

SOUTH ORANGE/MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY COALITION ON RACE
February 28, 2019 Meeting

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

Present: Lee Boswell May, Colleen Breslin, Abigail Cotler, Catherine Cronin, Dean Dafis, Nancy Gagnier, Leila Gonzalez Sullivan, David Harris, and Robert A. Marchman, Fred R. Profeta Jr., Kelly Quirk, Audrey Rowe, Erin Scherzer, Ed Stuart, and Barbara Velazquez.

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

Excused: Carol Barry-Austin, Walter Clarke, Tegan Culler, Deborah Davis Ford, John Kerner, Kristen Mahoney, Reynaldo Tapia, and Meredith Sue Willis.

Minutes Approval: A motion to approve January Minutes was made by Leila Gonzalez Sullivan with a second from Lee Boswell May, and the motion passed unanimously.

ED Report:

- Financials
 - We have adequate funds to cover first quarter for the first time in a number of years. The timing of receipt of funds caused this imbalance in the past, but funds from last year carried us this year. The Luminary Project's \$13.5K+ contributed to this solvency. We should all express our personal thanks to project leaders Patricia Canning, Liz Testa and Jocelyn Ryan. ED Gagnier already showed our gratitude by hosting a party for the entire Luminary team at her home and Chair Marchman attended.
 - The 2019 Black History Month (BHM) events were not budgeted in 2018, so the Board will receive an updated budget reflecting this.
- Reminder: Trustees should complete and return their annual pledge and other forms.
- Updates
 - The Coalition's new NationBuilder web site is live, so trustees should go there and familiarize themselves.
 - The Schools Committee will host a *Talking to Children about Race* workshop on Tuesday, March 26th 7:30 PM at Tuscan Elementary School.
 - The next Coalition e-newsletter will be sent to subscribers on March 1, 2019.
 - The 2018 Annual Report is completed and will be distributed to trustees at the weekend retreat on March 2nd. Light breakfast will be served, so anyone with gluten intolerance should notify the office.

Program Director's Report:

- Trustees were directed to the full Program Highlights distributed in the packet earlier.
- Chair Marchman offered kudos for both Black History Month events and several trustees also commented on their success - including the standing room only theatrical production of *The Bubbling Black Girl Sheds her Chameleon Skin* .
- The 2019 *Conversations on Race* planning is making headway and the committee has connected with Seton Hall as a potential partner for venue, speakers and volunteers.

MERT: Discussion of Demographic Report Updates

- ED Gagnier reminded trustees that the 2019 Demographic Report updates included the American Community Survey (ACS) through 2017, SOMA School District updates through 2018, and that the committee discontinued use of Home Mortgage Data (HMDA)

because reporting of applicants' race has become less reliable. Also, the perspectives of new committee members on the original data were taken into consideration.

- Trustees were asked to provide feedback and recommendations tonight, so that changes can be made before the updated report goes public. Updates are provided in three segments – Demographics, Affordable Housing and Schools Data.
- Chair Marchman emphasized the rigor that the committee has put into this study to insure data reliability and to protect the organization's credibility.
- **Demographic Racial Integration Summary**
 - The MERT Committee leader for this segment was Tegan Culler.
 - Update continues to show decline in the rate of Black in-movers.
 - Discussion followed surfacing the fact that Montclair is also losing Black in-movers starting earlier than SOMA and continuing at a higher rate. West Orange also started this trend earlier.

Recommendation: The resulting action of this discussion was to add slides that compare SOMA's decline with the other major competing communities that for the most part are on the same train line. There was a request to also include Teaneck.

- Another highlight was the update to the foreign born data which shows the SOMA percentage of immigrant residents to be 23%, but the percentage of that number who are people of color increased significantly in the update to 72% as a result of a correction in the calculation methodology.
- Neighborhoods are fairly racially stable in the update with Hilton, College Hill and Newstead showing increased integration and Montrose, Tuxedo Park and part of College Hill near Tuscan Elementary School showing decreased integration.
- **Affordable Housing/Income**
 - The MERT Committee leader for this segment was Leila Gonzalez Sullivan.
 - Overall the update showed minimal change
 - SOMA Residential sales are up and sales comparisons with neighboring towns are included in the update.
 - Prices were on the rise before the 2008 recession and are now going back up
 - Home Maintenance Data Act (HMDA) indicated a 12% increase in mortgages for SOMA but 70% of applicants did not include race.

Recommendation: Add a line in slide 20 showing most likely distribution trends on applications when race is not reported.

