

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

**HELD AT 7:00 P.M. ON FEBRUARY 26, 2025**

**VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**A. CALL TO ORDER** *meeting was called to order at 7:04 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

AJ Kiernan

John Vajda

Tovah Kopan

PJ Pimpinelli

Christine McGrath - Council Representative

**Absent:**

Michelle O'Neill

Rita Chevalier

Michael McMahon - Verona Recreation

Diane DiGiuseppe - Superintendent of School

Claudine Pascale - Verona Public Library

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the January Meeting were approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

## **REPRESENTATIVE UPDATES**

Library update – The Women of Impact event was discussed. The date will be March 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 3 pm, at Community Center. Twenty-four nominations were received. A panel will be chosen by the subcommittee this week.

Blooms in Hand can do five bouquets at \$35 each (50% off their regular price). With regard to food, Eight Hills has not committed to the event yet and they requested and Kathy sent them links to the Library website to see description of event.

Schools update – DiGiuseppe passed on information that VHS plans to celebrate AAPI month in May (instead of doing a Lunar New Year event in January). Verona township will help with planning.

Recreation – No update.

Town update - C.McGrath provided an update regarding the budget. The first budget workshop held on 2/24. R.Tirado attended for MIAAC. The council had previously received a list of MIAAC events and had no questions. The next town budget meeting will be March 3<sup>rd</sup>, where “big ticket” items will be discussed. MIAAC members are encouraged to attend.

Town manager is supportive of accessibility initiatives. A \$70K NJ Dept of Human Services Age-Friendly grant has been awarded to Verona but not yet received or allocated. MIAAC may wish to apply for some grants and can use town grant-writing service for large grants.

Irish American flag raising will be held on March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30pm.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Recent Black History Month event on February 20 was excellent, featured local businesswoman, fashion designer and influencer Arlinda McIntosh and moderated by local journalist Sally El-Shorafa. Included fashion show in which MIAAC members R.Tirado and R.Chevalier and her husband and daughters, participated as models. The event had a live audience and was also livestreamed.

Upcoming events:

May – AAPI event planned for May by Verona public schools and the town.

May is also Older Americans month. The MIAAC subcommittee will meet soon to plan an event.

June – PRIDE event scheduled for June 1<sup>st</sup>. The time not firm yet. Subcommittee (T.Kopan, M.Gruet and P.Pimpinelli) will follow up with faith leaders regarding optimal time after religious service and will plan event specifics.

MIAAC meeting dates – Previously no MIAAC meeting was held in December, but R.Tirado suggested that MIAAC meet in December since important events need to be planned for early 2026. The normal 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday meeting dates in November and December fall on Thanksgiving Eve and Christmas Eve, so it was agreed that a request be made to Jennifer Kiernan to move those meetings to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of Nov and Dec. (Nov 19 and Dec 17). The meeting scheduled for July 23 will be removed from the schedule for summer break. August, September, and October meetings will remain as scheduled (Aug 27, Sep 24 and Oct 22).

M.O'Neill was unable to attend tonight's meeting but requested that the issue of sidewalk accessibility after snowstorms be discussed, and C.McGrath also brought up the similar issue of bus stop accessibility after snow. C.McGrath noted that Fairlawn has a program whereby a volunteer corps (often HS students) assists those residents of the town who are unable to remove snow or perform other necessary outdoor tasks due to age and/or infirmity. The MIAAC agrees that such a program in Verona should be explored and implemented if possible, as it would provide an outlet for young people to perform community service, assist residents with disabilities and enhance accessibility, and in general, foster a sense of community and neighborliness in our town. C.McGrath and M.O'Neill will obtain further information about the Fairlawn project.

On the subject of environmental impediments to accessibility, C.McGrath encouraged all to report any impediments they observe in the town (tree roots, broken sidewalks, unremoved snow etc) via a form available from the town.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm.