed interest in running for office were not at the meeting today. Bernadette stated to the group it was her understanding that both of these individuals strongly expressed interest and their lack of attendance was probably due to work commitments. Both candidates attendance at Cultural Connections Meetings has been outstanding. Patricia reminded the group that Rafael has not been confirmed by the Alderman as a member to the Cultural Connections Committee, this will not be in place until the end of the month. It was agreed upon by the attending members that it would be advisable to go with 2 Co-Chair, 1 Vice Chair, and 1 secretary. Bernadette made the motion that Lavone Colon and Jean Adie become Co-Chairs of the Cultural Connections Committee and that Rafael Caldgron become Vice Chair. Bernadette would remain on the committee as secretary until her term expires in April 2016. The motion was seconded by Jean and passed unanimously.
3. **Officer's Status**: New officers are Jean Adie and Lavone Colon as Co-Chair, Rafael Caldgron as Vice Chair and Bernadette Melton- Plante as secretary.
4. Patricia Piecuch spoke to the group about the meeting scheduled for March 23rd on the 3rd floor at 3-00PM to discuss Festival planning. Park and Recreation, Environmental, Permit Department, Police Department, Fire Marshalls and many other departments will be attending the meeting. Patricia wanted to ensure all local festival planners and people in the

community are aware of this scheduled meeting. Patricia wanted names of groups that should receive invitations. The group shared with Patricia that they all believed Tom Lopez has a list of organizations and we would ask him to provide that list to her. The group also suggested to Patricia that she contact the Chamber of Commerce and American Downtown.

5. Manny Spatial from the Mayor's office spoke to the group about President Obama's initiative "My Brother's Keeper" and how the Mayor is seriously considering this for Nashua. Currently 49 states are involved in this project and the Mayor would like to see Nashua become involved. Andrew stated this would work well with the Mirror Project .Manny the City of Nashua would be reviewing whether to accept this challenge in the next couple of months. Andrew along with Manny shared information about this program and the objective how it is designed to build ladders of opportunity for boy's girls and young men and women of color. Local communities and business's connect boys / girls and young men /women to mentoring, support networks and skills they need to find a good job or go to college and work their way up to be successful . Manny reported that he is currently looking at stake holders in the community of Nashua and expects a decision to be made in the next several months. Andrew discussed with the group how the program focuses on specific milestones some of which are getting a healthy start on entering school to learn, some of skills that are developed include cognitively development, physical development, social development and emotional development, the need for students to be reading at grade level by 3rd grade or age 8, the focus of graduating from high school and been ready for college and careers, completing post-secondary education and training , ability to enter into the workforce and the need to keeping kids on track and giving them second chances that all youth and young adults should be safe from violent crime and that individuals who are confined

should receive the education , training and treatment they need for a second chance. Andrew discussed the similarities of the mirror project and how the barriers that our disadvantaged youth face particularly young men of color and the cost to the US economy. We see significant disparities in education, exposure to the criminal justice system and employment or lack off that persists between young men of color and other Americans. The group discussed current stake holders at the table with the Cultural Connections Committee, Gate City Initiative and One Greater Nashua and that Nashua PAL and Girls Inc. would be good groups to talk to as well. All of the mentioned groups could be used as resources. Andrew thought the Cultural Connection's Committee would like to assist with this project if it is promoted further by the City. Andrew stated it would be helpful to know how we can help, what the sense of expectations would be and the need to not reinvent the wheel, have clear and concise goals for the committee, to have the opportunity to review the successes of this program in other states and to fully understand purpose and intent for the City of Nashua.

6. The committee discussed how they would like to have a faith representative on the committee, the group was all asked to think of possible candidates. It was shared we will have two new members at April's meeting on the committee.

7. Karen shared with the group in her role as an employee of the Division of Public Health and Community Services that Bobbie D. Hagley has been hired as the Director, Division of Public Health and Community services. Several members of the committee have all worked or interacted with Bobbie as she spent 7 years of academic leadership at Rivier University. Karen reported that on Saturday March 19th there will be a Heroin

Awareness Walk that is organized by the Opiate Task force that will meet at 11-00AM at Greeley Park.

8. Gate City Immigrant Initiative: Karen reported that on Wednesday March 23rd from 9-00 AM to 11-00 AM at Nashua City Hall in the Auditorium on the 3rd floor a presentation on the Refugee Resettlement Process will be presented by Ascentria Care Alliance and the International Institute of New England. Karen has requested that all member's present please communicate this information to interested parties. The meeting was adjourned at 4-41PM a motion was made by Karen and seconded by Sharon.
9. The next Cultural Connections Meeting will be on Tuesday April 19th from 3-30PM to 5-00PM in room 208 at City Hall in Nashua.

Respectfully Submitted

Bernadette Melton- Plante.

Secretary of Cultural Connections Committee.

