

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

**Call to Order:** Chair Robert A. Marchman called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM

**Present:** Carol Barry-Austin, Abigail Cotler, Tegan Culler, Deborah Davis Ford, Nancy Gagnier, Leila Gonzalez Sullivan, David Harris, John Kerner, Kristen Mahoney, Robert A. Marchman, Audrey Rowe, Erin Scherzer, Ed Stuart, Barbara Velazquez, and Meredith Sue Willis.

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

**Excused:** Lee Boswell May, Colleen Breslin, Walter Clarke, Catherine Cronin, Dean Dafis, Fred R. Profeta Jr., Kelly Quirk, and Reynaldo Tapia,

**Chairman's Comments:**

- Thanks to all who attended the Trustee Retreat. The time spent was productive and forged strong connections.
- Kudos to the Schools committee for the *Talking to Children about Race* event.
- The EC is convening to discuss the NJ State Ethics Committee statement regarding BOE member Lawson-Muhammad and the Coalition's response.

**Minutes Approval:**

- February Minutes should be corrected to show Erin Scherzer was present and Sue Willis was absent. No other changes were identified.
- Motion to approve was made by Abbey Colter with a second by Carol Barry-Austin and passed with two abstentions.

**ED Report:**

- Financials
  - Recent changes and improvements to financial reports were reviewed and explained with no questions from trustees. Admin. support Lorry Ripley was commended.
  - 2019 Spring Appeal is targeted for launch in early May before the *Conversations on Race* May 15<sup>th</sup> which will be referenced in that communication.
  - Financial Review is on target and any previous 990s can be accessed on our web site.
- Civil Rights Summit sponsored by Building One New Jersey May 2-3 will be attended by Coalition Trustees Harris, Boswell May, Marchman and ED Gagnier.
- Congratulations to the Schools Committee for a well executed and attended *Talking to Children About Race* event.
- Coalition's Demographics Report update is targeted for presentation in June 2019.

**Program Director's Report:**

- Trustees were directed to the full Program Highlights distributed in the packet earlier.
- At Chairs request, Program Director expanded on the Marketing Committee's project to create a history of integration in South Orange/Maplewood to inform residents and others of the trajectory that the community has followed and the role that The Coalition, township governments and others have played to get us to this point.
- Trustees were reminded of the importance of RSVPs for the monthly meeting to insure a quorum for decision making and to follow best practices for Board effectiveness and good governance.

- SOMA for All Ages Volunteer Fair on Sunday, March 31 needs racially mixed trustee pair to serve as ambassadors at the Coalition on Race table. See Program Director if you can help.
- Program Director is planning a Training in April for new and incumbent committee leaders. Stay tuned for an availability inquiry for scheduling purposes.

### **Retreat Follow-up**

- Chairman Marchman reminded the Board that the March Trustee Retreat's purpose.
  - To build relationship among Board members
  - To update the status of our Initiatives
  - To identify any urgent issues or concerns
- Concerns identified were:
  - Loss of the sense of community as neighborhood age and economic demographics change – there is a sense of people becoming more isolated and less engaged in the community.
  - Affordability of SOMA: Coalition must take some responsibility for the increased demand which has resulted in homes selling above the asking price and many middle class families, including people of color, teachers, senior citizens and others, being forced out. We were reminded to expand our efforts to support and include our neighbors to the east (Newark/Irvington) and not only neighbors to the west.
  - Demographics and continuing trends in SOMA schools with segregation on multiple levels. There's concern SOMA is beginning to look more like our neighbors to the west.
- Floor was opened for other comments:
  - What we have in SOMA is fragile, and the township governments and other community organizations need to be commended for getting our community to this point.
  - It was encouraging to see that young families who attend *Talking to Children about Race* are committed to integration. Some attendees came from as far as Jersey City, Morris Plains and West Orange.
  - The issue of focusing beyond our township borders is resurfacing as in earlier strategy discussions for this organization.
  - The personal connection that began at the retreat is a key success factor for our work which requires trust and confidence in each other's contributions and motives.
  - Trustees not in attendance at the retreat are asked to make personal commitments to support one or more of the fundraising efforts circulated at the retreat. Please follow-up with Finance & Development Chair Quirk.
  - Comment was made at the retreat that some view the Coalition as not needing additional funds and that we should personally and unapologetically counter this misperception by speaking up year round about the work that we do on behalf of the community.

