

Meeting Minutes  
**Wednesday June 22, 2022**

**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.

**Minutes from the Wednesday, June 22, 2022 Meeting**

**A. Call to Order**

**B. Statement Regarding Public Meetings Act**

**C. Roll Call**

1. Maura Barrett
2. Kathleen Francis
3. Michele Gruet
4. Verena Mikhael
5. Wesley Tahsir-Rodriguez
6. John Vajda
7. Deputy Mayor Christine McGrath
8. Steven Neale
9. Jim Cunningham
10. Claudine Pascale

**D. Approval of Minutes**

1. Approval of Minutes (not sure who made the motions?).

**E. Standing Meeting Items:**

1. Updates from the Library Director, Claudine Pascale

**\*Celebrating Pride Webinar (Gender Identity and Pronouns)**

-Overall it went well (12 Attendees)

-Michele and Christine attended the webinar

-One attendee came to be disruptive (moving forward they will not be allowing anonymous comments).

-The moderator wanted to encourage conversation so they will be looking for a way to leave the comments open in future webinars with hopefully no disruptions.

-Other programs run through the town require attendees to state their name and the camera needs to be on (provide a valid Verona address)

\*Code of Conduct and Robert's Rules were briefly discussed

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- Christine felt that overall the session was great and the moderators were fantastic. Felt that the moderators handle the disruptive attendee very well based on the format.
- The webinar received positive feedback and they are hoping to have a follow-up that goes more in depth.

## **2. Fall Calendar**

- Claudine is in the process of working with her team and will share events in a future meeting.
- As a committee, we need to prioritize events and present 3 events to the town council by August 8, 2022.
  - \*key is bringing the community together
- Events that are already on the calendar were discussed and Wesley suggested an event in the Fall for Native American and Indigenous people at the library. Kathleen suggested that we come up with events that will accommodate people with disabilities (lecture series and highlight people in the community with disabilities).
- Steve and Jim Cunningham suggested several resources that Essex county provides to raise awareness for people with disabilities (Essex County Health Services/ Public Advocate for Individuals with Disabilities).
- The Pride event went very well and was a great way to bring the community together.

## **F. New Business**

- Jim Cunningham introduced Andrew DiChiara (Recreation Department Staff Member who is going to focus on inclusion activities for children and adults in Verona)
- Andrew works full-time for the city of Jersey City as a member of their legal department . In the past, he volunteered at New Beginnings in Fairfield where his cousin was a student.
- Programs that he is currently working on and implementing:
  - \*Verona Swimming Pool activities (open swim day/night and providing certified instructors)
  - \*Cornhole
  - \*Social Wellness (collaborating with MSU): personal training and exercise classes (instructors have experience with the special needs population)
- Fall Programs:
  - \*Bounce Out the Stigma (basketball program)
  - \*Soccer Programs
  - \*Pickle Ball
  - \*Track/ Cross Country (was mentioned)
- Plans to collaborate with C.H.I.L.D and other organizations as resources
- Looking for volunteers (will provide training)
- Main goal is to integrate all community members, educate the public, and be as inclusive as possible
- Create safe spaces at community events to accomodate all members of Verona (sensory areas and noise reduction)
- Use social media and other outlets to connect with all community members
- Andrew is interested in working with the committee on future events and activities

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**G. New Business**

1. Marketing Document (timeline of events and how people can help) - will be discussed at a future meeting

**H. Public Comment**

-No members from the public were present for comment

**I. Adjournment**

-Motion: Kathleen (1st) and John (2nd)