[4/18/2024]

Montclair Civil Rights Commission Meeting Notes

[Leslie Brown]
[Jennifer Otero]
[Matilda Carvajal]
[Joni Cohen]
[Kevin Pierre]

Absent
[Madeline Gale]
[Rebuena Spence]
[Ravi Srinivasan]
[Nelson Campbell]
[Kevin Allen]
[David Hanson]

Guests
-none attending

Announcements

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Discussion

Internal logistics
-New members discussed what their roles are and what the purpose of the CRC is-to support equity in the community and assist in issues of concern.
-Discussion of how CRC commissioners attend community events related to their interests and the mission of the CRC, such as NAACP events, AAPI events, Planned Parenthood of Metro NJ, town council meetings, Navegadores, MFEE meetings.
-Matilda mentioned that she would like to help bilingual individuals/families in the bilingual community navigate systems/services in Montclair by bridging the language gap. She reported that the Montclair School District has let go of bilingual educators and paraprofessionals. Reportedly, waivers are used by the district as a barrier to obtaining needed resources for bilingual instruction, with 20 students speaking another language being the operative number. Regulations appear to be being circumvented. Vicky Chang used to give updates but meetings aren't being held. A resource mentioned included Paragon,

which is a 24/7 access to a live translator by phone. Concerns regarding building administrators not being aware of such resources and also not sharing information. There needs to be greater concern and better ways to disseminate information to thid community. Also looking for more people to volunteer for ESL/migrant education and partnering with the school district.
-Some were disappointed when Montclair opted not to be a sanctuary city.
-Joni stated that she is interested in housing, and that her husband is knowledgeable and could come and present for the CRC.
-Leslie summarized the incident involving Mr. Abraham Dickerson, and is keeping the CRC informed as events unfold.
-Jennifer briefly discussed Autism Awareness (Acceptance) Month, and current language related to referring to people with Autism and other disabilities. A follow up email which provides greater detail relating to language and current neurodivergent perspectives will be shared via email. Additionally, the Disability Pride Parade is on Saturday May 18th from 1-4pm. The Disability community is looking for allies and would welcome more support through increased attendance.
-Ms. Wineglass' communication to the CRC was discussed, pertaining to the building behind the Acme being full of black mold, and the lack of oversight and interest in improvement demonstrated by landlords. Kevin Pierre volunteered to speak to Ms. Wineglass and report back to the CRC. He stated that Mr. Pelham had played an important role in advocating for better conditions on Mission St., but that there has been a downward spiral since Mr. Pelham passed away.
-Topic of how issues of Domestic Violence were dealt with in Montclair was introduced. Reaching out to Tyrone was suggested. Joni mentioned that she was on the board of the Rachel Commision and volunteered as a court advocate. Leslie shared related perspectives and information. It was noted that victims have not had access to their own records relating to incidents of domestic violence. Leslie said that it has been very difficult to obtain restraining orders to protect women, that police have not wanted to do them. Legislation is pending that would provide access to records and more protections for victims.
-Leslie is arranging a presentation by the Department of Civil Rights for the May meeting.
