

Lakewood Community Relations Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, September 14, 2010

Location: Lakewood City Hall

Attending: April Stoltz, Acting Chair, Nadhal Eadeh, Joe Lobo, Gayle Wellman, Barbara Schwartz, Nickie Antonio, Lakewood City Council Liaison, Melissa Garrett, Community Relations Specialist.

Absent: Nahida Farunia (ill), Litha Macon, Paula Maeder Connor, Greg Mahoney, Dan Saracina

At 6:40 PM April Stoltz, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order and the members present agreed on the following agenda:

- Follow-up of the Diversity Picnic
- Training for holding a Community Conversation by Nickie Antonio
- Preparing for a Youth Conversation
- A Community Resource
- Update from Nadhal on LOBC
- Lakewood Foundation
- New Members
- Update from Joe on RAD (Race and Diversity) at Lakewood High School

Review of Diversity Picnic Potluck on Friday, August 13th at Madison Park.

Gayle, Barbara, Dan, Nadhal, Greg and Melissa attended. April had solicited pasta dishes and Nadhal and Dan picked up the food donated by Angelo's, Pepper's Restaurant, Italian Creations, Greek Village, and Nunzio's. Bela Dubby did not deliver coffee. April prepared and delivered very nice "Thank You" letters to each of the donors. Unfortunately, we did not have a very good turnout, only about 25 people, but the movie also had much less of a turnout than last year. It was a very hot evening, which may have affected the turnout. People who attended brought a variety of ethnic dishes in addition to the donated pasta, however, there was a great deal of food left over, which we tried to give away to those present. It was recommended that holding future picnics in the Women's Pavilion would be better and avoid the problems of heat, flies and wind. Dale Miller, County Council Candidate and Monica Smith, Lakewood City Council member also attended the picnic.

Block Clubs

Nickie Antonio suggested making a connection with block clubs, by talking to Mike Tuttle, Block Club Coordinator, about talking with the block club captains at one of their meetings.

Community Conversation Training

Nickie distributed her outline of the CommUNITY CONVERSATION DISCUSSION MODEL (see attached) and by experiencing the process directly, trained the members present in how to

use the model. The members should then be able to apply this model in carrying out community conversations with various groups, and around whatever topics we feel should be addressed.

Nickie made the following points: one and a half hours is an optimum amount of time, although the sample in the outline is one hour. It is important to start on time, and although one can end early, it is not good to go over the specified time.

At the first meeting it is necessary to find out who is committed to carrying out the process, but also to get people to come and at least participate. We would need to recruit a facilitator for each table, and to ask them to come 15 minutes earlier to review what they need to do.

People do not have to talk. No one should be pressured to talk if they do not want to. There should be an atmosphere of acceptance and non – judgment. It is important that we all do active listening: not to be thinking about what our response will be, but to really focus on what the other person is saying. It is also important to use “I statements” and to only speak for yourself and from your own experience.

Everyone is asked to introduce themselves.

In our role play, Nickie asked us to write the answers to three questions: What am I most worried about? What has given me hope? Which question was hardest to answer?

Sharing responses can be done in different ways, e.g. pairing off to share answers and then putting two pairs together, etc. We shared our responses as a whole group to questions #1 and #3. Next we were asked for common themes that we heard and to record them. Then we were asked to share our answers to #2 and the common themes that we heard. We shared personal feelings and thoughts and got to know each other better. In getting to know each other better, it is harder to put others in a stereotyped box. It is very important to end on a positive experience, to thank everyone for participating, and to develop a plan for future activities.

Youth Conversation:

The original date set for the Youth Conversation was October 12th, but the group decided that more time was needed to prepare. A motion was made to cancel the October 12th date, was seconded by Gayle Wellman, and passed unanimously by the group. A new date proposed is Tuesday, November 16th, with a back-up date of Thursday, November 18th, 7:00 to 8:30 PM. Melissa will check the availability of the city hall auditorium and reserve a date.

Joe agreed to recruit kids from RAD and from the high school to participate in the Youth Conversation. It was hoped that he could get a good cross section of 8-10 youth.

Nickie suggested that we use a “Fishbowl Conversation” model. (See attached handout: Fishbowl, Technologies for Conversation.) This entails the group holding the discussion sitting within a larger group of “observers”. The topic would be “What is it like to grow up as a young person in Lakewood?” A facilitator would be assigned from among the kids. The conversation would go on for about 20 minutes, and then time is spent in a whole group dialogue between participants and observers to identify patterns and themes.

Nadhah volunteered to coordinate by email scheduling a small group to plan the Youth Conversation, using the Fishbowl model.

LOBC (Lakewood Outdoor Basketball Committee)

LCRAC's (Lakewood Community Relations Advisory Committee) endorsement of LOBC appeared on page four of the Lakewood Observer issue of September 8, 2010. Nadhal said that they are installing the hoops at Kaufman Park, and they should have an official opening next week. He is working with Paula and the church community to use gyms in the community. Many churches and vacant schools have gyms that could be utilized. The goal is to have free access to as many youth as possible. Sports is a universal language, and our endorsement of LOBC's goals is in keeping with LCRAC's goals of promoting diversity and dialogue. LOBC is working on getting the police on board, and also talking with park officials to extend the ground patrol budget until the end of October instead of September.

New Resource

Nickie suggested that Heights Community Congress, which promotes diversity in Cleveland Heights, would be a good contact for us. They have shared their experiences in the past, and it might be good to ask them to come to a meeting again. Nadhal took the card of Casey Greer, who is their contact person.

Lakewood Foundation

It is hoped that the Lakewood Foundation would become our fiscal agent. While our primary purpose is not to raise funds, but we may need to raise some funds to finance activities, such as speakers. April will discuss this further with Melissa.

New Members

Names of possible members were discussed:

Carla Williams (April) is at CSU in public relations and has a son at LHS.

Richard Cole

Kyle Baker (Nadhal)

Announcements:

April said there will be a jobs rally in Washington DC on Sat. October 2nd, and that there will be a Get Out the Vote in Cleveland that same day. Also at 6 PM on October 2nd there will be A Peace City at the Indian Cultural Garden.

Nickie reminded us that she will be stepping off as advisor to our committee at the end of the year as she takes on her new duties as State Representative. She is seeking out a new advisor from the members if city council.

The motion to adjourn was made by Nickie at 8:20 PM, seconded by Nadhal and passed by the members.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 9th at 6:30 PM.

Minutes submitted by Barbara A. Schwartz