

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

May 27, 2025

MEETING CONVENED: 7:07 p.m. Microsoft Teams

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joel Murphy (Chair – Presiding), Sasha Aber, Tamesha Garnett, Richard Gaskins

STAFF: Diana Reed, Deputy City Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Murphy at 7:06 p.m.

2. MOMENT OF SILENCE:

Mr. Murphy offered a moment of silence.

3. ROLL CALL:

In attendance were Joel Murphy, Sasha Aber, Tamesha Garnett, and Richard Gaskins.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

5. APPROVAL OF APRIL 22, 2025 MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION BY MS. ABER, SECONDED BY MR. GASKINS: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 22, 2025 MEETING.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 4 to 0.

Aye – Aber, Garnett, Gaskins, Murphy.

Nay – 0.

Absent – Jackson, McCloskey.

6. UPDATE REGARDING THE OUTREACH WORK GROUP:

- Mr. Gaskins explained the Outreach Work Group’s purpose is to increase the Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Commission’s effectiveness in community outreach and providing advice to the City. Its goal is to provide the D&I Commission with specific activities to enhance their skills and engage with the community. He explained the resulting activities and recommendations will be presented in a prioritized timeline for discussion and consideration of the commission’s needs. The work group is currently comprised of himself, Ms. Garnett, and Mr. McCloskey, but other commission members are welcome to participate. This work group has been split into two divisions: the Commission Outreach Skill Enhancement group, and Commission Community Engagement group. The next action item for the work group is to create a report for City Council regarding key areas for consideration relating to diversity and inclusion. It would include recruitment and getting Council’s insight related to the D&I Commission. The work group will have weekly teleconferences in preparation for the final report at a future Commission meeting.

(Secretary's Note: Mr. McCloskey arrived at 7:12 p.m.)

7. CONSIDERATION OF SUBMITTING A REQUEST TO CITY COUNCIL TO ALLOCATE FUNDS TO THE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION FOR OUTREACH:

- Ms. Aber noted the City has begun creating its FY2026 budget request. She suggested the D&I Commission recommend that Council allocate funding for the commission's community outreach efforts. She noted the commission's recommendations always go to the City Council's consent agenda for approval, but after such, they are effectively shelved. This can be avoided if a member of the commission speaks to their Councilmember and requests that they pull it from the consent agenda to schedule for discussion. Ms. Schiano suggested a member of the commission should contact their Councilmember immediately after the recommendation is approved to notify them of the upcoming item, so this process can occur smoothly. Ms. Aber stated she would address the remaining items on the agenda before continuing this item and drafting a funding request.

8. UPDATE REGARDING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION LOGO:

- Ms. Aber shared that UD Art Department Professor Ashley Pigford will host a project in September for his students to create a logo for the commission. Following the project, the selected artist will be awarded \$200 from The Newark Partnership (TNP). She recommended scheduling this item on the commission's August agenda for follow-up with Mr. Pigford.

9. DISCUSSION REGARDING CITY COMMUNICATIONS AND HOLIDAYS:

- Ms. Aber stated she has observed that the City's social media will acknowledge some holidays but not others. She did not believe these exclusions to be intentional but suggested creating a list for the City of occasions that should be included to support diversity and inclusivity. Jayme Gravell, Chief of Community Engagement, noted she attempts to refrain from mentioning holidays of specific religious faiths as much as possible, and mainly does so when the holiday's observance affects City operations, such as refuse collection. She suggested that the commission create a calendar of holidays and submit it for reference when scheduling posts for the City's social media accounts. The commission agreed to move forward with this item by placing it on the June agenda. Ms. Garnett volunteered to create a list of holidays for consideration and discussion.

