

CALL TO ORDER The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been satisfied with respect to this meeting of the Multicultural Inclusion & Accessibility Advisory Committee which is being held via Zoom video conferencing due to restrictions on indoor public gatherings resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This information, along with the public internet link and telephone call-in information was posted in the Municipal Building, and sent the official newspapers of the Township, the Verona-Cedar Grove Times and the Star Ledger and MyVeronaNJ.com, TAPinto and the Patch, the official online news source(s) of the Township, at least 48 hours preceding the start time of this meeting. A public comment period will be held in the order it is listed on the meeting agenda and instructions on how to comment will be provided at the appropriate time.

B. ROLL CALL C. NEW/UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Introduction of Committee Members:

- Maura Barrett - Term ends 12/31/2022
- Carla Buglione - Term ends 12/31/2022
- Kathleen Francis - Term ends 12/31/2022
- Michele Gruet - Term Ends 12/31/2022
- Verena Mikhael - Term ends 12/31/2022
- Wesley Tahsir-Rodriguez - Term ends 12/31/2022
- John Vajda - Term ends 12/31/2022
- Deputy Mayor Christine McGrath - Council Liaison
- Steven Neale - Director of Administration and Economic Development
- Jim Cunningham - Director of Community Services
- Claudine Pascale - Director of the Verona Public Library
- Dr. Lydia E. Furnari - Interim Superintendent of Schools

2. Review of Mission Statement and Previous DEI workgroup summary – Deputy Mayor McGrath (*Copied from previous DEI workgroup found [here](#).*)

- There was consensus that Verona is a welcoming community.
- While a “one sentence” mission statement was initially appealing, two sentences seemed more favored as it would likely result in a stronger statement.
- Mentioning policies and programs made the statement tangible and was preferred.
- Words like “strive” helped to convey that we want the community to move in a direction. Positive statements were preferred over negative statements.
- Words or phrases that have become politicized (e.g. social justice) should not be used as they may have multiple meanings.

Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2022
Carla Buglione – MIAAC Secretary

List of MIAAC Meeting Dates:

April 27, 2022
May 25, 2022
June 22, 2022
July 27, 2022
August 24, 2022
September 28, 2022
October 26, 2022
November 30, 2022
December (TBD possible informal meeting)

3. Review of Advisory group structure – Deputy Mayor McGrath
 - This group of volunteers will dedicate their time to develop recommendations for the council.
 - The goal is to make the town of Verona more inclusive.
 - The group will share recommendations for the 2023 Budget.
 - In general, the group will aim to trade ideas.
4. Election of Chairperson – Michele Gruet – Term Ending 12/31/2022
5. Election of Secretary – Carla Buglione – Term Ending 12/31/2022
6. Discussion of Events Calendar/Time Sensitive Upcoming Event Planning - Steve Neale
 - Robust list of inclusive initiatives & events (LGTBQ event, list of flag raising events, Diwali celebration, Mental Health Awareness Day, Lunar New Year etc.).
 - Website & social media accessibility review & improvements.
 - Surveys before & after events (survey the youth of the town).
 - Research internal/external field experts to weigh in on certain topics.
 - Next meeting, we would like to develop a framework for launching events & initiatives.
7. Discussion on Accessibility of Recreation Programs – Jim Cunningham
 - Large events would be reviewed (handicap parking, neuro diversity events for children).
 - Provide accessibility of our Recreation Programs for disabled adults & children.
 - Splash pad at the pool along with other handicap accessibility options
 - They plan to add swim lessons for disabled Verona residents (Special Olympics)
 - Utilization of Verona Park
 - Look to other towns for support with utilization of aids
8. Update on Board of Education and Verona Public Library Relative Activities – Board of Education and Verona Public Library Representatives
 - The library will share a quarterly list of initiatives with the group so we can align all inclusion efforts.
 - The Board of education has dedicated time & funding towards increasing DE&I education:
 - DEI consultant
 - Student Voice

Meeting Minutes

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- DEI subcommittees

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Rita Chevalier of Hillcrest Terrace – “Have we received a pulse of the community in terms of what they would like to see us do.”

G. ADJOURNMENT The public may speak on any matter during Public Comment, listed on the agenda.