[3/21/24]

Montclair Civil Rights Commission Meeting Notes

Attendees

[Leslie Brown]
[Jennifer Otero]
[Reubena Spence]
[Madeline Gale]
[Matilda Carvajal]
[Ravi Srinivasan]
[Nelson Campbell]
[Kevin Allen] via phonecall

Absent
[Kevin Pierre]
[Joni Cohen]

Guests
[Abraham Dickerson, presenting]
[Diane Anglin, NAACP]

Announcements

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Discussion

Commissioners viewed a video and police report presented by Mr. Abraham Dickerson, who reported racism experienced at the Acme located on Valley Road in Upper Montclair. Mr. Dickerson would like the employees at Acme to receive training, and to see the assistant manager removed, so that he can again feel comfortable shopping there. He would also like an apology for the reported incident (please see documents presented at the meeting for further information). Mr. Dickerson stated that he intends to file charges.

Ms. Anglin commented that the NAACP cannot get involved in this situation, as Mr. Abraham is seeking legal representation. However, she stated that she has known Mr. Dickerson for a number of years and would like to see him treated fairly.

Internal Logistics
Present and new members of the CRC made introductions, and summarized their related experience and areas of interest.

-Ravi stated that he would like to see Montclair become a leader in civil rights for the state of New Jersey
-Reubena has a report with goals regarding DEI.
-Madeline stated people have reached out to discuss the CRC structure with her.
-Meetings will happen on the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7:00pm.
-The former CRC meeting structure included committees of people assigned to areas (education, housing, DEI, disability, etc;). Presently people are working independently in their areas of interest and reporting back to the CRC.
-All members will keep pace with the agenda and problem solve offline.
-Acknowledging that people come from diverse backgrounds and may have different points of view.
-Side conversations will not take place at meetings
-Best efforts will be undertaken to get everyone's point of view at meetings
-CRC is not an advocacy organization for any one agenda, but to support the township in ensuring fair and equitable treatment of citizens in our community.
-Madeline mentioned that we advocate for individuals, and want to end discrimination, and suggested advising township council about ideas as necessary.
-Discussion of innate biases that we all have
-We need to work within the framework of the law.
-Ravi urged sensitivity on social media, as commissioners.
-The chair will comment on media questions.
-Proactively propose ways to improve our town.
-We have not hosted programs but we do participate in programs/events hosted by other commissions and agencies,
-When the council people get elected we should discuss a budget for the CRC.
-We should have a forum stating what we do and outline objectives of the CRC.
-Lori Price Abrams was our liaison but is not running for a continued seat in the May election.
-Fire chief is resigning on April 14th.

ESL
Ravi has given an ESL presentation to Spanish and Turkish families. Ravi will be connecting with people as they move in to tell them about resources/assistance from the CRC.

-Leslie will be following up on recommendations pertaining to Abraham Dickerson.
-Madeline mentioned inviting the Montclair BID, and associated BID DEI training
-Email addresses should be used for communicating CRC issues. Ravi has access to the phone number set up for the CRC.

-Issues of land lords not willing to receive funding
-discussion of rent control board
-Ravi and Lori Price Abrams discussed dissemination of materials offered in foreign languages.
-What can we do to improve language equity in Montclair? No proposals yet
-Madeline mentioned that MFEE works on language communication and translation
-CRC should make the town council aware of discriminatory practices so that legislation can be enacted.