

**Cultural Connections Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
February 23, 2022  
9:06 – 10:08 am**

**1. Call to Order**

**Margaret Loret, Chair**

The meeting was called to order by Margaret at 9:06 am.

**2. Roll Call**

**Eliane Urgiles, Secretary**

Members present: Elizabeth Berry, Barbara Costa, Shanta Bist, Adelina Hernandez, Rosemary Ford, Jennifer Hosking, Wei Lin, Tom Lopez, Margaret Loret, Donna Marceau, Robert Ortiz, Gloria Timmons, Cecilia Ulibarri, and Eliane Urgiles.

Guests: Matt Giftos, Mark Hastbacka, Henry Harris, Andrea O'Brien, Kathy Palmer, Brenda Poirier, Sonia Prince, Derek Thibeault

Excused absences: Deepa Mangalat, Eric Drouart, Sandra Pratt, Samba Halkose, Bernadette Melton-Plante, Nonny Egbuono.

**3. Approval of the January 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes**

Minutes of the January meeting were approved.

**4. Update on New Immigrants in NH  
Director**

**Henry Harris, Managing**

**International Institute of NH**

**Henry** reported that New Hampshire welcomed 81 Afghan refugees since last Thanksgiving. The IINE has been processing their temporary visas and converting them into the refugee status. The IINE faces challenges, comparable to those at the end of the Vietnam War, include identifying employers for the newcomers and finding the accommodations for them. Over half of the families have already been moved from hotels to permanent housing.

**Tom Lopez** asked whether Ukrainian refugees have arrived in NH. Henry replied that he doesn't expect any new arrivals from Ukraine in the months to come.

**5. Mark Hastbacka**

**FBI**

Mark has been busy over the past two months dealing with unjustified fees charged to newcomers, food stamp scams and issues with arranged marriages. Mark asked the committee members for help identify possible problems related to the above.

**5. St. Joseph Hospital Mobile Health Clinic**

**Rosemary Ford  
System Director of Interpreter  
Services**

**Rosemary** reported on the Mobile Clinic program initiated by St. Joseph Hospital. The Mobile Clinic collaborates with the Division of Public Health to coordinate public health services offered to Nashua residents as well as surrounding towns of Hollis, Milford, Hudson, and Merrimack. Most of the services are provided at no cost to patients or very low costs. Locations include YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and St. Patrick Church, among others. These services are not meant to replace medical care provided by primary care physicians. The Mobile Clinic is staffed with a nurse practitioner and a midwife.

Rosemary asked committee members for suggestions of possible locations of the Mobile Clinic in addition to the ones already in place. Rosemary's contact:

*Rosemary Ford, Director Mobile Health/System Director of Interpreter Services @ St. Joseph Hospital 603-884-3863 [rsimpsonford@sjnh.org](mailto:rsimpsonford@sjnh.org).*

**6. Financial Services for Immigrants**

**Sonia Prince, Financial Advisor  
Primerica Financial Services**

Primerica Financial Services offer free webinars for adults as well as for children at YMCA, Boys & Girls Club and local public schools. Sonia works mostly with small businesses and non-profits, such as Marguerite Place, teaching basics of financial concepts. Fluent in French, Sonia also is available for translating if needed.

Sonia's contact information:

*Sonia Prince  
Primerica Financial Services  
603-486-5930  
[soniaprince1@gmail.com](mailto:soniaprince1@gmail.com).*

**7. NH Small Business Development Center**

**Andrea O'Brien, Director  
Statewide Business Sustainability  
Program**

NH SBDC is a non-profit housed at Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics, University of New Hampshire in Manchester. The Center provides individual business advising to people who either plan to open a business or who already own one. The Center's advising services cover a wide array of topics available to residents of the State of NH ranging from assistance with loan applications to connecting with financial or marketing professionals. Five hours of financial and marketing consultations are free of charge.

Recently, the Center has started a cybersecurity program that provides free cyber security audit for small businesses. The Nashua region is served by four advisors at no cost to the user. The number of meetings with advisors is unlimited.

The Center's goal is to leverage the UNH resources by matching UNH students who search for projects with individual clients of the Center.

The Center started participating in the Community Navigator program focused on diversity.

Andrea's contact:

*Andrea O'Brien*  
*UNH Manchester*  
*88 Commercial St. Manchester, NH 03101*  
*[andrea.obrien@unh.edu](mailto:andrea.obrien@unh.edu)*  
*Phone: 603-641-4379*

**Elizabeth Berry** asked whether the SBDC have interpreters to work with immigrants. Andrea responded that at his point there are no interpreters on her staff.

A discussion followed on the Navigator Program as several members of the Committee has served as navigators for local immigrants in Nashua. Navigators were recruited among immigrants with higher level of proficiency in English.

**Adelina Hernandez** commented that she was a navigator in Nashua working with the United Way of Greater Nashua, and suggested re-invigorating the program in Nashua.

## **8. Multicultural Festival**

**Margaret Loret/Elizabeth Berry**

**Margaret and Elizabeth** asked Cecilia to check the status of sponsorship of the 2022 Multicultural Festival with the Mayor, and submit the list of the 2019 festival committee members by Friday, February 25, so that planning could start promptly if the Cultural Committee has to be involved in the planning stage of the event.

**Tom Lopez**, who organizes the Tree Street Festival, usually held around June 30 every year, suggested coordinating both festival activities.

**Cecilia Ulibarri** reminded the Committee that the Multicultural Festival is a Mayor's event, not the Cultural Connections Committee's initiative as was the case in 2021.

## **9. Other Business**

**Donna Marceau** of the Nashua Soup Kitchen reported on activities of the Nashua Soup Kitchen. The ethnic composition of the NSK clients includes French Canadians, Arabs, and African Americans.

The pantry is open from 11 – 2:45, breakfast is served Monday – Friday, 7:30 – 8:30 am, and dinner Monday – Saturday, 4:00 – 6:00 pm, Sunday 12:00 -1:30 pm.

Donna, who is charge of employment services at NSK, advises on career options and helps clients to navigate the employment world.

The NSK also offers emergency housing as well.

Donna's contact information:

*Nashua Soup Kitchen*  
*2 Quincy Street*  
*Nashua, NH 03060*  
*Phone: (603) 889-7770*  
*Email: [donna@nsk.org](mailto:donna@nsk.org)*

**Eliane Urgiles** wanted to know if the City collects data on different ethnic groups living in Nashua.

**Margaret** said that there is no such information available. The 2020 census collected data on race only and languages other than English spoken at home, without specifying what those languages are. She suggested that some data could be obtained from different ethnic organizations operating in Nashua or state-wide. The CCC may serve as a good start whose members represent several ethnic organizations.

**Gloria Timmons** offered insight into the racial composition of the school community. Over 42% of Nashua public school students are students of color, but only about 90% of teachers are white.

**Derek Thibeault** echoed Gloria's comments by emphasizing the fact that the City government is predominantly white while Nashua is not. He encouraged members of the CCC to recruit members of various ethnic groups to participate in the Nashua government by running for positions open or actively participating in the electoral process in various capacities.

**10. Next meeting** will be held on March 23, time TBD, in person and on zoom.

**7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:08 am.