

Minutes of the Cultural Connections Committee
Meeting of January 27, 2021

Call to Order at 9:00 a.m. by Vice Chair Jessica Ayala

Roll Call:

Present: Jessica Ayala; Jennifer Hosking; Eric Drouart; Margaret Loret; Bernadette Melton-Plante; Donna Marceau; Sandra Pratt; Shoshanna Kelly; Jessica Gorhan; Nonyem Egbuono, Elizabeth Lu; Adelina Reyes Hernandez.

Absent: Mohammad Arif; Rosemary Ford; Samba Halkose; Deepa Mangalat; Sharon Saunders; Nikki Hannigan; Amanda Martinez; Lauren Osowski; Cecilia Ulibarri; Sue Lovering.

Visitors: Erin Cotton, Mark Hastbacka; Robert Cioppa

Report of Chair: Vice Chair Jessica Ayala reported on results of an Officer discussion pertaining to first quarter presenters and 2021 annual goals for this committee, working with member input submitted in response to call for member input in late 2020.

The resulting annual goals presented were as follows:

1. Welcoming Week participation in September
2. Calendar of Cultural Celebrations observed by community members – for sharing on the Cultural Connections Facebook page.
3. Survey to Minority businesses to help promote the committee as a resource and to better understand the issues of interest and concern of these particular stakeholders.

Jessica Ayala moved to accept the 2021 annual goals as presented. Bernadette seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Communications and/or Presentations:

1. Jessica Ayala, representing Department of Public Health and Community Services(DPHCS) gave a report on Covid19 issues and vaccination registration. She explained that the vaccination registration is under the purview of the State of NH but that DPHCS is working closely with the state and handling much of the coordination between the state and the NH National Guard. Jessica shared her screen to show the group how to navigate to the COVID19 vaccination registry information by going to NASHUANH.gov and halfway down the page on the right clicking on Public Health and Community Services which will bring up a page where “COVID19” will be the top link to click on on the left of the page. DPHCS is also conducting weekly community closed clinics for individuals that may not fit into the 1a or 1b, etc. category - such as high racial ethnic minorities that may have language barriers and people that do not have transportation to get the vaccines. We are in phase 1B of Vaccination. As of yesterday there were no outbreaks in the city.

Ensuing Discussion: Margaret Loret shared that she went to register for vaccination and she found all Nashua clinics “closed” for registration. Jessica Ayala explained that medical facilities have only limited numbers of vaccines – all sources are restricted to the same distribution method. Mark Hastbacka shared that his second shot had to be redirected after initial scheduling to a site outside of Nashua. Margart Loret suggested that two separate appointments be allocated upon registration.

Nonni Egbuono expressed that having to change location for second shot is something that should be avoided.

2. Mr. Bob Cioppa, Director of Student Services for the Nashua School District, gave an update on effects of remote learning on the ESL population in the Nashua School District. Impact of transitioning from in-person instruction to remote has been negative, in general. He reported that initially, in March, there were enormous barriers as some students had bad or no internet. United Way of Nashua got 'hotspots' to some of them. Because the City COVID19 relief funds covered generally one device per family, United Way of Nashua also obtained funding to provide additional devices to families with several students at home. Mr. Cioppa also stated that many ELL students did not have technological skills to multitask on the various platforms, therefore ELL teachers shifted at one point in the spring/summer to focus instruction on technology training. He emphasized the "this isn't an issue that is going to go away. These meetings will still be part of education [when in person classes resume]". With help from the United Way of Nashua, tutorials on technology for the classroom have been made available in several different languages. Many children are being served over at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Nashua and at the new facilities at Police Athletic League, both of which have computers and access to instructional available.

Ensuing Discussion: Nonni Egbuono commented as follows: 'Open' and distance learning options have been around for years. A number of people seem to be getting on well [with these forms of instruction].

Our part of implementing and planning will show that getting the environment where people can choose and receive the method they prefer [is important]. Mr. Cioppa agreed with Nonyem and commented that “when this is over, it is wrong to return to the old ways. We totally revamped our summer school program, 200 secondary and 100 or so elementary students.”

Jessica Gorhan of the Greater Nashua Food Council commented that this group is working to ensure qualifying students are getting access to free meals. She asked Mr. Cioppa whether the school district is communicating with this population about the ‘Pandemic EBT’, etc. Mr. Cioppa responded that the Outreach Specialists would be better able to answer that question.

Old Business: none

New Business: none

Discussion Items:

Sandra Pratt is working with the Brazilian community to organize a Brazilian group. More to follow as the formation members proceed.

Jessica Gorhan reported that NH Hunger Solutions, New Futures, Welcoming NH, Greater Nashua Food Council, and Victory Women of Vision will be offering an **Advocacy Letter Writing Training** to New Americans, Immigrants, and Refugees late February in English and Mid-March with Language Interpretations. Jessica will send out details about these trainings to CCC as she gets the details.

Jenn Hosking made a motion to correct the minutes of the January meeting of the CCC to correct attribution of the last paragraph. Bernadette moved and Jenn Hosking seconded it.

Erin Cotton of Congresswoman Annie Kuster's office reported on work authorization delays -immigration issues.

Bernadette Melton-Plante stated that CASA continues to be in great need of volunteers. Contact her if able to commit to this.

Margaret Loret spoke on information she has recently learned of regarding a Nashua Transit Services' "Call for a Ride" program which provides at call transportation for certain parts of the service area population.

Eric Drouart reported that the Francophile Organization has not been meeting due to pandemic. They are, though, now making plans to rededicate the statue in Renaissance Parc in March or May. Also there will be a concert of Jose Richaun and a book event that would be in March and be virtual.

Donna Marceau stated that the Radisson has a need for employees and are hosting ' People Ready'. Also, she has clients needing housing and is looking for people willing to participate in a 'Friendship Rent'..

Mark Hastbacka reported that Matt Giftos is now at FBI for three years. There has been one incident of suspected domestic aggression at the Islamic center that was downgraded to an outburst resulting from Mental Illness.

Motion to Adjourn was made and passed unanimously at 10:03

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Lu, Secretary