

**SOUTH ORANGE/MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY COALITION ON RACE**  
**April 26, 2018 Meeting**

**Call to Order:** Chair Robert A. Marchman convened the meeting at 7:35 PM.

**Present:** Carol Barry-Austin, Lee Boswell May, Tegan Culler, Nancy Gagnier, Leila Gonzalez Sullivan, Robert A. Marchman, Erin Scherzer, Kelly Quirk, George Robinson, Barbara Velazquez, Colleen Breslin Abigail Cotler, Dean Dafis Deborah Davis Ford, Nina Essel, David Harris

**Absent:** Stephanie Lawson-Muhammad, Rhea Mokund-Beck

**Excused:** Audrey Rowe, Meredith Sue Willis, Walter Clarke, Catherine Cronin, Fred R. Profeta Jr., Reynaldo Tapia

**Minutes Approval:** The wrong draft of the March minutes were sent to the trustees. The correct copy will be sent and the trustees will approve at the May meeting.

**Executive Director Report**

- The F&D and EC committees reviewed the financial reports prior to the meeting. Nancy had nothing new to report.
- The Spring Appeal bulk letters were mailed and the trustees with letters are in the process of writing their notes. Nancy met with a development volunteer who is interested in working with us on a wine-tasting fundraiser. Nancy and Kelly will be meeting with another development professional for support on getting sponsorships.
- Nancy reminded the trustees about the upcoming Conversations on Race on May 9th, putting out lawn signs, and sharing social media. On May 16<sup>th</sup>, the Residential committee is hosting a Neighborhood Summit. Trustees should spread the word for that as well.
- Nancy attended the Pride Month planning meeting and offered to promote upcoming events.

**Chair Report:** Robert's report is in the notes on the Police Community Board

**Mission Focus Area Updates:**

**Schools**

- Carol Barry-Austin reported on the SOMSD Diversity Hiring Fair which the Committee has advocated for and supported over the last few years. About 40 people attended. The Committee will follow up with the district to see if any hires were made as a result of the fair. They will continue to work with Kevin Walston on diversity hiring issues.
- The Committee is also working with Dr. Diane Hughes to expand the Strategies for Talking to Children about Race hand-out distributed at the event. They are emailing event attendees to get feedback on the handout and see if it had any impact.
- Co-chairs Sue Willis and Carol Barry-Austin will be doing a presentation at William Patterson University in committee member Alice Baldwin Jones' class.

**Residential**

- The committee is working on the Neighborhood Summit which will be held May 16<sup>th</sup> at the Woodland. Their goal is to provide neighborhood associations and block groups with resources.
- They will also be hosting a Coalition table at Mayfest.
- The Committee would like to work with Local Assistance Boards on housing affordability issues
- The Committee is looking into bias incidents in businesses and considering offering a training to merchants. Tegan Culler said she has a resource for training.

## **MERT**

- Leila Gonzalez Sullivan noted that the committee is also looking into affordable housing information for the towns. The committee is focused on updating the current report and expanding into a few new areas.

## **Community Engagement Programs**

- Barbara Velazquez reported that the Civic Engagement Institute is finished and went well. They trained volunteers for advocacy work and to follow their passions.
- XRootsFest: sponsors and vendors are signing up. The committee needs to focus on advertising in order to get people out that day.
- David Harris reported on Coffee House Discussions. 40 people attended; it was diverse and included people who were involved in some of the social media controversies. The next CHD will focus on the Latino community.
- Conversations on Race: Colleen Breslin noted that there is a need for facilitators for the event

Barbara Velazquez also reported on the radio program she is coordinating with other local groups. The Coalition participated in the introductory program. The Coalition's first full show will air on May 13<sup>th</sup>.

## **Marketing**

- Nancy reported briefly that the committee continued to work on the issue of marketing outreach to targeted groups. An arrangement was made with a Seton Hall professor to conduct focus groups. The trustees wanted some clarification about the focus group needs. They also asked for the results from the poll conducted by Nubia on a local parents Facebook group. Nancy will share those results.

## **Development Presentation Follow Up**

Kelly Quirk asked the trustees for feedback on their first effort to contact their assigned donors. She asked that their next outreach be to personally invite them to Conversations on Race. She encouraged the trustees to keep up the good work in reaching out to donors—even if they don't get a response, the outreach is important.

