

**CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMISSION MINUTES**

December 27, 2022

MEETING CONVENED: 7:04 p.m. Microsoft Teams

MEMBERS PRESENT: Blaine Hackett (Presiding), Tamisha Garnett, Marihelen Barrett, Patrick McCloskey

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sasha Aber

STAFF: Nichol Scheld, Deputy City Secretary
Devan Hardin, Chief Human Resources Officer

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Hackett, at 7:04 pm.

2. MOMENT OF SILENCE:

The Chair offered a moment of silence.

3. ROLL CALL

In attendance were Blaine Hackett, Tamesha Garnett, Patrick McCloskey, and Marihelen Barrett.

4. APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 27, 2022, MINUTES

MOTION BY MS. BARRETT, SECONDED BY MS. GARNETT: TO ACCEPT THE SEPTEMBER 27, 2022, MINUTES AS RECEIVED.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 3 to 0.

Aye – Barrett, McCloskey, Garnett.

Nay – 0.

Abstain - Hackett.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION BY MS. GARNETT, SECONDED BY MR. MCLOSKEY: TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 27, 2022, AGENDA.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 4 to 0.

Aye – Hackett, Barrett, McCloskey, Garnett.

Nay – 0.

Absent – Aber.

6. CONSIDERATION AND POTENTIAL VOTE FOR NEW CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Mr. Hackett recalled that the term for the chair was one year and reminded that Jacob Higgins had resigned. Ms. Barrett stated that she would stay through her term in July. Mr. Hackett requested direction on how to vote for a new chair and Ms. Garnett explained that the vote was originally on the October agenda but then two members resigned. She asked if the Commission should postpone the vote until new members joined and explained that Ms. Aber was ill and unable to attend the meeting. She asked Ms. Scheld for an update. Mr. Hackett noted that the group had a quorum and offered to proceed with a vote; he asked if Ms. Aber could be contacted for a vote. Ms. Scheld explained that other boards and commissions generally waited until all available members were present to vote. Mr. Hackett requested verification on the term limits. Ms. Garnett reminded that term limits were discussed in the inaugural meeting, and it was up to the Commission to determine how often the roles should be rotated but no decision was ever made. Mr. Hackett recalled that the chair term was for one year and he had exceeded the limit. He asked if the vice chair would graduate to the chair and then another person would serve as the vice chair.

Mr. McCloskey asked if Mr. Hackett would be willing to serve until all active members were present and Mr. Hackett confirmed. Mr. McCloskey reiterated that there was no rule on term limits and Ms. Garnett confirmed. Ms. Barrett appreciated Mr. Hackett's suggestion that the vice chair graduate to the chair role and agreed that a year was reasonable. Ms. Garnett disagreed because she only offered to serve as vice chair because there were no other volunteers, and she was not comfortable moving to the chair role. Ms. Barrett understood. Mr. McCloskey supported transferring the role in the future but felt that Ms. Garnett would feel pressured to stand in. Ms. Barrett stated that members would have to agree on the rule and the member would have to accept the role. She pointed out that graduating the role would provide continuity but understood Ms. Garnett's concern about immediately accepting the role.

Mr. McCloskey suggested that Mr. Hackett remain in his current position as chair until Ms. Aber was able to attend and vote to set parameters. He wanted to table the discussion until the next meeting. Ms. Garnett agreed and asked for an update on when the vacancies would be filled. Ms. Scheld informed that there were no pending applications for the Commission so staff could not provide an estimate. Ms. Garnett asked if the vacancies were advertised, and Ms. Scheld confirmed.

Ms. Barrett informed that she was unable to serve as chair because she was already serving as chair for the Delaware School Base Health Alliance and could not commit more time. Ms. Garnett believed that Ms. Aber did not offer to serve as chair for similar reasons but was unsure if the situation changed. She continued that Ms. Aber would be a great leader and would be the best option if she was willing to accept the role. Mr. Hackett agreed and suggested that conversation be tabled until Ms. Aber could attend and decide to accept the role.

7. DEFINING AND REFINING COMMISSION GOALS

Mr. Hackett was still unclear on the Commission's goals and role in the City. Ms. Barrett suggested that it would be helpful for the Commission to have a strategic planning session with a facilitator to assist in clarifying roles and move towards an action agenda. She wondered if there was another city with a similar committee that the Commission could use a model for functionality and action. Mr. Hackett was unaware that the City would have so much control over how the Commission interacted with the community. Ms. Garnett reminded that she and Ms. Barrett had forwarded suggestions in September and asked if Ms. Scheld could share the list. Ms. Garnett researched similar plans from committees in other cities and states and solicited her suggestions from said plans. Ms. Barrett emphasized her desire for a work session and explained that she found it difficult to formulate plans during the Commission's regular meetings.

