

# Citizens' Unity Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 11, 2018 ~ 6:00pm-8:00pm  
Community Development Conference Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 22 Lincoln St. Hampton, VA.

**Attendance:** Alice Capehart, Carter Phillips, Michael Harper, Mei Stukes, Luretta Ray, Mary Wallace, Ray Smith, Cassandra Simpson, Rebecca Jackson, Ellen Shackelford (Community Liaison), Burley Gardner (Community Liaison),

**Absent:** Anne Andrews, Milton McDonald, Nolan Dazevedo, Darius Swift, A. Tyrone George, Deena Franklin (Community Liaison), Nikcola Walker, Kerrelia Woodruff

**Staff:** Steven D. Bond (Assistant City Manager) Latiesha Handie (Program Coordinator), Synetheia Newby (Executive Director);

**Call to Order** – Synetheia Newby, Executive Director, 6:16 pm

**Roll Call** – Latiesha Handie

## Action Items

*Item 1: Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes from 12-14-17*

- Commissioner Carter Phillips made a motion to approve the minutes; motion seconded by Commissioner Mary Wallace. Minutes approved by vote of commissioners.

## New Business

*Item 1: Introductions (NOTE: This agenda item was added by Synetheia Newby, Executive Director during the meeting.)*

- Synetheia Newby, Executive Director, requested commissioners and staff to provide a brief introduction for new Commissioner Cassandra Simpson; she was appointed during Summer 2017.

*Item 2: Update on Vacancies*

- Synetheia Newby, Executive Director, explained that the recently appointed commissioners were unable to attend the current meeting due to a delay in notification by the Clerk of Council; inclement weather and holiday-related events created the delay. They will join the February meeting after proper notification.
- Sharmane Baynard resigned from the commission on December 15, 2017.
- The website will be updated by the Clerk of Council to reflect the number of current vacancies.

### *Item 3: Program Evaluation Updates*

- CUC Program Coordinator Latiesha Handie provided an update on all CUC programs and activities for December 2017. Copies of “*The Tides Are Changing: LGBTQ & Law Enforcement Working Together*” LGBTQQ Awareness evaluation report and the December 2017 monthly report was circulated during the meeting for review. They are available electronically upon request.
- Noted Commissioner Attendance at CUC events: Commissioners Mary Wallace and CEARC Commissioners Rev. Dr. Simeon Green III and Shannon Freeman were acknowledged for attending the LGBTQQ Event on December 2, 2017.
- Noted Elected Officials Attendance at CUC events: Mayor Donnie R. Tuck, Councilman Jimmy Gray, and Assistant City Manager Steve Bond were acknowledged for attending the LGBTQQ Event on December 2, 2017.
- Noted Hampton Diversity College Level I updates: Hampton Diversity College Level I will begin January 18, 2018.
- Assistant City Manager, Steven D. Bond concluded program evaluation updates with information on the upcoming plaque unveiling ceremony for the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Bridge, January 15, 2018, at 1 pm on the former Mercury Boulevard Bridge leading into Fort Monroe.

### *Item 4: International Children’s Festival (NOTE: This agenda item was added by Synetheia Newby, Executive Director, during the meeting.)*

- Synetheia Newby requested that CUC Commissioners save the date for the upcoming International Children’s Festival to ensure that the information table is adequately staffed by commissioners; The International Children’s Festival date is Saturday, April 21, 2018.
- Synetheia Newby stated that she had not received the registration packet from Hampton Parks and Recreation, however, the usual fee is \$500.00.
- Synetheia Newby will provide a recruitment sheet at the next monthly meeting for commissioners to sign-up for staffing rotations, in pairs, and the commission will decide what information will be disseminated.
- Last year CUC ordered 450 animal shaped bags for youth attendees. Synetheia Newby provided samples for commissioners to decide if the variety bags will be used at this year’s festival. Commissioners agreed to reorder the same product and requested to increase the number of bags to 600 due to last year’s demand. Synetheia Newby suggested, from a budgetary standpoint, apportioning a certain number of bags according to time blocks to avoid running out of bags before the end of the event. However, she will check the budget to see if the Commission can increase the number of bags to 600.
- Commissioner Carter Phillips requested 650 bags and a signup sheet chronicling names and phone numbers of people that visit the table. Synetheia Newby referenced that at last year’s event visitor’s information was captured by name and email and are currently registered to receive CUC communication by email.
- Commissioner Mei Stukes asked if the event could be advertised on Facebook. Synetheia Newby explained because the event is sponsored by another City of Hampton department and the CUC role is simply as a vendor, all primary

marketing will be done by the host department. Synetheia Newby suggested that residual marketing for this event be discussed at the next meeting during logistic planning.

