

**SOUTH ORANGE/MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY COALITION ON RACE**  
**August 25, 2018 Meeting**

**Call to Order:** Chair Robert A. Marchman called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM.

**Present:** Lee Boswell May, Colleen Breslin (late), Abigail Cotler, Catherine Cronin, Tegan Culler, Deborah Davis Ford, Nancy Gagnier, David Harris, Robert A. Marchman, Kelly Quirk, George Robinson, Audrey Rowe, Erin Scherzer, Reynaldo Tapia, Barbara Velazquez, Meredith Sue Willis

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

**Excused:** Carol Barry-Austin, Walter Clarke, Dean Dafis, Leila Gonzalez Sullivan, Fred R. Profeta Jr.,

**Minutes Approval:** Sue Willis moved Minutes be approved and George Robinson seconded followed by unanimous trustee approval.

**Chair Report:**

- Chair Marchman noted that the Coalition has been invited to the first SOMA Progressive coalition meeting on Saturday, August 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Our focus for the meeting will be forging sustainable partnerships with other local groups and gaining support for positive integration and inclusion outcomes.

**Executive Director Report:**

- Monthly financials were sent to trustees in advance and the floor was opened for questions. No questions were asked.
- We received some late Spring Appeal donations, some assignable to the Coalition's recent public statement on the schools. The Chair complimented the Executive Committee for crafting an excellent statement.
- Coalition bookkeeper/accountant are scrutinizing the latest Financial Review which should be completed before the end of September and then sent to trustees.

**Program Director's Report:**

- Trustees were directed to the full Program Highlights distributed earlier in the Trustee Packet.
- Volunteerism is up for the coalition with six new volunteers being assigned and now working across marketing, residential and MERT.
- Realtor event with Superintendent Ficarro drew solid attendance, and his presentation on facilities planning, integration direction and answers to tough questions were well received.

**Annual Dinner**

- Annual Dinner Chair, Kelly Quirk, indicated that both honorees are engaged.
- Trustee Rhea Mokund-Beck and volunteer Jessica James will be working with ED Nancy Gagnier to solicit sponsors for the Annual Dinner.
- Trustees are asked to purchase tickets at a minimum and preferably become table hosts.
- Trustees will receive a list of assignments over the weekend to solicit ads for the journal. Ads are due by September 20<sup>th</sup>.
- This year's journal will include upgrades to enhance its value, including the *Speak Up* brochure tips and *Tips for Discussing Race on Social Media*.
- Businesses unable or unwilling to place an ad should be offered the option to donate a gift card which will be consolidated into gift card trees.
- A letter for distribution to donors for the **Live Auction** and a form will also be sent to trustees to solicit higher-end items and experiences.
- Invitations will be mailed September 5<sup>th</sup> to 750 people. Assistance is needed stuffing envelopes on September 3rd.

## By Laws

- By Laws Chair Erin Scherzer provided background on the reasons and process for the current revisions.
- An approval tonight will be followed by final review by the pro bono counsel.
- A motion to approve was made by David Harris with a second from Abbey Cotler.
- Discussion was open and Trustee Willis stated she was abstaining in objection to the removal of race in the voting process By Law.
- The two-thirds vote needed to pass a By Law change was reached with 11 voting “yes” and the 1 abstention.

## Nominations

- The 2018 Nominations Committee will consist of Reynaldo Tapia, Catherine Cronin, George Robinson, Carole Barry-Austin and Nancy Gagnier. The next meeting is Monday, August 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Trustees are requested to make outreach to potential candidates. They should confirm interest before submitting any name.
- Candidates should be representative of the various groups in the community, be interested in serving, share the integration/inclusion philosophy and different points-of-view are welcome.
- The committee will consider placing a general open call for candidates in the Coalition’s September e-newsletter.
- Current trustees can self-nominate for consideration on the Coalition’s Executive Committee (EC).