## **Update on the Police Community Board**

Chair Marchman congratulated Erin Sherzer and Kelly Quirk for their hard work and tireless efforts to develop a Police Community Board for Maplewood. Erin and Kelly shared that NJ has strict rules regarding the formation of such boards and that this one is only the second of its kind in the state. The development was collaborative and the organization of the board is designed to be collaborative in the future. They hope it will be a model for the state. The PBA wants to meet before the TC begins to accept applications for membership.

- The Coalition has a designated seat on the 13-member board
- We need to nominate 3-5 people—Coalition volunteers or committee members, not trustees
- The TC will interview those candidates and select one for a 3-year term.

**SOPD Incident:** Robert Marchman filled the board in on the meeting he and Nancy had with Police Chief Kroll after we were asked to respond to an incident of the police detaining a youth of color in South Orange. Chief Kroll gave us the details on the incident from his perspective and told us that he met with the parents and other concerned community members and that he has responded by taking specific actions with his staff. He has instituted some new procedures and will continue to do anti-bias training. Robert and Nancy expressed their concern that this was a bigger issue than this one stop and that there is a need for anti-bias training more broadly in South Orange—beyond the Police Department. Because the stop was requested by the Fire Chief, accountability and training needs to happen there too. Trustees expressed concern about who would be chief after the Fire Department merger in the towns. This incident should be cause for concern by those who hire the chief. Robert noted that he and Nancy will be seeking a meeting with Sheena Collum, Walter Clark, and Deborah Davis Ford.

**Update on the BOE integration plan:** Carol Barry-Austin filled the Board in on the information she, Sue Willis, and Nancy Gagnier received during the conference call with the SOMSD Superintendent and BOE president regarding the building use and integration plan.

- The district's 16 portables are unsafe and require too much repair.
- Given the increase in population and the need to take down the portables, the district needs 26 classrooms.
- There are many repairs and upgrades required in all the existing buildings—maintenance that has been too long deferred.
- The middle schools are the best buildings for gaining classroom space
- The BOE will propose a bond issue to pay for the above
- If passed, they will seek bids in 2019
- The resulting school arrangements will be that the 2 middle schools will house 5-6 and 7-8—it's not clear yet if that means one building for each cluster or each building houses 5-8.
- With this arrangement, grades 5-12 will be integrated by building
- Elementary school integration planning is ongoing; clusters and pairing are most likely scenarios as the development of magnet schools is a very long term project and they have high expenses.

Carol noted that a response was sent to Ficarra and Baker about using the term 'redistricting,' the problem with only referring to Seth Boyden when noting district segregation, and the need to inform realtors about the changes and the need for them to sell the whole district, not just individual schools as a 'desirable.' She said we would be willing to orchestrate a realtor briefing.

Trustees responded that:

- We need to push hard on the integration plan
- Integration plans should be clear before we ask the community to agree to a bond issue
- The school district needs to understand the concerns and needs of working parents when planning for busing, school start times, before- and aftercare, and school building assignments
- Classroom integration is not addressed and must be

**Ad Hoc Update:** The trustees will receive the committee's proposal in May. The proposal focuses the organization on its mission and includes a process for the Board to develop initiatives on an annual basis that will help all Mission Focus Areas work consistently toward common initiatives.

### **Liaisons Reports:**

**South Orange:** Deborah Davis Ford shared her concerns about the police incident. She was concerned that she was not informed, especially as the only trustee of color in South Orange. Once informed, she followed up by asking that the town pursue a set of initiatives including individual anti-bias training for the fire chief; follow up with the family; a public apology from the town; and training for all police, fire, and municipal personnel.

There is an open position for township business administrator. They will be interviewing 7 candidates.

**Maplewood:** Frank McGehee shared plans for the Fire Department merger. The Goal is to merge by 2019. There are 6 people on the steering committee. It is a collaboration of both towns. There will be a substantial cost savings.

Dean Dafis reported on the Youth Advisory Committee, designed to empower future leaders. Youth will have a voice on local government issues. He also commended Kelly and Erin for their work on the Police Community Board.

There are new plans for policing at Mayfest this year to ensure people are not chased away as the event closes. The avenue will remain open to pedestrians for 2 hours.

Pride Month: the towns are planning for events in addition to NJ Pride Fest that include education, forums and more on the same model as Black History Month.

**New Business:** None

**Adjournment:** 10:46 David Harris, seconded by Abby Cotler