

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

September 24, 2024

MEETING CONVENED: 7:09 p.m. Microsoft Teams

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joel Murphy (Chair - Presiding), Sasha Aber, C. Linwood Jackson, Tamesha Garnett (Virtual)

STAFF: Diana Reed, Deputy City Secretary
Devan Hardin, Chief Human Resources Officer (Virtual)

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Murphy, at 7:13 p.m.

2. MOMENT OF SILENCE:

Mr. Murphy offered a moment of silence.

3. ROLL CALL:

In attendance were Tamesha Garnett, Sasha Aber, C. Linwood Jackson, and Joel Murphy.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

5. APPROVAL OF JUNE 25, 2024, MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION BY MR. JACKSON, SECONDED BY MS. ABER: TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 24, 2024 MEETING MINUTES.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 4 to 0.

Aye – Garnett, Aber, Murphy, Jackson.

Nay – 0.

Absent – McCloskey.

6. DISCUSSION REGARDING DOWNTOWN PARKING COSTS:

Mr. Murphy asked if there were any questions regarding the documents received from Planning and Development Director Renee Bensley.

Mr. Jackson stated he felt the document addressed a lot of the questions submitted by the commission.

Ms. Aber stated that there will be Free Parking on weekends from December 16th through January 15th. There will also be a survey sent to the businesses to gauge the program's effectiveness. She stated that while it is generous, she believed most businesses would prefer there to be free parking

on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays. The parking lots are already full on the weekends and the City could make more money on the weekends. However, the businesses do appreciate that the city is doing this, staff and customers will also love it. In addition, there will be free or discounted parking for restaurant week which runs from January 16th through 22nd. She also stated there have been discussions about offering reduced parking fees in locations further out.

Mr. Murphy asked if there were any questions or concerns.

Ms. Aber recommended tabling further discussion until after the free weekend parking trail over the holidays. She also stated she would request a copy of the survey results following that test. Once the results are received, they will be forwarded to Ms. Reed for distribution.

MOTION BY MS. ABER, SECONDED BY MR. JACKSON: TO TABLE DISCUSSION UNTIL JANUARY 2025.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 4 to 0.

Aye – Garnett, Aber, Murphy, Jackson.

Nay – 0.

Absent – McCloskey.

7. DISCUSSION REGARDING CAMPS AND ACTIVITIES:

Mr. Murphy gave an overview of the responses received from Parks and Recreation Director Paula Ennis. He referred to the mention of the potential addition of a Police Athletic League (PAL) Center in Newark and asked if that was still a possibility.

Ms. Aber stated her conversations were very informal. PAL is interested in opening a location in Newark; however, it will likely not be for several years. They plan to wait until after the Newark Free Library Project is complete to potentially begin fundraising for a project in Newark.

Mr. Murphy stated there is still no solution to the lack of programs for the older children issue. He believed there needed to be additional follow-up on those questions.

Ms. Aber stated there is a fine line for this age because the older children want a job for the summer instead of a camp. Some even want internships or mentorships.

Mr. Murphy believed one issue is the potential need to have a conversation with Ms. Ennis about how programs are communicated to the public, are they effective, are they inclusive and go beyond what is typically thought of for camp-age students.

Ms. Garnett stated she felt the responses were more surface level and didn't really provide the clarification the commission had hoped for. She had asked if Ms. Ennis could attend a meeting but had not received a response. She requested Ms. Reed to reach out to discuss the possibility of attending the October meeting. She feels there needs to be more back and forth and hopes a conversation could solve the confusion.

Diana Reed, Deputy City Secretary, stated that she could speak with Director Ennis, however, it would be helpful if she could provide a written list of questions for Ms. Ennis so that she can be prepared to discuss the questions with the commission.

Ms. Aber asked if she read correctly that the programs do have availability for children with disabilities who need accommodations.

Ms. Reed stated she is aware of some accommodations which can be made offering the example that her daughter attended Rittenhouse Rocks at the beginning of the summer and unfortunately a week before camp, she broke part of her foot. The staff were incredibly accommodating, despite the camp being very outdoors and in the woods. In addition, her son wears hearing aid devices, the staff were incredibly accommodating to his issues in making sure that they were confirming he heard instructions and making sure, if they were going to be doing water-based activities, that he was removing the devices to protect them.

Ms. Aber asked if the accommodation was limited to less severe disabilities or if they offered services and providers for more severe disabilities, and where those providers came from.

Ms. Reed stated she was unsure and that would be a question best asked of Ms. Ennis. She stated if Ms. Ennis will be attending, she would like to be able to provide her with the questions in advance so that Ms. Ennis can be prepared to provide the desired responses.

Mr. Jackson asked if members could review the information provided and email questions to the City Secretary's Office for distribution to Director Ennis.

Ms. Reed agreed, as long as members email them to her directly and not to the group, she could compile the questions and provide them to Director Ennis. She stated that she would need to have everyone's questions by October 8th to give Director Ennis appropriate time to prepare and provide responses for the agenda distribution on October 15th.