- Community Liaison, Burley Gardner asked if CUC will be listed in the passport as a sponsored country. Synetheia Newby stated that last year the option to sponsor a country was not available for city departments/vendors. She advised that once she receives the package if the opportunity to sponsor a country for passport inclusion is possible she will update the commission accordingly.

#### *Item 4: Committee Work*

- Synetheia Newby reiterated that the commission agreed to utilize general body meeting time as an opportunity to meet in sub-committees.
- America Divided has been removed as a CUC program and merged into future commission work, by decision of the assigned sub-committee commissioners.
- Due to the absence of committee members, the commission agreed to 1 rotation for committee assignments for 20 minutes at 6:40 pm. Each group was given a committee task sheet to guide the planning conversation. The Membership and Orientation committee was omitted from the rotation because it does not require continuous planning.
- The CUC Commission agreed to utilize a portion of the general body meeting time to execute sub-committee work. The rotational format will continue to be used following the completion of administrative tasks such as the approval of meeting minutes, program evaluation updates and miscellaneous reports. At the close of the meeting, commissioners will report to the general body about their progress and plans. Committee reports are as follows:

**Movie Talks:** Commissioner Luretta Ray provided the report; sub-committee members came up with a list of 9 potential movies to engage both youth and adult participants. Commissioner Luretta Ray contacted Rita from Hampton Library System to confirm an initial 2018 viewing date.

- The suggested date is Tuesday, February 6, 2018, at 6 pm and the movie has not been decided due to the absence of some of the committee members.
- To attract youth participants the first optional movie will be "Wonder," but it is still under consideration.
- They will contact Rita January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to confirm available dates and times for Movie Talks Events.
- Synetheia Newby requested by January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to receive the movie selections and potential dates.

**YAG:** Latiesha Handie provided the report; sub-committee members reviewed event proposals offered by the youth advisory group to raise awareness about diversity and inclusion among Hampton teens.

- The committee discussed utilizing and partnering with Teens with a Purpose, Project Inclusion, and other teen lead groups

- Youth suggested events such as open mic, Unity through Art, Wacky Tuesdays following a contest.
- This committee established that there would be no committee lead as it is a department-led group.
- The event will be in March on a Friday or Saturday of the third week.

**1 City, 1 Book:** Assistant City Manager Steve Bond provided the report; sub-committee looked at two books for citywide reading and suggested that there could be some connection to “Movie Talks” such as books that have also been converted to film.

- The first book suggested was *Forsaken*, Ross Howell Jr. Where an African American girl was tried for killing her white employer. In April 1912 in Hampton, Virginia, white eighteen-year-old reporter Charles Mears covered his first murder case. This was a true story that happened in Hampton, Virginia. Sub-committee members suggested that if this book is selected the author Ross Howell Jr. has come to Hampton once before and is based out of Raleigh committee members could contact him to join a culminating event.
- The second book is *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother* by James McBride. The setting starts in Suffolk and some other local places in the Hampton Roads area which touches on several issues of race and class. Potential challenges: *The Color of Water* is that many people have read the book, but it is on the Hampton City Schools reading list. However, committee members believe that it is a book that could be interpreted several times with new developing perspectives.
- Before selecting a book, sub-committee members learned from Rita at Hampton City Libraries that there are four established book clubs in the city at North Hampton, Phoebus, Willow Oaks and the Main Library. Sub-committee members would like to engage the book clubs for feedback and potential partnership for the book selection.
- Steve Bond mentioned the book club to Ann Bane, Director of Community and Legislative Relations for Hampton City Schools who seemed interested in supporting the initiative. Additionally, City of Hampton’s Economic Development department expressed an interest in supporting this initiative; a suggestion was made to incorporate the idea into restaurant week for people to host discussions to promote attendance.
- March or June is the suggested time frames to launch the initiative as March is National Reading Month; the format should be flexible with established book clubs adopting the book selections without changing book club members to change their normal routine; to track reading, sub-committee members will consider a raffle format with an option to have dinner with the author.