## Initiatives

- ED Gagnier reviewed previous work leading up to today’s Initiative selection and opened the floor for any addition to the examples prepared from last meeting’s brain storming that were sent to the trustees earlier in the packet. Receiving no additions, ED reminded trustees that initiatives will be revisited annually and tonight we should select no more than two for 2019. Committees will receive the selected initiatives in August to develop their respective objectives for 2019 in September 2018.
- Discussion of the five potential initiatives followed:
  - Initiative 4 focusing on maintaining Blacks involves many variables that are out of the Coalition’s control, but it is the most important because it threatens integration here. “Maintain and increase” need to be replaced with “grow and nurture”.
  - Concern was expressed about focusing only on Blacks and not supporting the other emerging groups. However, our annual review process allows us to recalibrate and shift emphasized as needed.
  - Schools is not explicitly mentioned in Initiative 3 that speaks to integration in neighborhoods. However, the process calls for every committee, including Schools, to focus their work to support the selected initiative, so the integration focus would not just be in neighborhoods.
  - We need to understand what the community sees as critical in order to get their buy-in for this work. Most people would agree that they did not move here to become “Brooklyn West” or end up in an all-White community.
  - Suggestion was made to consider splitting Initiative 4 into attracting and maintaining.
  - The imperative was raised of not diluting the need to attract Blacks.
  - A trustee stated that the publicity and negative accounts from current Black residents around issues of the police, the schools, our fire department, etc., send the message to Blacks that “SOMA is not a place for you.” SOMA has a bad reputation for some people in the POC community.
  - You have to already be living here to feel the impact of Initiatives 1, 2 and 3.
  - The expected interaction that would reflect true integration at the adult level is not seen by all, but can be witnessed on occasion at outdoor concerts, the train station and other events.

- People need a compelling reason to make substantial changes, so the Coalition must include education on the empirical data (like the Demographic Study) and on the benefits to ALL of supporting our initiatives.
- Various suggestions and observations were made on how certain initiatives could be combined or incorporated into to one statement or had cascading impact on one another.
- The chair called for a vote and Initiative 4 received unanimous approval, pending re-wording by ED Gagnier and Future Staff moderator Kelly Quirk in clear and simple terms.

**Initiative 4: Maintaining our Black community and increasing total African American (Black) population in SOMA,[given that this group is declining while emerging (Hispanic/Asian/Mixed-race) populations are increasing].**

- Initiative 5 received the second highest vote 7/10

**Initiative 5: Fostering an inclusive climate by engaging the Pillars of Community (Educational System, Criminal Justice System, Residential Housing Opportunity, Diversity/Demographics, Social Interaction, Economic Opportunity and Government Structure/Representation) that prevent POC (People of Color) from feeling welcome in our community.**

- Trustees were reminded that the 1-2 year focus of our initiatives allows the flexibility to pivot quickly, if needed.

#### **Liaison Reports:**

##### **South Orange**

- Debra Davis Ford expressed that the South Orange Master Plan which defines the township's multi-decade vision needs diverse representation. (NOTE: The Coalition received an invitation
- South Orange Play Day is Sunday, September 16 with additions of all-day pass for bouncies at only \$5, a zip line and other attractions.
- South Orange Newcomers' Day is September 23<sup>rd</sup> from 2-4 pm at South Orange Library.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Charity Golf event co-organized by Liaison Davis-Ford to support selected 501C3 organizations is September 17 at East Orange Golf Club. Last year's \$30K recipient was YouthNet and this year's awardee will be the South Orange Rescue Squad. Registration starts at noon, golfing begins at 1 pm and dinner is at 6 pm.

##### **Maplewood**

- Liaison excused

#### **New Business/Announcements:**

- This meeting marks Executive Director, Nancy Gagnier's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the Community Coalition on Race.
- South Orange Tennis Courts will be dedicated to the memory of Kenney Graham on September 29, 2018

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 9:31 PM

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, September 27; at 7:30 PM at Prospect Presbyterian Church, 646 Prospect St. Maplewood NJ

**Submitted By:** Audrey Rowe

**Secretary:** Carol Barry-Austin