



## Mayor's Multicultural Council of Stamford Meeting held virtually

### MINUTES January 24, 2022

#### **Attendance and quorum check:**

Members attending the meeting: Eva Weller, Corey Paris, Shobhna Bhatnagar, Sandra Jean Barrett, Peter Dao, Deborah Goldberg, James Hinton, Francise Jean-Louis, Eva Padilla, Sonal Patel, Pilar Pelaez, Malinda Polite and Ana Gallegos.

Eva Weller, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:22 PM.

#### **Welcome:**

Eva as Chair welcomed members and thanked everyone for attending the virtual meeting. Eva informed the Council that Mayor Simmons would love to attend a meeting when she returns from her maternity leave. Because of the spike on COVID-19 cases, it was not possible to get together for the holidays.

#### **Approve Minutes:**

##### **November 22, 2021, Minutes:**

Eva Weller, Chair, asked members to review and approve the minutes from the November 22, 2021, meeting. Sandra Barrett made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Malinda Polite seconded. Minutes were approved unanimously.

#### **Budget Report:**

Shobhna Bhatnagar treasurer informed that since we didn't have new expenses the total budget amount remaining is \$9,250.

#### **Projects/Events:**

*-Building Bridges with Books project:* Debby Goldberg reported the objective of the community-wide book reading of *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig was to share ideas that would build community unity. The discussions were well attended for a first-time event. There were discussions in three small groups on different dates and the final discussion was held via zoom on January 11<sup>th</sup>. The committee will reach other community organizations, UConn students, and connect with bookstores for future events. Council members Shobhna, Malinda and Sandra were also part of the committee. The panelists represented diverse groups and the final discussion was interesting and encouraged people who didn't read the book to want to read it. The publications included the logo of the MMC. Having the library as a partner is a plus. Eva Weller thanked those who participated in the planning committee. She added that partnering gave the MMC visibility, a greater presence in the community and brought people and communities together.

*-MLK Day Update:* Malinda said the Celebration of Martin Luther King Day on January 17, 2022, was done differently from what was planned. She thanked Eva Weller, Ana and James for participating and representing the Council. The car procession gave more people the opportunity to participate than the march. It passed through different areas of Stamford honoring and celebrating Jack Bryant, John Fersner, Elaine Mitchell, and Keith Simmons. James informed that in the afternoon there was a virtual program with some speakers featuring Dr. King's legacy. Eva W. thanked Malinda and James for helping to plan the event and Ana for bringing the MMC logos that were used as visuals during the procession and for posting the information on MMC social media.

#### **Old Business:**

*-Stamford Stands Against Racism* Eva W. reported that she, Shobhna, Ana and Donn Reid met with Anu Gupta via zoom. It was discussed that initially the conversation was about antiracism and the caste system concept that is presented in the book "Caste" by Isabel Wilkerson. The original concept was for him to introduce the book to the community and follow up with smaller group discussions. Anu and his team are trainers, they not only talk about the problem of race but try to find possible solutions with the group. Eva said that many have already read the book or had the opportunity to talk about it, so we need to consider options before deciding how to proceed. The proposed cost for training would be \$7,500. Eva added the MMC should not take on such a large commitment when our budget is only \$9,500. MMC should consider using the free posts Anu offered. She thanked Shobhna for the opportunity to meet and talk with him. MMC will need to find partners to help fund this initiative if we want to work with Anu and his team.

*-Film: "Reflecting on Anti-Bias Education in Action: The Early Years"* Corey said that the CLC will be celebrating their 120th Anniversary, a celebration of racial equality for children and their families. He suggested MMC contact Jennifer Hallisey and talk about the film and the possibility of partnering with CLC. Pilar, Sonal along with Corey are members of this initiative. Pilar agreed to contact Jennifer Hallisey.

**New Event:**

*-Author Presentation:* Eva informed that the MMC and Friends of Ferguson as co-partners will present Roya Hakakian author of "A Beginner's Guide to America" January 31<sup>st</sup>. She said that it's a beautifully written book that takes a fresh look at American society from an immigrant's new perspective. Eva encouraged the council to attend and invite others. She said the event will be in person but also by zoom. The library will be following COVID-19 guidelines for people attending in person.

**New Projects:**

*-Afternoon of Jazz:* Eva informed that we won't be able to hold the jazz concert in the church. Lou Ursone, Executive Director, Curtain Call would welcome holding the concert at Curtain Call. She said that other possibility is the Ferguson Library. There is a piano and the audio system had been upgraded. The auditorium has a capacity for 300 people. It was discussed about having in person and via zoom, since last year the jazz concert was livestreamed, and it was a success. We had people attend from not only Stamford, but from other states and other countries. It was agreed that having the jazz event in combination with Stamford Day are difficult to hold together in the time allotted. Some artists were still concerned about COVID-19. Eva will ask the library about the possibility of holding the concert there. She asked members to let her know if they wish to be part of the planning committee.

*-Stamford Day 2022:* Eva informed that she contacted the Mill River Park Collaborative and confirmed the reservation for May 15<sup>th</sup>. Shobhna Bhatnagar and Ana Gallegos agreed to co-chair the event. Sandra Barrett, Peter Dao, Deborah Goldberg, James Hinton, Francise Jean-Louis, Pilar Pelaez, and Malinda Polite expressed interest in being part of this planning committee. Pilar agreed to oversee the food trucks and Francise with marketing. Eva will meet with the event co-chairs Shobhna and Ana on Thursday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> and then with the planning committee tentatively on Thursday February 24<sup>th</sup>.

**New Business:**

-Eva shared an invitation to attend an event at the Ferguson Library co-sponsored by different organizations for International Holocaust Remembrance Day that will take place Thursday, January 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm via zoom. She added that Holocaust survivors will be talking after the film.

**Next Meeting:** February 28, 2022

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm.

Submitted by: Ana Gallegos, MMC Secretary