

**MEETING MINUTES FROM A REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
MULTICULTURAL INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 7:00 P.M. ON JANUARY 28, 2025**

**VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**A. CALL TO ORDER** *meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Roxanna Tirado.*

**B. STATEMENT REGARDING PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT - read by Roxanna Tirado.**

*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. 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.*

**C. ROLL CALL**

**Present:**

Roxanna Tirado

Michele Gruet

Kathleen Francis

Rita Chevalier

AJ Kiernan

John Vajda

Tovah Kopan

Christine McGrath - Council Representative

Claudine Pascale - Verona Public Library

Diane DiGiuseppe - Superintendent of School

**Absent:**

Michelle O'Neill

Michael McMahon - Verona Recreation

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the November Meeting were approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

## **REPRESENTATIVE UPDATES**

- Library Update: C.Pasquale stated that the Women of Impact panel will be held on March 23rd at 3pm. Nomination forms are available on library website. The form has been updated to encourage more detailed information on nominees to assist with judging. Hard copies will be available at library and VCC. Deadline to submit forms is on 2/17.

There will be a program called Martin Luther King Recollections on Sat 2/8 at 1 pm, interactive format with live actor.

- Recreation Update: Recreation department now has clearance to fill position for special needs coordinator and a search will be initiated. Unclear yet if position is FT or PT. Christine will discuss in town budget workshops.
- School Update: Since the inauguration, concerns have been raised regarding continued safe access for all to public schools. Access to public schools regardless of immigration status is protected under federal law. Today the Dept of Education put out guidance for schools, information is available on their website.

Concerns were also raised by staff moderator of HBW Safe club regarding continuation of support for LBGTQ+ students, and Diane reiterated that Verona public schools and the Verona Board of Education remain committed to inclusivity and protections for all students, including transgender students and other communities.

A previously successful social justice program will be repeated this year for staff and students. Rita had heard that some children were being kept out of school and inquired about resources for them, Diane will follow up.

Roxanna also noted that MIAAC is happy to provide support for the Lunar New Year event if needed. Diane will follow up.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Budget: Budget for 2024 and proposed budget for 2025 were reviewed by Roxanna and Elisa prior to this meeting and tonight Roxanna went over in detail the proposed budget of \$3500 for 2025 and the calendar of events for 2025. Subcommittees are encouraged to begin planning as early as possible to secure dates and plan budget.

Michele Gruet proposed having a MIAAC table at Fall-O-Ween this year to distribute inexpensive toys and favors to children with food allergies. This would also increase MIAAC visibility in town. Claudine noted that one of the goals of the event this year is to increase the number of community organizations involved in the event so MIAAC presence would be welcomed.

Older Americans month (May) – Claudine intends to apply for a grant that would provide \$10,000/yr for 2 years for multiple activities for seniors throughout the year. Ideas include art and writing workshops, among others.

Christine McGrath reported on Verona Community Pool – she informed committee that the town had considered abolishing the recreation tent at the pool but she and another council member advocated successfully to keep it, especially since it provides resources that enhance inclusivity for children.

Everett field project is in the design stage and is also projected to enhance accessibility, more information will probably be available in the Spring.

Next week is Inclusive Schools week, T-shirts have been sold by Verona CHILD and according to Diane various activities are planned for each day of the week. Michelle Gruet reported helping to put together packets that CHILD will be distributing to elementary schools.

Roxanna reported that Sensory Story Time will be held again this Saturday at the library. Volunteers from Verona CHILD lead the event.

Black History month – subcommittee met on 1/21. Program has been proposed featuring Arlinda McIntosh, fashion designer and influencer. Claudine and the BHM subcommittee will follow up to confirm dates and run of program.

Hanukkah recap – Tovah provided feedback on the event, which was well-attended and was held indoors this year. Mayor Tamburro gave a nice talk. Discussion was held regarding facilitating RSVPs for council members who will be attending events and/or are willing to speak.

Claudine would like to hold summer reading kickoff on Saturday June 7, so the committee decided to propose Sunday June 1 as date for the Verona Pride Celebration. It remains unclear if the Montclair Pride event will take place in 2025.

Roxanna reported that MIAAC has access to the town grant writer and the town database of available grants, and mentioned some that might interest MIAAC. Christine proposed that MIAAC consider another disability inclusion project and a grant might be a way of financing an assessment of needs for this. If grant money is not available other ideas might include working with local businesses and/or the Chamber of Commerce to increase accessibility and inclusion.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Meeting was adjourned at 8:21 pm.