The following questions were discussed:

- Could you provide statistics regarding the wait list program?
 - How frequently is it utilized,
 - how many children are typically wait-listed,
 - are there programs that always have a waitlist,
 - Has any consideration been given to expanding programs that always have a waitlist?
- Are tie-in demographics or other stats available that would decipher if a particular program is only drawing a certain audience so that we can further explore diversity and inclusion aspects, if applicable?

8. OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

Ms. Reed provided an update shared at the Council Meeting by Mark Arehart of The Newark Partnership (TNP) regarding the Veteran's Banner project. A clarification was made at the meeting that the expansion of the project onto New London Road will include veterans of all minorities and not just African American Veterans, which was previously discussed. She also believed Pastor Hackett reported their list of candidates was over 100, but there were only 47 poles available for the display. They are working through logistics and possible solutions for the project.

Ms. Aber asked if there was mention of mixing up Main Street as well.

Ms. Reed stated it was not mentioned.

Ms. Aber stated it needed to be done. She noted Mr. Arehart reported he had not received the recommendation.

Ms. Reed stated she had spoken to him about two weeks prior to the Council Meeting and he stated he had it.

Ms. Aber wanted to ensure everyone had received the recommendation.

Ms. Reed stated it was presented to Council and it was forwarded to TNP, however, she could not confirm whether TNP had shared the recommendation with the other organizations.

Ms. Aber asked if the Menorah issue was old business, or if it was new business because there isn't one.

Ms. Reed stated it qualifies as new business for a request to place the discussion on the October Agenda.

Mr. Murphy asked if this was to include a nativity scene or other religious displays.

Ms. Aber stated her thoughts surround the fact that the Holiday Tree is still a Christmas Tree and wanted to discuss the possibility of including other religions, whether on Academy Lawn or in store window displays. She also asked for clarification whether the University can permit or install religious displays even if the City cannot. Academy Lawn is owned by the University and not the City. She wondered if it was possible for the University to grant use of part of the lawn to the City for their Holiday display but grant use of another part of the lawn to multiple religious holiday displays.

Mr. Murphy agreed to add the discussion to the October agenda.

Ms. Reed stated she would discuss the academy lawn question with Staff.

Mr. Murphy asked if there was any other New Business.

Ms. Aber stated she spoke with Mayor Clifton about his ideas for the commission. He brought up the Israel and Hamas conflict, but more on the side of what is happening on campuses and how well the University has been handling it. Those conflicts and takeovers have not occurred here at the University of Delaware. He was considering the government side of how the city would handle that while respecting the opinions of others. He asked what programs the City can offer to boost inclusiveness. She noted the commission talked previously about having a Diversity Festival of some sort. She spoke to Mayor Clifton about the group's action plan of making recommendations for events, but not planning them. She wondered if the group could discuss what they would like to see at a Diversity Festival so that a detailed vision can be provided for the Council and Staff with the recommendation to hold such an event. She recommended placing this item for discussion on a future agenda.

Mr. Murphy stated he loved the idea but felt that it would be a very large discussion. The October Agenda looked full, and he felt it should be discussed at a meeting where the commission can give it a significant amount of their time. He recommended placing the discussion on the November agenda.

Ms. Aber and Mr. Murphy wondered if there would be value in having members create a list of ideas.

Ms. Garnett stated she recalled the previous discussion.

Ms. Aber asked if it would be beneficial to have a brief discussion of the lists at the October meeting and pair the ideas down to a smaller concentrated list for discussion at the November meeting.

Ms. Reed recommended members submit their ideas to her and she could compile them for distribution with the October Agenda.

The commission agreed.

Ms. Reed stated ideas would need to be provided to her via email by Monday, October 14th for distribution with the agenda packet on October 15th to allow everyone time to review and provide a productive discussion at the October meeting.

Mr. Murphy reiterated that the goal of the discussion is to provide a detailed recommendation of what should be included.

Ms. Aber asked if an additional recommendation would be required for Juneteenth or if that was handled.

Ms. Reed stated she felt that was handled but would follow up.

Ms. Aber asked if members are still communicating with their Council members and whether that should be an agenda topic moving forward.

Mr. Murphy stated he does still communicate with his representative; however, he wasn't sure if it needed to be an item.

Ms. Garnett and Mr. Jackson both stated they communicate with their representatives and have relayed any items of concern when discussed.

There was a consensus not to include this as a separate agenda item and to discuss under old/new business.

MOTION BY MS. ABER, SECONDED BY MR. JACKSON: TO HAVE MEMBERS SUBMIT THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A DIVERSITY FESTIVAL TO MS. REED BY OCTOBER 11TH TO DISTRIBUTE FOR BRIEF DISCUSSION IN OCTOBER AND DETAILED DISCUSSION IN NOVEMBER.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 4 to 0.

Aye – Garnett, Aber, Murphy, Jackson.

Nay – 0.

Absent – McCloskey.

Ms. Aber asked if Ms. Reed could notify Mr. McCloskey of the assignments discussed.

Ms. Reed agreed.

9. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Jackson motioned to adjourn. Ms. Aber seconded.

Mr. Murphy adjourned the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Diana J. Reed
Legislative Coordinator/Deputy City Secretary

/djrr