

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Diverse and Inclusive Communities Committee Meeting Minutes
July 8, 2024, 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Hants Community Hospital, Room 1A, 89 Payzant Dr, Windsor



Attendance:

Anne Bishop, Community Member, Co-Chair
Domenic Padula, Community Member, Co-Chair
Ripley Brown-Fogarty, Community Member
Charlotte Paul, Glooscap Representative
David Ferguson, RCMP Representative
Andrea Parker, Community Health Board Representative
Abraham Zebian, Mayor
Mark Phillips, CAO
Deanna Snair, WHRM Employee
Sarah Taylor, WHRM Employee
Chris Burns, WHRM Employee
Kevin Waters, WHRM Employee
Jenny LaPierre, WHRM Employee
Vanessa Lake, WHRM Employee

Regrets:

Ian Shaw, Community Member
Jamie Patterson, Community Member
Shartelle Lyon, SPEC Advisory Member
Jessie Drysdale, WHRM Employee
Jim Ivey, Councillor, District 11

1. At 6:00pm, Domenic and Anne called the meeting to order and acknowledged that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People, and acknowledged the historic Black Loyalist communities in Nova Scotia.
2. Anne gave an overview of the agenda and asked if there were any additions. Sarah and Kevin added an update to the Ongoing Business (renamed from Unfinished Business) section for the Equity and Anti-Racism and Hate plan they are working on.
3. No conflicts of interest were declared. Mark provided a brief explanation of what constitutes a conflict of interest.

4. Check-in – Members were invited to share anything related to diversity and equity that they are aware of or that they have experienced.
- Mark shared that the Pride stickers on the municipal fleet have been rolled out, including fire department vehicles. The stickers are also on the doors or windows of several WHRM buildings. He wondered if there was any interest in a business initiative to self-declare as a safe space and to post the stickers in more businesses. Mark also shared that he has been less of a by-stander and speaking out more often when witnessing discriminatory behaviour or language with family and friends.
 - Abe shared that several businesses have reached out to him about wanting the stickers. He also shared that he has invited several newcomers to West Hants (and Canada) to his home to help them feel more welcome. He said folks do feel much more welcome now than previous newcomers, citing positive change in perspectives and the increase in diverse populations already in West Hants.
 - Andrea shared that the Community Health Resource Social, in partnership with the Community Health Board and the Nova Scotia Brotherhood and Sisterhood, will be held at the Three Mile Plains Community Hall on July 27, from 10:30am to 1:30pm, with a free BBQ courtesy of the RCMP. The Falmouth Wellness Fund Grant Celebration will be held on September 16 at the Falmouth Community hall at 6:30pm. All are welcome!
 - Kevin shared that two of his family members have disabilities, but he was able to play golf with his father for the first time in a very long time. A ParaGolf event had been held right here in Windsor and his father was able to participate.
 - Chris had mentioned the Pride crosswalk as an example during the brainstorming process and was happy to see brought it to life by the Committee and the municipality.
 - Dave shared that he attended an African Canadian workshop with the RCMP, and it was a very eye-opening experience.
 - Anne shared that, following the discussion with the schools, the guests had individually reached out to express what a wonderful experience it was, and they would like to continue the conversation. Even working within the same system, they do not often have time to discuss with each other in that manner.
 - Sarah expressed a sense of pride in seeing the Pride celebrations and especially the sidewalk and hopes to see more, and more diverse, representation in the future.
 - Deanna shared that both of her daughters attended the Pride celebrations in Cape Breton. She and a friend of hers, an elementary school counselor, are starting up a program to purchase backpacks and care packages for underprivileged children.
 - Domenic shared that the Pride Parade in Windsor was a highlight since the last meeting. Despite the rain, many people showed up and it was a wonderful event. He also shared that he spoke up to a neighbour about an offensive flag being displayed in their yard.

- Vanessa shared that they have mentioned this Committee to many people, who were pleasantly surprised of its existence. They were happy to hear that the Pride Parade had a good turnout despite the rain.
- Charlotte, Ripley, and Jenny had nothing specific to share, but (re-)introduced themselves.

5. Announcement/Concerns

- Domenic had shared the Inspire West Hants's Facebook post about the Pride crosswalk on the Hants County and Beyond Facebook page and was surprised to see much less hate than he had anticipated, and people speaking up against hate in the comments.
- Anne shared that the friend that match-made her and her partner had recently got in touch, and they all got together. They discussed how different things are now compared to then, and it was encouraging to see the progress made.

6. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – Anne commented on how well the school discussion had been captured in the minutes. It was a team effort between Deanna and Vanessa. Moved by Domenic Padula and seconded by Charlotte Paul that the minutes be approved as circulated. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Ongoing Business

- Updates on School Discussion, Pride Events – Many of these items had already been discussed during the meeting. The Committee felt the discussion with school representatives went quite well and were hopeful to have similar discussions with the schools again as well as other groups. Abe shared that Horton High School, during graduation, has African Canadian and First Nations students speak about their experiences. He wants to speak with Avon View about doing something similar. The letter of endorsement to fund a full-time equity worker was approved by Council and is ready to be drafted. It will not be done in time for the 2024-2025 school year.
- Update on the Equity and Anti-Racism and Hate Plan – As of last week, the NS Government prescribed a deadline of April 1, 2025, for municipalities to develop their Plans. Sarah and Kevin have met with officials to discuss the details. There will be a community engagement portion of the process. Sarah said they are considering hiring a consultant to help with the process. Funding for this would be drawn from the municipality's operating reserves. Kevin would like for the Committee to highlight high-level stakeholders to assist with the Plan. Mark asked if a secondary working group would be beneficial. Sarah replied that it would be quite helpful. Domenic asked if a diverse individual could be chosen as the consultant, and Mark replied that it could provide extra points during evaluation. The Committee made two recommendations:
 - i. Moved by Domenic Padula and seconded by Charlotte Paul that the Diverse and Inclusive Communities Committee recommends to Council to create an

RFP and obtain a consultant to assist with the Anti-Hate and Racism Plan.

Motion carried unanimously.

- ii. Moved by Anne Bishop and seconded by Domenic Padula that the Committee, in principle, recommends forming a sub-group to work with the consultant after the two vacant positions are filled. Motion carried unanimously.

Abe had to step out of the meeting at 6:49pm.

8. Finalize Planning Process

- Committee Membership – The process to fill the two vacancies is to advertise the position (newspaper, website, social media, etc.), make a recommendation to Committee of the Whole, and ratification by Council. Deanna said there has been no new interest, so she is checking with previous applicants. There are specific criteria that must be met to serve on this Committee. Deanna explained the difference between voting and advisory members. She asked members to please speak to anyone interested in joining. Current terms expire in November, but members are encouraged to re-offer.
- Childcare for Members – Some members, and members on other committees and council, are sometimes unable to attend meetings due to the inability to find suitable childcare. Anne asked if there was any financial support available. Andrea commented that it extends beyond “child” care, to seniors or other dependants. Mark said some other municipalities have policies in place, and WHRM hopes to move toward a policy as well. In the meantime, he suggests members speak with someone at the municipality and they will do what they can to assist.
 - i. Moved by Domenic Padula and seconded by Charlotte Paul that the Diverse and Inclusive Communities Committee recommends to Council to move forward with policy to support dependant care for the Municipality. Motion carried unanimously.
- Continued Liaison With School Equity Committees – The Committee discussed opening one or more advisory positions to school representatives, up to one for each level of schooling (elementary, middle, and high school). Sending invitations to members of the school equity committee members was a starting point. Mark and Deanna noted that adding a position to the Committee composition would have to go to Council for approval. Ripley added that Schools Plus may also be interested or able to assist.
 - i. Moved by Anne Bishop and seconded by Domenic Padula that Council provides an invitation to AV/WHMS Equity committees to determine their interest in having a member of their committee sit as an advisory member to WHRM’s Diverse and Inclusive Communities committee and further if there was interest; staff be directed to amend the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy to reflect the committee’s new composition. Motion carried unanimously.

- Respectful Disagreement – Due to the nature of the Committee, there will be differing views and high emotions during some discussions. The Committee discussed ways to communicate disagreement with respect to the other person. Providing alternatives, presenting feelings as opinions rather than facts, etc. In most cases, a person may be upset with an institution, not the individual workers. It is important to consider where the person is coming from.
 - “The Five Pillars” – Five areas of focus for the Committee’s mandate were identified from the projects and priorities (action items) listed by members.
 - i. Symbolic Actions – Flags, stickers, etc.
 - ii. Public Education – Teaching and changing attitudes, including events.
 - iii. Internal Education – Think tanks, consultation, reflection, analysis.
 - iv. Policy and Practice – Applying a D&I lens to policy, consultation.
 - v. Structural Equity – Access to housing, transportation, health services, etc.
 - Setting Priorities – Each pillar has actions items associated with it. Kevin added that for the AccessAbility Week action item, he would like it changed to a whole calendar of different events and celebrations. Via a dotmocracy process, the Committee chose which items were their top priorities. The results were:
 - i. Public DI Education
 - ii. Youth Programming
 - iii. Inclusive Community Meals
 - iv. Internal Education
 - v. Inclusive Children’s Books in public areas
 - vi. Inclusive & Accessible Events
9. Next Steps – A more concrete action plan will be developed in the fall now that priorities have been set. Many items are already underway, and more information will be available when the Committee reconvenes in the fall. Over the summer, Committee members will work on different projects such as compiling a list of children’s books and investigating internal education opportunities. The Committee may contact each other throughout August if anything important comes up.
10. Next Meeting / Adjournment – The next meeting date was selected to be September 9, 2024. The Committee will meet in the NS Works Boardroom, at 80 Water Street, if Jamie is able to arrange for it. If not, a different location will be chosen, and the Committee will be notified in advance. Moved by Domenic Padula and seconded by Charlotte Paul that the meeting be adjourned at 8:00pm. Motion carried unanimously.