Ms. Scheld explained that as a City Commission, any meetings were required to be open to the public. She confirmed that other committees had held strategic meetings sessions to create base plan. Ms. Barrett welcomed the public but wanted the ability to create strategies and action steps. Ms. Scheld confirmed that

Ms. Schiano could compile the group's suggestions for the January agenda which could be limited to roll call, approval of the minutes, and the work session. Ms. Garnett agreed. Mr. Hackett wanted to add the vote for the chair and vice chair to the agenda as the first item. Ms. Scheld suggested that the Commission first discuss the terms and roles as ground rules before holding a vote. She emphasized that the Commissioners attend the meeting in person because it was easier to hold conversations without the delay of the microphones in the hybrid software. Ms. Barrett asked if another room was available with tables and Ms. Scheld confirmed that tables could be set up on the floor of Council Chambers. Ms. Garnett offered to send the list to the Commissioners. Ms. Scheld requested that all members send suggestions directly to Ms. Schiano and added that members should review the agenda before the meeting.

Ms. Barrett wanted to concentrate on the Commission's role and responsibilities; she asked if the primary role was to provide advice to City Council and/or the Mayor or interact with the community and marginalized communities. Mr. Hackett agreed and sought direction on how to interact without violating any FOIA rules; he was unaware how the Commission would be governed.

Ms. Scheld presented the Commission's functions that were approved by City Council at formation of the Commission:

The Diversity and Inclusion Commission is to provide advice and recommendations to Council and City staff in regard to the following:

- Recommend strategies to achieve Newark's vision to be an inclusive community that embraces diversity and enables and supports different lifestyles by encouraging cooperation, tolerance, and respect among and by all persons who come in contact with the City of Newark, including residents, students, visitors, employers and employees.
- Assist the city and the community to eliminate and prevent all forms of discrimination, hate or bias.
- Act as conduit for complaints in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion. Any related complaints about city staff will be transmitted to the city manager for investigation and follow-up in accordance with city policy.
- Recommend methods to improve diversity recruitment and retention efforts at all levels of city government including council, boards/commissions, and staff.
- Provide education regarding the community's overall diversity.
- Recommend effective strategies for improved public engagement and methods to remove or reduce barriers to improve access to city services for our diverse population.
- Recommend areas for investment where needs are greatest, addressing root causes of inequities and lack of access to more smartly allocate our public resources.
- Recommend opportunities for community partnerships as a strategy to better understand and address equity impacts throughout our city.
- Facilitate the building of relationships with under-served and underrepresented communities and serve as trusted messengers to the community at large.
- Prepare an annual report to council on the previous year's activities of the commission and the forthcoming year's goals.
- Perform such other duties as the mayor and/or city council may direct.

Ms. Barrett wanted to operationalize the list and determine how to follow through. Ms. Garnett agreed and was initially caught off-guard by FOIA rules. She found it difficult to be consistent because the Commission only met once a month and the areas of concern required more effort. Ms. Barrett agreed the topics were complicated. Mr. McCloskey supported an in-person, dedicated planning meeting. He recalled that members were asked to submit suggestions a few months earlier but never really followed through. He agreed that the Commission was lacking direction. Mr. Hackett asked that Ms. Aber be informed about the

January work session.

8. CITY EVENTS FOR ADVOCACY EFFORTS – MARIHELEN BARRETT

Ms. Barrett suggested that the Commission review the calendar of events and determine which to address. She wanted to add the topic to the January discussion and investigate the events. She shared that she had been working with the Friendship House on its support for homelessness, particularly raising funds to maintaining housing for one woman who suffered from chronic illness. She credited Mr. Hackett for assisting in the endeavor and revealed that several churches and the Newark Welfare Committee had provided donations. She continued that she was active with helping some homeless Newarkers and believed it was clear that the City did not have an adequate plan for assisting the homeless population. She was trying to craft a better strategy for the City and acknowledged that Representative Paul Baumbach was also investigating the issue. She believed the City needed a better arrangement to help the homeless population but she was unsure if the Commission was the appropriate body to participate.

Ms. Hardin interjected that Parks & Recreation always planned events a year in advance and both she and Ms. Schiano could reach out to staff for the 2023 events. She believed that Mike Fortner, Senior Planner, was working closely with some Councilmembers on Section 8 housing with the Newark Housing Authority and considered him a resource for the issue.

