

**SOUTH ORANGE/MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY COALITION ON RACE**  
**June 27, 2019 Meeting**

**Call to Order:** Robert A. Marchman called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM

**Present:** Carol Barry-Austin, Lee Boswell May, Colleen Breslin (by phone), Abigail Cotler, Catherine Cronin, Nancy Gagnier, John Kerner, Summer Jones, Kristen Mahoney, Fred R. Profeta Jr., Erin Scherzer, Ed Stuart, Barbara Velazquez

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

**Excused:** Tegan Culler, David Harris, Leila Gonzalez Sullivan, Dean Dafis, Kelly Quirk, Audrey Rowe, Meredith Sue Willis

**Minutes Approval:**

- Motion to approve the May 2019 Trustee Minutes was made by Abby Cotler with a second by Ed Stuart; Abby Cotler abstained; all others approved the minutes as amended.

**Chair Report:**

- Robert reported on his meeting with Tom Puryear from the local NAACP and the plans for the EC to meet and discuss common goals.
- The controversy at the South Orange Trattoria was explained. Rhea Beck connected the owner to the Coalition. Robert spoke with her and we have arranged for a meeting with Mary and her managers to discuss anti-bias training.
- Robert and Nancy will also have meetings with the police chiefs this summer to follow up on issues from the time since the Force Report was released.
- Robert shared a print-out of the testimony by Dr. Julianne Malveaux regarding HR-40 and the promise of reparations for African Americans,

**ED Report:**

- Nancy noted the passing of Carol Buchanan, former Coalition employee, long-time resident, and recent Celebrating Integration honoree. The family asked for donations to the library and to the Coalition in lieu of flowers, a kind recognition of Carol's commitment to racial integration.
- Nancy announced that she sent flowers and a card to the funeral home in memory of Audrey's mother.
- Pastor Brad Motta retired from Morrow Church and 40 years of ministry. He chose the Coalition as one of two nonprofits that gifts should be sent to in honor of his retirement.
- Prof. Khadijah White has submitted a proposal to the Whiting Foundation to do video interviews on school and community safety and the potential harmful effects on students, especially students of color. Nancy submitted a letter in support.
- The Juneteenth Celebration was a success and well attended. The date next year will not conflict with the Pride Festival. The historical exhibit remains up throughout the summer.
- The Demographics Report Presentation was well attended and generated lively and productive conversation. The version posted on line was edited the next day in response to some of the comments. The team has some further tinkering to do and will then make plans for more community presentations.
- **Financials:**
  - We received the South Orange and Maplewood half-yearly contributions; Maplewood's will be reflected in next month's statement.
  - The Spring Appeal has had a lower response than the last few years. It is done to capture new potential donors and for those of our donors who prefer to donate mid-year rather than

end of year. Nancy noted that we have lost a few major (\$250-500) donors who donated in the spring but have moved away. She emphasized the need to grow the donor pool with board connections and board outreach. She is also working to adjust this appeal to be by email (thereby avoiding print and postage expense) and to be more targeted. She did target the Conversations attendees with a special email letter this year.

**By Laws Vote:** Erin Scherzer explained the updates that were worked on over time with our assigned lawyer from Pro Bono Partnership. The suggested changes in Article IV were based on Pro Bono's preferred standard language for setting the size of a board. A motion was made to approve by Abby Cotler and seconded by Kristin Mahoney. Discussion of the first change in Article IV, Section 1 generated one more edit: "of a number" was added before "not less than" for clarity.

Erin explained that the second change in Section 10 was also based on Pro Bono's strong recommendation that a quorum be 51% of the board. Our prior language that included racial percentages is not legal. This new wording puts a warranted burden on the board to be present for meetings. The trustees discussed using better tech to include trustees who cannot be physically present at a meeting. There was general consensus that presence is best, but not always possible. Fred Profeta and others added that while the racial quota is not allowed, we can work according to our organizational culture and agree to table major decisions if there is not adequate representation present.

- After the discussion, the trustees voted unanimously in favor of the changes as amended. Nancy will send out the edited by laws to all trustees.

**Annual Dinner Update:** Nancy reported on behalf of Kelly that the dinner planning committee suggested that this year's honorees be Patricia Canning and George Robinson. The committee also suggested honoring a local organization; this year's organization will be SOMA Cross Cultural Works. Please keep this confidential until we can ask the honorees if they are on board. The tagline will be Community Building by Honoring Difference.

### **Marketing Presentation:**

John Kerner made the power point presentation of the findings obtained by the committee's collaboration with Seton Hall University students who provided resources and support for conducting a community survey on thoughts about why Black potential in-movers may or may not choose SOMA. John noted from the outset an issue with the response set. The total was 522, of whom 99 identified as African American or Black. The issue is that a majority are long-time residents and this may skew the responses. The report with the analytics will be sent to all the trustees so they can review the details. A key take-away is that the schools rose to the top of the concerns about what might keep people from considering a move to SOMA. The trustee responses included:

- Take this information to the new superintendent
- Take this to the town leaders
- Use this to develop a sense of urgency from public officials around the issue of reduced numbers of Black in-movers
- We should look into how what we are experiencing fits with or is contrary to regional and national trends
- We need input from an expanded SOMA demographic set to make this more compelling and more informative
- The schools issue (along with a community identifier like 'Brooklyn West') problematizes good branding for target markets

These points also generated a separate discussion about other areas of community life that remain segregated by race, like sports teams. While the Coalition entertained this problem at a coffee House Discussion a few years ago, there continues to be structural, social, and cultural forces that result in segregated sports participation. We should ask towns to produce data on this so we can better understand how to support integrated teams.

**Liaison Reports:** Summer Jones reported that Mark Packer has stepped down as ED of SOPAC and that Dee Bilia is acting ED. She reported that South Orange has established a Citizen Engagement & Planning Committee and combined two committees to create the Health & Public Safety Committee, which is asking about the use of force by the police department. They are working on expanding the pool of planners of South Orange Newcomers, the goal of which is to engage Neighborhood Association leaders. They are also working to reinvigorate attention to Seton Village. Summer also announced that the trustees are looking at property on 3<sup>rd</sup> street for rehabilitation into 105 affordable housing units. Dean Dafis will submit his report in writing.

**Adjournment:**

Move to adjourn by Abby Cotler and seconded by Fred Profeta. Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM

**Next Meeting:** Thurs. August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 7:30 PM, Prospect Church, 646 Prospect St. Maplewood NJ.

**Submitted By:** Nancy Gagnier

**Secretary:** Carol Barry-Austin