7. CONSIDERATION OF SUBMITTING A REQUEST TO CITY COUNCIL TO ALLOCATE FUNDS TO THE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION FOR OUTREACH (CONTINUED):

- Ms. Aber stated this item would consist of discussing funding for a Juneteenth event along with requesting a Council allocation of \$500 to be used for branding at community events. Mr. Murphy asked if this would be a one-time or year-over-year expense. Ms. Garnett believed the commission would need funding every year, but not always of this amount. Mr. Murphy suggested the outreach work group create a budget as one of their annual action items and then once approved by the commission, it would be forwarded to Council as part of the Diversity & Inclusion Commission's annual report. He believed the commission should request funding based on determined costs and expenses and then shape how they intend to use that funding based on how much is received, i.e., cutting back on certain costs should they receive less funding than requested. Ms. Reed noted this request would need to be submitted to Council as soon as possible to be considered for the City's 2026 budget hearings.
- Ms. Aber believed the D&I Commission had already missed the opportunity to submit a funding request for a Juneteenth event in 2025. Ms. Garnett did not believe this to be a priority for the

commission due to a pre-existing event sponsored by the Friends of School Hill Association (FOSHA) and TNP. Ms. Reed suggested it may be better for the commission to participate as a vendor at the FOSHA event rather than create their own. Ms. Garnett suggested discussing this on the next D&I Commission agenda.

MOTION BY MS. GARNETT, SECONDED BY MR. GASKINS: THAT ON THE NEXT MEETING AGENDA, THE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (D&I) COMMISSION DISCUSS THE STRATEGY FOR A JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION BY EITHER PARTNERING WITH THE NEWARK PARTNERSHIP (TNP) OR CONTINUING TO ASK FOR FUNDING THROUGH THE CITY OF NEWARK.

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 5 to 0.

Aye – Aber, Garnett, Gaskins, McCloskey, Murphy.

Nay – 0.

Absent – Jackson.

- The commission confirmed items included in their request for community outreach funding would be signage, stickers, shirts with printed logos to identify commission members, and designs for flyers (as the City could print flyers themselves). Ms. Aber recommended requesting \$500. The commission discussed the estimated cost for each item and debated whether it would be beneficial to request a range of funding or a specific amount, and ultimately decided to request a fixed amount. Mr. Murphy suggested considering the cost of producing such items, in addition to the cost of the materials.
- As the commission deliberated the cost of each item included within their recommendation, they concluded the total would be higher than \$500 and agreed to request \$1,000. Mr. McCloskey stated he would reach out to the Mayor and notify him of this upcoming recommendation so it could be pulled from the consent agenda and discussed by Council.

MOTION BY MS. ABER, SECONDED BY MS. GARNETT: TO RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY COUNCIL ALLOCATE \$1,000 FOR THE 2026 FISCAL YEAR FOR THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMISSION. THESE FUNDS SHALL BE FOR BRANDING AND OUTREACH TO RAISE AWARENESS AND GARNER SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY. ITEMS TO INCLUDE:

- SIGNAGE
- STICKERS
- SHIRTS W/LOGO DESIGN TO IDENTIFY D&I COMMISSION MEMBERS AT COMMUNITY EVENTS
- FLYER DESIGN

MOTION PASSED. VOTE 5 TO 0.

Aye – Aber, Garnett, Gaskins, McCloskey, Murphy.

Nay – 0.

Absent – Jackson.

10. **OLD/NEW BUSINESS:**

- ***Old business:***
 - Menorah recommendation — *by Ms. Aber.* Ms. Aber reminded the commission of the recommendation submitted to Council to purchase a menorah for the holiday display. She

spoke about this recommendation at a Council meeting, and Council will formally discuss it on Monday, June 16th. She believed all the funds had been raised for its purchase, so the City would only need to determine where the menorah would be stored.

- ***New business:***

- Resignation of Ms. Aber — *by Mr. Gaskins*. Mr. Gaskins thanked Ms. Aber for her service on the Diversity & Inclusion Commission. Mr. Murphy commended Ms. Aber for the hard work she invested in Newark as a proprietor, parent, and resident with a passion for the city that she lives in. He admired and appreciated her energy, agreeing with Mr. Gaskins that it would be missed. He wished her the best on her new journey. Ms. Aber stated the commission would be welcome to reach out to her in the future should they need assistance.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Gaskins motioned to adjourn.

Mr. Murphy adjourned the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

Jordan L. Herring
Administrative Professional I

/jlh