

Lakewood Community Relations Advisory Commission Minutes
March 14, 2019; 6:30 p.m., Lakewood City Hall, 12600 Detroit Ave, Lakewood, OH

In attendance were: Rachel Donaldson (Vice-Chair), Chitra Walker (Secretary), Andrew Morris, Gary Rick, Walter Wright, Gabrielle Jackson and Melissa Garrett (Community Relations Specialist)

Not present were: Tariq Ata, Barbara Howell, Jessica Sloan, Robin Beaver.

OLD BUSINESS

The minutes of the February 7, 2019 meeting were approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Youth Advisory Council:

Melissa noted that 21 students had applied for the 9 positions on the Task Force to establish the Youth Action Council. City Council will choose their 3 candidates first, then LCRAC will nominate its 3, and then the Mayor will nominate his 3. There is a City Council meeting on March 18 where City Council will decide on its 3 candidates. Applying for the positions was promoted on Social Media. The object, once the positions are approved, is to get a time table to get to the establishment of the Council – obtain applications, establish meeting schedules (possibly invite them to attend LCRAC meetings as well). The LCRAC subcommittee will meet next week. Melissa passed around the 21 applications to members of the committee. She will send them to all members of the Commission via email. LCRAC members should review the applications also, and then weigh in when the subcommittee makes their recommendations.

LakewoodAlive Community Forum update: Chitra provided a brief update on the Forum committee which will be meeting again on March 18 to finalize panelists. Date has been finalized for Tuesday, May 14 from 7-9 p.m. at the Lakewood Public Library. Chitra will keep LCRAC members informed about needs for volunteers as for past forums.

Upcoming Discussion on Racial Equity with guest Erica Merritt: Rachel noted that Erica Merritt, whom Walter Wright had recommended at LCRAC's last meeting, will be speaking to the Commission at the next meeting of the Commission on April 11. She provided members with Erica's impressive bio and we look forward to an exciting discussion. Walter noted that her group is currently working in the Cleveland area with groups regarding racial equity issues, the prison system, infant mortality rates, and giving people training in areas related to structural racism. Erica has done a lot of follow-up work on how to talk about difficult issues with many diverse groups.

Gabrielle Jackson spoke to the group briefly about the forum held at the Lakewood Democratic Club in February which centered on beginning a dialogue on racism in our communities. The panelists were 4 African American persons who are all engaged in local politics – a judge of a local municipal court, two city council representatives, and an Ohio state senator – all of whom gave moving and candid descriptions of their own upbringing, their individual and family experiences with racial bias, and their very positive ways of approaching their constituents and communities to resolve these issues.

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There ensued a very good and at times passionate discussion on racial bias in our own community, and ways in which each of us may have encountered specific situations involving race in our lives. Such genuine, frank discussion about a difficult topic is hard to have, and we, as a Commission, showed that we can do this with respect and grace. (Thank you, fellow Commissioners!)

Bios of LCRAC members needed: Rachel asked that Erica Merritt, who is speaking to us via phone at the next meeting of the Commission, requested brief bios of each of the Commission members and asked that we get them to Melissa by the end of the month.

LCRAC Lakewood Mixer: Rachel will send out an informal poll for the last two weeks in April. Members should think of possible venues. Ward 2 restaurants could be possible choices.

LCRAC publicity in local papers: There was a brief discussion on providing written articles to local news outlets and papers regarding LCRAC activities. Gabrielle is happy to continue to provide info on social media, but would like someone else to take over the writing of articles. Barbara has offered to write articles in the past. Walter Wright has graciously offered to write articles when needed. (Thank you, Walter!)

Next Meetings: The next meetings of the Commission:

- i. Thursday, April 11, 2019
- ii. Thursday, May 9, 2019
- iii. Thursday, June 13

With no further announcements or discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.