

Minutes from Cultural Connections Committee Meeting April 19th 2016.

DRAFT.

Members present : Lavonne Colon (Co Chair) Jean Adie (Co Chair) Rafaol Calderon (Vice Chair), Bernadette Melton Plante Secretary) Tom Lopez, Sharon Dalton, Adelina Hernandez, Sylvia Gale, Manuel Espitia, Sharon Dalton, Jenn Hosking, Tina Forbes, Turcina McNeilly and Sue Marin.

Excused Absences : Andrew Smith and Karen Emis - Williams.

Absent Members : Elias Muchuma Niva, Janeth Orozco Sanchez, Mary Ann Melizzi-Golja, Bruno Soares, Maria Bola-Ferrier, Kim Kleiner, Patricia Piecuch, Fouad Mahfuz, Mark Hastbacka and Dendrea Smith.

Tom Lopez read the mission of the 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**: Some changes were made to the minutes to reflect correct spellings of people names. Please note and accept apologies from this secretary, please note Manuel Espitia, Rafaol Calderon and Bobbie D Bagley are the correct spellings and not what was reflected in March’s minutes.Syliva made a motion to accept the amended March’s minutes seconded by Sharon and approved unanimously by the committee.
2. Introductions were made Sylvia Gale was welcomed by the committee. The new Co Chairs Lavonne and Jean along with Rafaol as Vice Chair were congratulated by the committee member’s. Sylvia mentioned that the minutes from this committee have not been updated since last June on the City Web site. Manuel stated he would look into this for the committee. Sylvia also suggested we look into how we receive information about new members so that we can reach out to

them and notify them of our upcoming meetings. A suggestion was made that we should receive notification from the Mayor's office.

3. A discussion was held about whether it is necessary to make a motion to accept and approve the agenda for the current meetings. Suggestions were made by committee members that we might want to make the meetings friendlier and open for guests and interested parties. Suggested was that the business reports from various committee's be at the end of the meeting versus the beginning. This would allow guests to talk to the Cultural Committee Members at the onset of the meeting and not have to sit through all the various committee reports. Sylvia suggested that the committee develop a list of festivals and activities that are going on in the City that is accessible. Tom stated a lot of the information is available on the Nashua City Website but is problematic if it is not kept up to date. Tom also stated that Facebook has a lot of the information as well.
4. **Gate City Immigrant Initiative Update** :
Karen was unable to attend the meeting today but provided a step by step process for resettlement security screening handout that is attached to these minutes. The area's covered are Refugee Status, Referral to the United States, Resettlement Support Center, Security Clearance Process, Security Clearance of certain refugees who undergo an additional security review called a Security Advisory Opinion (SAO), Security Clearance Process Refugees who meet the minimum age requirement have their fingerprints and photographs taken by a trained U.S Government employee usually on the same day as their DHS interview, In Person Interview, DHS Approval, Medical Screening, Matching Refugees with a Sponsor Agency, Cultural Orientation and Admission to the United States. Tom asked permission from the committee to provide this information to the Alderman as he felt it would be very helpful to them. The Committee provided full support for Tom to do this. They will be provided with a draft of this month's minutes.
5. **One Greater Nashua Navigators Program** : Adelina Hernandez and Tom Lopez gave an update of what the Nashua Navigators are planning for this year. The committee was informed this Saturday the group will be provided with Emergency Services information. This group meets on Saturdays and both United Way of Greater Nashua and the Nashua Community College have formed a partnership that aims to help at risk teens tap into their passions so they can create positive change in the Nashua Community. This group works on helping participants understand their roles in creating lasting change in their neighborhoods, Schools and town. Rafaol asked if he could post pictures on Facebook of the group and

the different activities that are going on, the committee gave full support of this idea.

6. **Positive Street Art:** Tom discussed the interactions between Nashua Navigators and PSA. This is a group that is working on transforming the negative connotations that go along with Urban Art. Tom discussed the engagement of minority youth in Nashua feeling that they have activities designed to meet the educational, social and creative needs of people in underserved communities in Nashua. Tom discussed the Honduras Art Project and that the Nashua PAL program is working on the same curriculum. One of the focus's for a mural is "What makes Girls Mighty".

7. **Nashua Red Program:** Tom gave a brief update as Andrew was unable to attend this month. Tom spoke briefly about "My brother's Keeper initiative", title 1 schools training for Positive Engagement and focus of minority contact with the Justice System.

8. **Upcoming Events:** On May 13th Nashua Community College will be hosting an event called "Around the World" from 6-00PM to 8-00PM tickets can be bought in advance for \$10.00 or at the door for \$12.00. May 21st Leadership Greater Nashua Presents Healthy Family Fun Fare featuring food play at Bishop Guertin High School from 10-00AM to 1-00PM, this will include live theater, great food, rock climbing wall, cooking tips and games and activities. Nashua goes M.A.D. (Multicultural Awareness Day) June 4th from 10-00AM to 1-00PM Greeley Park this initiative is being coordinated by Emerging Leaders in Communities of Color Class of 2015 in conjunction with the Adult Learning Center there will be free food, cultural activities and entertainment.

Students will be encouraged to bring artifacts from their Countries restaurants will be donating food as well. The Summer Fun schedule was discussed and the Cultural Connections Committee would like to develop a plan of how we can support these activities. Jared will be hosting an International Soccer Tournament again and the Summer Blast off starts on June 4th at Greeley Park from 10-00AM to 1-00PM, Field day on July 4th at Holman Stadium, Fish and Game on July 9th at Horse Pond, Fairy Tale Festival on July 16th at Greeley Park from 10-00AM to 1-00PM and Wheels and Wings on August 6th at Nashua Airport from 10-00AM to 2-00PM. A discussion was held about the Greek Festival that is held in May and all members agreed this is a well-run and very successful festival. Sylvia suggested we consider putting an ad in their program saying

how we support this festival. The thoughts of the committee were simply the Greek Church is very successful but we should as a committee show our support in some way.

9. The group also discussed the importance of having a calendar of all the Independence days and making them available to everyone.
10. The Cultural Connections Committee agreed that the May 17th meeting will be used to develop a strategic plan for the next year and to determine which projects we can support and do a good job with.
11. Adelina Hernandez of One Greater Nashua spoke with the committee about been approached by someone in her community who is from Puerto Rico and was treated very badly by the Judicial System in Nashua. The committee heard the concerns and have agreed to look into this further. The first step having the citizen write a letter about her experience. Sylvia and Bernadette both agreed to review the letter and prepare a letter to Judge Kelly from the Cultural Connections Committee. This matter will be shared with the Mayor prior to the committee taking the next steps without approval from the Mayor.
12. The next Cultural Connections Meeting will be on Tuesday May 17th from 3-30PM to 5-00PM in room 208 at City Hall in Nashua.

Respectfully Submitted

Bernadette Melton- Plante.

Secretary of Cultural Connections Committee.