### **Principles of Good (Board) Governance**

- Trustee Quirk who intended to lead this discussion was unexpectedly unavailable this evening
- ED Gagnier reviewed key highlights from the document with the trustees.
- Chairman Marchman reinforced that in the interest of fairness and effectiveness, we will be observing and enforcing more governance practices.
- Comments were made regarding Board size which should be between 10 – 35, according to our By Laws, and the need to find the right balance.

- Question was raised regarding the By Laws and our previous practice for ensuring racial balance when voting. Trustee Scherzer clarified the advice of Pro Bono legal consultants that we can no longer follow any procedure that suggests a form of racial quotas.
- Attendance for Board members with small children could be supported through alternative meeting modes, such a teleconferencing. Facetime at meeting is not the only barometer of commitment and engagement.
- Trustees were reminded to complete related forms for Conflict of Interest, etc.

#### **South Orange Liaison Report by Deborah Davis Ford**

- South Orange Village township budget of \$31M was adopted earlier this year than usual. This was a much needed timing improvement.
- Updates on the Old South Orange Village Town Hall adaptive re-use as a restaurant on the interior and remodeling as a historic site on the exterior were shared.
- Following a questions about South Orange's follow-up to the Force Report, Liaison Davis Ford shared that two meetings of a *South Orange Community Police Collaboration Board* have been held.
  - Over 25 residents responded with interest in serving and 12 were selected along with 2 South Orange Village Trustees (Davis-Ford and Clarke), 3 Police Department reps (Chief Kroll, Community Rep Officer Adrian and Lieutenant ?Moore) and Chair of Public Safety, Howard Levison.
  - Monthly meetings are on the third Tuesday, 7 or 7:30pm at the Baird Center in South Orange and are open to the public.
  - Trustee Scherzer who serves on the Maplewood Community Policing Board requested that any inquiries regarding collaboration with the newly created South Orange police board be directed to either Ian Grodman or Roger Desiderio for clearance.
- Question was asked about use of SO Police to direct traffic for roadwork when they are already under-staffed, and Davis-Ford indicated that she would get an answer.

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

- Trustees were informed by Schools Committee co-chair Willis that the committee has been invited to provide programming for the Education Roundtable on SOMA.com TV that is hosted by Larry Petracarro who is also a member of the Coalition's Schools Committee. Shows to date included The Integrated Play Group with Keli Tianga and others, Coalition Overview with ED Gagnier and PD Rowe and Community Policing with Trustee Erin Scherzer. Rowe requested early notification on airings, whenever possible, for promotion in the e-newsletter and other publications.
- Trustee Harris stated that the Essex County Freeholders President announced the use of paper ballots following efforts by SOMA Action and others and as a direct result of assistance from Deborah Davis Ford. Liaison Davis-Ford acknowledged willingness to always help and recommended texting as the preferred way to reach her.
- Trustee Velazquez announced that SOMA Action met with Assemblywoman Mila Jasey and the Commission on the Census regarding the importance and need for minority residents to be counted in the 2020 census to receive services. Coalition was invited to join this effort; however, the Coalition MERT Committee is already at full capacity and unavailable to take on additional projects.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 9:19 PM

**Next Meeting:** Thurs. April 25th, 7:30 PM Prospect Church, 646 Prospect St. Maplewood NJ.

**Submitted By:** Audrey Rowe

**Secretary:** Carol Barry-Austin