

Cultural Connections Committee
February 19, 2020 City Hall Auditorium

Meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m.

Roll Call:

Present: Deepa Mangalat, Rosemary Ford, Elizabeth Lu, Bernadette Plante, Fahmina Zaman, Samba Halkose, Donna Marceau, Shannon St. Pierre, Bruno Soares, Nonny Egbuomu, Nicole Reyes, Celina Ulibarri, Sandra Pratt, and Jan Hosking joined via telephone.

Communications:

Cecilia Ulibarri presented update on the progress of Nashua becoming a 'Welcoming City'. We are on the 3rd level of the certification process and representatives from the certification audit committee were here for two days two weeks ago. **Deepa Mangalat**, Chair of this committee, was in attendance at this audit. The auditors met with several division/department heads to gather information and will create an action plan which will provide guidance on eliminating any gaps they identified. Only eight(8) other U.S. cities are certified as Welcoming Cities. More information about this certification program is found at the Welcoming America website. Nashua will receive the audit report within a couple of weeks.

Minutes:

Bernadette Plante made a motion to accept the minutes of the meeting of January 15, 2020, seconded by **Elizabeth Lu**. Motion passed.

Report of the Chair - Deepa Mangalat:

1. Reported that she has been informed by Erin Cotton of Annie Kuster's office that Congresswoman Kuster will be submitting a letter of recommendation for Sylvia Gale to be entered into the Congressional Record.
2. Both the Voter Registration assistance at the polls and a mayoral forum at the library were events hosted by this Committee that were held last month. Both were successful.

3. **Deepa, Amanda and Margaret** attended the Civic Engagement workshop which was a one of six workgroups comprising the Race and Equity Series sponsored by the NH Endowment for Health. Discussed was implicit bias. Some challenges presented to participants were, how can institutions build on trust to see the effects of systemic racism? And what do we need to know to end systemic racism?
4. There were students from NYU that were shadowing our three representatives and who interviewed them.

Old Business:

Bylaws and Mission and Purpose Statement - **Cecilia** asked what our priorities are this year, and whether they will be aligned with our standing Mission Statement or will they necessitate a change to our Purpose/Mission Statement? She also asked whether the group will still do the Gate City Symposium. **Cecilia** also mentioned that our presence at cultural events in the city is needed to achieve our objectives.

Jan Hosking suggested that the word 'Ethnic' be changed to the word 'Cultural' in view of the 'Welcoming City' designation we are pursuing. She offered also that the group is meant to be a bridge between the community and the government. **Jan** asked whether the Mayor has indicated a direction he feels we should be heading. **Cecilia** thought the words "compassionate" and "kindness" have been used by the Mayor in relation to this group's purpose.

Nonyem Egbuomu said that a meeting she recently attended, titled 'Reframing Aging', recalled to mind **Deepa's** story of her mother's experience relocating here to be closer to her daughter. **Nonyem** discussed the Nashua population of elderly immigrants who, due to cultural norms in their place of origin, expect that their children will support them in old age, financially as well as emotionally. She identified these elderly as having needs and expectations that are not being met because our native norms are less sensitive to elderly inclusion or isolation. **Jan Hosking** suggested that an objective in this exercise should be to not 'bite off more than we can chew'.

Bernadette suggested that we need to focus on what we will do, going forward, beyond meeting as a group monthly. **Samba Halkose** agreed, and suggested we could invite some of the target groups to meet with us.

Bruno Soares suggested that people are not comfortable coming into a meeting at the city hall. He emphasized that he feels we should go to them. Celina recalled that last year members attended several events drawing from the committee's target groups and a lot was learned from attendance at these events. **Nonyem** suggested that we are invited to meet with some of our target group by attending the Interfaith service, and agreed that to explore the diversity of elders, we should, out of respect, plan to go to them.

Further attention was given to the question of wording of the Mission and Purpose Statements. There was a lot of discussion about wording, to improve economy and clarity as well as ways to convey a broader vision of inclusion. **Rosemary Ford** suggested 'Cultural Competency' and **Fahmina Zahman** offered 'Cultural Humility'. A motion was made to amend both the Mission Statement and the Purpose Statement. The motion passed.

Discussion: Large items coming up are the Census, Elections, and Community Outreach. **Nicole** will be posting the Bylaw Changes on the Nashua NH website. **Bernadette** asked about annual elections, and **Deepa** suggested that be delayed a bit to see whether Sylvia may return. March 3rd will be a new City Hall flag raising – the flag of France will be flown. Bruno reported that there is a bill being introduced in Concord to form a study group to analyze the impact of immigrants and deportation on our state economy.

The need for a secretary was noted. A motion was made to nominate **Elizabeth Lu**, it was seconded. The motion passed.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 10:45.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Lu