**“Hot Button”:** Ellen Shackelford provided the report; members of the sub-committee were absent thus decisions could not be made without a quorum of the committee present; Sub-committee members agreed to have a phone meeting due to the absences of multiple group members.

- Sub-committee members would like to focus the first “Hot Button” conversation on the Confederate flag; suggested first topic to be hosted Saturday, February 10<sup>th</sup> from 4 pm to 6 pm.
- Commissioner Carter Phillips suggested to the committee to invite Breitbart to the conversation.
- Commissioner Ray Smith wanted to confirm that any opinion shared as a commissioner at one of these events does not reflect the voice or opinions of the commission.
- Assistant City Manager Steve Bond stated that the community conversations would require a strong facilitator and establish ground rules.

**Unity through Art:** Mei Stukes provided the report; on the absence of the committee lead, Commissioner A. Tyrone George, Mei was unable to provide a full report out.

- From the previous meeting, committee members shared findings from the last two events that were not cost effective for the commission; suggestions to reduce costs were for the CUC department to purchase the paint at wholesale costs and hire an artistic hobbyist instead of a professional artist; they have agreed to reach out to potential partners to support funding as well.
- The committees would like to continue to host these events quarterly.
- Synetheia Newby suggested that Mei touch bases with Anthony next week for updates.

**Unity Awards:** Mary Wallace provided the report; sub-committee members agreed on the location and confirmed the date.

- The American Theatre will be the location for the June 8, 2018, Ceremony.
- Commissioners decided that February 1, 2018, will begin the nominations for Unity Award recipients until May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 and will decide on the winners by May 20, 2018; winner’s names will be submitted to the Executive Director by May 20, 2018, in time to award trophies.
- Program format will remain consistent with last year's program except for the invitation. *Suggested wording:* “You are cordially invited to attend.”
- Program participants have not been finalized, but General Wallace Arnold is being consider for Master of Ceremony. He has not been confirmed but Commissioner Mary Wallace will follow-up.
- The committee would like CUC Staff to maintain responsibility of arranging catering with the same menu options from 2017 and selecting trophies and certificates; decorations only in reception area.
- A photographer and entertainment options have not been finalized; the previous photographer charged \$400.00 and the committee would like to find options at a lower cost.
- New Criteria: CUC Commissioners are not eligible to be nominated nor to receive an award while serving on the commission.

**LGBTQ:** Rebecca K. Jackson provided the report; the committee has decided to create a resource guide in addition to the partnership that supports events for LGBTQ Awareness.

- The resource guide will contain community resources for LGBTQ members (i.e. services and programs).
- Commissioner Rebecca K. Jackson will contact staff from the LGBT Life Center to request information from their referral list on the Southside.
- The committee will plan a meeting with the LGBT Life Center to build closer relationships.
- Commissioner Rebecca K. Jackson has an established relationship with Outwire757, which is a local LGBT magazine that is published twice a year. Outwire757 can assist with promoting and marketing LGBTQ events.
- Synetheia Newby concluded by stating that the resource guide will be a beneficial tool to add to the LGBTQ website link that will be launched on the Unity Commission website.

#### *Item 5: Elections*

- Synetheia Newby asked if commissioners would like to postpone nominations and voting for Chairperson and Vice Chairperson to next month's meeting because most of the commissioners were not present.
- Commissioner Carter Phillips made a motion to postpone nominations and voting; motion seconded by Commissioner Ray Smith.
- Postponement approved by a vote of commissioners.

**“Go-Backs”:** None

#### **Announcements**

- Commissioner Rebecca K. Jackson announced an upcoming event for Old Dominion University's lecture series; she will send an event flyer to Latiesha Handie for dissemination to the commission.
- Commissioner Mei Stukes shared personal accomplishments.
- Commissioner Cassandra Simpson joined the LGBTQ and Youth sub-committees.
- Synetheia Newby stated that Latiesha Handie will send out an email requesting voting options for a meeting date change from February 8, 2018, to February 15, 2018, to accommodate the current Hampton Diversity College schedule.
- Synetheia Newby directed commissioners to see Latiesha Handie if their personal contact information has changed.

**Next Meeting Date and Time:** Recommended for February 15, 2018 at 6pm. This will be confirmed via email.

**Adjourned at 8:11 pm**