Ms. Barrett stated that homeless be discussed in January if the Commission wanted to be more deliberate with its actions. Mr. Hackett confirmed that the issue was pervasive across the nation and it would be difficult to solve the City's issue give Newark's role as a college town and its impact on the housing market. He argued that there was no affordable housing in the City. He wanted to investigate other college towns.

9. HOLIDAY DÉCOR UPDATE – TARA SCHIANO AND DEVAN HARDIN

Ms. Hardin reminded that Ms. Aber had made comments regarding representation of the menorah during the holiday season and including other holidays in future celebrations. She and Ms. Schiano discovered that the menorah was in UD's possession but was destroyed in the Chabad Jewish Community House fire. She had updated Ms. Aber and confirmed that staff would work with the Commission on representing other holidays at Winterfest. Ms. Barrett asked that the issue be discussed at the January meeting so the Commission could decide how to be more inclusive of various religious celebrations throughout the year. Mr. Hackett requested that the Commission address heritage celebrations.

10. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Garnett reviewed the September minutes and noted that Ms. Schiano recommended the Commission not delay votes until the vacancies were filled.

Mr. McCloskey asked if the Commission should recommend that Council purchase a new menorah. Ms. Hardin explained the menorah was owned by UD but suggested the City could assist in the purchase of a new display. She would defer to Ms. Scheld on whether to pursue a recommendation. Ms. Garnett preferred to make a recommendation following the Commission's planned discussion on holiday inclusion. Mr. McCloskey confirmed and withdrew his suggestion.

Mr. Hackett hoped that everyone could participate in the January meeting and Ms. Barrett suggested to change the start time to 6 pm and meet for two hours. Ms. Garnett suggested that the holiday discussion be postponed so the January meeting could focus on the Commission's roles because she recalled discussions that the Commission should discuss event participation for the year in the first quarter. Ms. Barrett agreed but emphasized that the topic should be mentioned in January to formulate an action plan. Mr. McCloskey

added that the January discussion should include Black History Month celebrations because February would be too late.

Mr. Hackett revealed that there was a community Martin Luther King, Jr., celebration at the Newark United Methodist Church at 6 pm on January 16th. He wanted to solicit opinions on how people felt about the City. Ms. Scheld interject that Commissioners could attend the function but would not be permitted to discuss City business if there was a quorum of members. Ms. Garnett admitted that she hesitated to speak about the Commission outside of its meetings because she was concerned about FOIA violations. Ms. Scheld shared that staff was involved in scheduling FOIA training sessions but clarified that the Commission needed to avoid a quorum meeting outside the posted meeting. Ms. Barrett asked if the Commissioners could describe the Commission. Ms. Scheld confirmed and explained that the Commissioners were permitted to introduce themselves. She continued that the Conservation Advisory Commission (CAC) had a suggestion box during Community Day to solicit opinions from residents. She noted that the CAC staffed the event with a non-quorum number to avoid FOIA issues and would take resident concerns. Ms. Garnett asked how to transition resident concerns into a discussion and Ms. Scheld suggested that the Commissioners encourage attendance to the public meetings where residents could offer comment on the record. Mr. Hackett explained that he would be participating in the Martin Luther King, Jr., celebration in his role as a pastor and shared that St. Johns celebrated Black History Month each Sunday in February.

11. NEW BUSINESS FOR UPCOMING FUTURE AGENDAS

12. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

13. DISCUSSION OF DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

January 24, 2023. Ms. Scheld explained that the 6 pm requested start time would have to be cleared with staff. Mr. McCloskey explained that he would be working night shift and would need to attend in his uniform.

MOTION BY MS. BARRETT, SECONDED BY MS. GARNETT: THAT THE JANUARY 24, 2023, MEETING BEGIN AT SIX PM AND RUN UNTIL 8 PM.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 4 to 0.

Aye – Hackett, Barrett, McCloskey, Garnett.

Nay – 0.

Absent – Aber.

Ms. Scheld requested verification on the Commission's topics for the January meeting. Mr. Hackett reiterated that the group intended to define its goals, vote for chair, and vice chair, and clarify term limits. Ms. Scheld added that the group also wanted to discuss Black History Month and Ms. Barrett reminded that the discussion would include roles and responsibilities and creating an action agenda for the calendar. Ms. Garnett wanted to discuss city events if the agenda permitted but noted the item could be pushed to February; she forwarded her list of Commission goals to Ms. Schiano and Ms. Scheld.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hackett adjourned the meeting at 8:01 p.m.

Nichol Scheld
Deputy City Secretary

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