- Same-sex household's data is unreliable, so it was removed.
- Slide 21 shows that in 2010 South Orange Black households had income higher than Whites but more recent data indicates that this has changed. It was suggested that perhaps the recession had a higher impact on Black families.
- Recommendation: Add data showing trends for the other groups, i.e. Asian, Hispanic and "emerging"
 - Slide 22 showing average household income comparisons with other areas places SOMA in the middle of the communities for median income.
 - The standard used for affordability is 30% of income required for housing, including utilities and taxes, and the SOMA poverty housing income is \$75K.
 - Average Median Income (AMI) for Maplewood is \$126K and SO \$121.6K
 - Fair Market Rent (FMR) in SOMA is up from 2017
 - Median rent in Maplewood is \$1,485/ mo. which equals \$17.8K per year.
 - Median rent for South Orange is \$1,568/mo. which equals \$18.8 per year.
 - Low Income Affordable Housing is an issue for SOMA
 - Using the United Way's definition of ALICE (**A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed) households, both South Orange and Maplewood have nearly 24% households that are below poverty level for local median income or classifiable as ALICE.

Recommendation:

- A. Compare the combined ALICE/Poverty number for SOMA with the other communities that are being tracked.
- B. Clarify the hourly wage or “Living Wage” needed to afford housing in SOMA

- **Schools**

- Updates are through 2017/2018 school year.
- Slide 34 shows sharp contrast of Black student enrollment at CHS moving from almost 50% in 2006/2007 to under 30% now.
- Overall, hiring of racially diverse staff by South Orange-Maplewood School District has shown no change over twenty years. The most change has been in the District Office and in the Middle Schools.
- The lowest racially representative staffs are in Seth Boyden and South Mountain Elementary Schools.

NOTE: Diversity Hiring Fair implemented by the District and focus on racial equality and inclusion in the Superintendent search values are both highly influenced by Community Coalition Schools Committee efforts.

- Slide 45 is a continuum of efforts to integrate SOMA schools through 2018.
- Review of all grades in all SOMA elementary schools show that Black male students almost disappear at the 4th grade,

Floor was opened for additional questions and comments which follow:

1. How does the Coalition leverage this data?
2. Reduction in Black population appears more social than financial, because trends in economic down-turn do not coincide with the beginning reduction of Black residents. Black people are dissatisfied. It's not the recession – it's the schools.
3. Data showing the number of families sending students out-of-district for private school and for IEPs would be helpful, but is not available by race.
4. Comment was made that affluence does not make a difference in the treatment of Black students in the SOMSD.
5. We need to orient recent in-movers to SOMA's history in the schools and to ignite a sense of inclusive community

Trustees were thanked for their comments, questions and recommendations and were reminded that this information is a data point in time and not intended to answer universal issues.

Trustee Board Retreat

- A Trustee Retreat and Brunch is scheduled for Saturday, March 2 from 9:30 am – 12:30 pm at the Ethical Culture Society Building
- Agenda is 1) to get to know one another and our personal priorities better 2) to review the 2019 Initiatives - including common understanding, feasibility and success measures 3) governance issues - including responsibilities and fundraising, and 4) opportunities, issues and challenges facing the organization like responses to the Demographic Report.

Maplewood Liaison Report

- Dean Dafis reported that Maplewood Township is moving forward with the Community Board on Policing by taking a deeper dive into the data to surface next steps for action. A youth board rep is still needed.
- Maplewood Township Committee is also exploring youth engagement including mentoring and after-school programs, leadership training, conversations about race, restorative justice, sports and other activities.

- Recommendation was made to tap into community role models and connect them with the youth.
- Trustees were reminded that there is separation of township governance from school district governance as currently designed. Someone suggested that a re-instatement of the two towns' joint committee with monthly meetings might be more effective for handling intersecting issues.

New Business/Announcements:

- Trustees were informed that the CHS Code of Conduct on substance abuse requires that the Maplewood police be called when a student is found with drugs rather than using restorative justice techniques of discussions with the student and their families. The public needs to be educated, and we need an alternative approach defined at the Attorney General's office.
- Coalition trustee and Vice Chair Carol Barry-Austin is being honored by the Rotary on March 15th. Trustees interested in attending should contact for Rick Porter using the email sent by Chairman Marchman.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:33 PM

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 28th, at 7:30 PM at Prospect Presbyterian Church, 646 Prospect St. Maplewood NJ.

Submitted By: Audrey Rowe

Secretary: Carol Barry-Austin