

Lakewood Community Relations Advisory Commission Minutes
February 7, 2019; 6:30 p.m., Lakewood City Hall, 12600 Detroit Ave, Lakewood, OH

In attendance were: Jessica Sloan (Chair), Rachel Donaldson (Vice-Chair), Chitra Walker (Secretary), Andrew Morris, Tariq Ata, Gary Rick, Robin Beavers, Walter Wright and Melissa Garrett (Community Relations Specialist)

Not present were: Gabrielle Jackson, Barbara Howell.

OLD BUSINESS

The minutes of the January 10, 2019 meeting were approved unanimously with one correction – remove line for “Not present” as Bernadette Elston has retired from the Commission as of December 31, 2018.

Diversity Potluck Recap: The group agreed that the event was the most successful one yet. Including the children who attended, there were approximately 50 people at the event. Rachel noted that there were several Councilpersons present, and described the table conversations, noting that City Councilman Litten had commented appreciatively on the program format. Others also commented on the good discussions at their tables. Chitra noted that both State Representative Skindell and State Senator Antonio had attended. The food was great, and not much was left over. Melissa brought the surveys taken at the table which were reviewed at the end of the meeting. She will also place the video she made of the event on the Commission’s FaceBook page. Gabrielle Jackson will be asked to write an article for the Observer.

NEW BUSINESS

Introduction of New Members: The Commission has two new members: Robin Beavers and Walter Wright. Robin came to Lakewood 2014, and has worked at both Harding and Garfield Middle schools. She is currently the Principal at Garfield Middle School and is working towards the completion of a doctoral program. Walter and his family have lived in Lakewood for 13 years. He has extensive experience in the nonprofit sector, and is an artist and musician as well. He is currently on sabbatical. Welcome to our new commissioners!

Youth Advisory Council: Gary reported on activities since the last Commission meeting. Three students from Lakewood High School and their Civics teacher, Ron Lewis, attended City Council’s Committee of the Whole Meeting on January 14, where the Council reviewed the proposed ordinance to establish the Youth Advisory Council. After discussion and at the Mayor’s recommendation, Council decided to wait on passing the ordinance, but to pass a resolution instead to create a Youth Advisory Task Force which would work with LCRAC to establish the Youth Advisory Council. The Task Force would consist of 9 students – 3 recommended by the Mayor, 3 by City Council and 3 by the LCRAC. An Application Form has been created by the Mayor to be distributed at both Lakewood High School and St. Edward’s High School. Gary reported that the 3 students who presented at the Committee of the Whole were very impressive. He has been meeting with Ron Lewis and the students, who have a lot of great ideas, and are very enthusiastic about getting started. Ron Lewis has already distributed 30 applications. The initial group of 5 students with whom he has met have already created a letter to go out to all students

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and a flyer to announce a “town meeting” to discuss the new Advisory Council. Melissa noted that the “town meeting” will probably take place after the Youth Advisory Task Force has been established. The Application deadline is February 15, after which recruits for the initial 9 positions will be chosen by the Mayor, City Council and the Commission. Gary recommended that Sophomores would be best recruits because they would continue the work of the Task Force into the new School year. Melissa said that City Council would probably go through a formal process of interviewing prospective candidates for the 9 positions, as would the Mayor. The Commission will also do the same for the 3 positions it will recruit. Chitra recommended involving the RAD group at the High School in this initial recruitment, and Walter recommended reaching out to the Middle Schools as well. Rachel suggested enlarging the Commission’s Subcommittee on the Youth Advisory Council, and Robin volunteered to join Gary and Tariq. Andrew noted that in discussions with neighboring Old Brooklyn Development Council, that the 18-24 year old demographic were “impossible to reach”, and that this Youth Advisory Council would instill enthusiasm in the youth of Lakewood to take a greater part in City governance and affairs. All agreed that the program was “getting legs”, and were pleased with the progress.

LakewoodAlive Community Forum: Chitra distributed the minutes from the last LakewoodAlive Community Forum Committee meeting distributed by Cindy Einhouse. The next Forum will be in May (9th or 14th), and the subject is “Civil Discourse and Mindfulness”. The Mayor had also recommended to the Forum Committee that the Fall Forum topic be about upcoming improvements in traffic management, parking technology and public safety in Lakewood. The group discussed the topic of the next forum, as well as other related discussion topics.

Review of Diversity Potluck Surveys: The surveys collected at the Potluck were distributed for the Commission’s review. There were many comments of “very likely” to attend another Potluck; appreciative comments about the table discussions, and several good recommendations for other events or outreach that the Commission could do in Lakewood.

Lakewood 2nd Quarter Mixer: Jessica suggested the next Mixer be at the end of March. The venue is to be decided. The last mixer was in Ward 3.

Vacancies on the Commission: Melissa said there were 3 vacancies – one to be appointed by the Mayor; and two by City Council. Jessica noted that Councilman Tom Bullock had contacted her regarding a possible new member, who may not be able to make the Commission’s current meeting schedule. Rachel asked members to think of good candidates to recommend to Mayor and City Council.

New Suggestions: New member Walter Wright suggested that the topic of racial equity and racial equity training be discussed at one of the next community conversations. He described his experience with a couple of groups who have researched this topic, are versed in this training and have conducted group sessions in Cleveland. The Commission members were interested in this suggestion and agreed that we invite one of the experts to talk to the Commission about the possibilities of doing something like this in Lakewood.

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Next Meetings: The next meeting of the Commission:

- i. Thursday, March 14, 2019
- ii. Thursday, April 11, 2019.

With no further announcements or discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.