

## **Lakewood Community Relations Commission (LCRAC)**

July 9, 2020

Attendees (Virtual Meeting): Neil Chavan, Rachel Donaldson, Melissa Garrett, Tracy Greenberg, Jon Gromek, Gwendolyn Holden-Seckers, Anastasia Loejos, Ella Sutcliffe, Walter Wright

Absent: Tariq Atta, Robin Beavers, Jasany Jenkins, Gary Rick, Lise Stephens

Meeting called to order by Walter Wright (WW), Chair of LCRAC at 6:37 p.m.

### 1. Welcome New Members

New members Jasany Jenkins and Neil Chavan (NC) welcomed by WW. After NC introduced himself, other members of the commission welcomed him and shared brief sketches of their interests and background as it relates to the commission.

### 2. Old Business:

NC asked for clarification of diversity and the commission will add specific language to address sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Ella Sutcliffe (ES) motioned to approve revision to minutes of previous meeting, seconded by Jon Gromek (JG). All present voted to approve minutes of meeting on June 11, 2020.

### 3. Covid-19 Update

Melissa Garrett (MG) provided updated information about the city's response to the Covid-19 pandemic to the commission. MG noted that cases are up significantly in Cuyahoga County and as the county is in a Level Three, the mask mandate is now in effect per Governor DeWine. While most guidelines are occurring at the state and federal level, Mayor George is expected to create additional local guidance at the next city council meeting. All summer events sponsored by the city have been cancelled and the popular Front Porch Concerts and the Cleveland Shakespeare Festival will be held virtually. Parks are open. ES and WW asked about enforcement and support; MG reported that support is strong among the business community and discussion continues with a business community task force convened by Mayor George.

### 4. Future Goals and Priorities for commission

WW reiterated the purpose of the commission--appointed by the mayor and city council as a go-between for residents and government and to make appropriate recommendations to the mayor and council. The goal is to amplify the voices of residents and the many different populations within the city. WW reminded the commission that at the moment, we are using the time to look backward but also to look to the future. Current goals include:

a. Equity, inclusion and consideration

The commission wants to engage members of the community so that all residents of Lakewood feel welcome and safe.

b. Addressing physical and/or sociological barriers for minorities, disabled and seniors:

Tracy Greenberg (TG) reminded the commission of the challenges faced by people with disabilities who are in the 18-59 age range, especially with the current very limited stock of accessible housing. As a person with physical disabilities, TG noted that these issues are frequently overlooked if one is not personally experiencing them. ES noted that while the city has a good resource webpage for senior citizens, Lakewood doesn't have a "One Stop" section on the city's website that could inform current and potential residents of the city's resources and assistance available from community partners. Discussion followed about the recognition that not everyone in the city has equal access to technology and that the city must find ways to help people connect with available information. MG noted that the city is aware of the challenge and has struggled to connect with people who may be underrepresented. After some discussion among members about how they can connect with additional members of the community via focus groups, questionnaires, or other ways to gauge community concerns, WW suggested that this be a significant conversation at the commission's next meeting. In addition, small group discussions, led by Jon Gromek (JG), will be held via Zoom to discuss and develop potential strategies for connecting with the community. Perspectives provided by the Youth Council will also be a valuable way of collecting more information about the needs and concerns of Lakewood's diverse population. NC asked if the commission may read the recommendations recently sent by the Youth Council to the City Council and MG will email a copy to all members of the commission.

c. Engaging and advising the mayor and members of city council:

The new mayor has met with many constituents over the past few months and has a very full schedule. MG suggested that if the commission has a specific topic to discuss with the mayor, the commission needs to give her guidance on what type of information is being sought by the commission. Discussion among members followed with JG suggesting that a video conference may be valuable and WW said that the survey or information gathering strategy developed by the commission could be sent to the mayor for her input, suggestions, or endorsement.

5. Status of 2019 annual report to city council

Lise Stephens is preparing a PowerPoint report highlighting the recent activities of the commission. As she is absent from the meeting, an update will be provided at a later time.

## 6. Announcements

WW spoke with former LCRAC member Chitra Walker, affiliated with Healthy Lakewood, about ways to move the conversation about diversity in Lakewood forward. A racial equity training program may be conducted virtually.

TG mentioned the recent news story about Lakewood High School developing and requiring diversity classes throughout the district.

JG motioned to adjourn the meeting; TG seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned by WW at 7:39 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Gwendolyn Holden-Seckers

Upcoming LCRAC meetings:

8/13/20

9/10/20

10/08/20