



Mayor's Multicultural Council of Stamford Meeting held via zoom

June 26, 2023

Attendance and quorum check:

Members attending the meeting: Eva Weller, Corey Paris, Shobhna Bhatnagar, Meera Banta, Sandra Barrett, Peter Dao, Deborah Goldberg, Francise Jean-Louis, Yelena Klompus, Sonal Patel, Pilar Pelaez, Malinda Polite, Ajmal Qureshi, Ana Gallegos and Carmen Hughes. Eva Padilla responded "I am sorry. I have a DCC meeting.

Corey Paris, Vice-chair, called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm.

Welcome:

Corey, as Vice-chair, welcomed everyone and thanked Carmen Hughes, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility Officer (IDEAS) for co-leading the meeting. Corey asked the Council to change the order of the agenda and move New Business, addressing concerns raised by Council member Peter Dao (4-24-2023 email & more), to the first item on the agenda. Sandra Barrett made the motion to move up New Business. Sonal Patel seconded the motion. The motion was carried by the majority. Corey Paris abstained to vote.

Approve Minutes: June 26, 2023

Corey asked members to review the minutes from the May 15th meeting. Pilar Pelaez made the motion to accept the minutes as submitted. Yelena Klompus seconded the motion. Minutes were approved unanimously.

New Business: Addressing concerns raised by Council member Peter Dao (4-24-2023 email & more).

Corey introduced Carmen Hughes. He stated that Carmen with Janeene Freeman, Director of Partnerships and Community Engagement will fill the role Marty Levine held as the Mayor's representative to the Council. Both will support the execution of duties of the MMC. Corey said that in this meeting we'll discuss the concerns member had raised, listen to the responses, and together find ways to address the concerns. Carmen thanked Corey for taking the lead in the meeting. She said that her role representing the Mayor will help the Council move forward. She said as members of the Mayor's Multicultural Council we are all part of the same Council and each member deserved to be treated with respect. She spoke with the parties involved and listened to each. She added that we must work with the liaison, not with people outside the Council. She added that in the future, if there is a concern it should be addressed with the Chair or with the Mayor's representatives. Corey said that there were disagreements in the past with previous chairs, as well as with the current chair and he was sure it will happen with the new chair, too, but it's important to find ways to resolve issues in appropriate ways. Corey asked if someone wanted to speak. Eva Weller, Chair, thanked Corey and Carmen for the opportunity to present and address the concerns of Council member Peter Dao. She added that because it was suggested not to address each statement in multiple emails, she will address three important themes.

1. Exclusion: Eva W said Peter has raised concerns that he was excluded in multiple meeting invitations sent by the MMC Secretary. Eva complimented Peter on his excellent meeting attendance based on a review of all minutes since Peter joined the Council. A record is kept and reported in the minutes of each member's attendance and members can review their attendance by reviewing the minutes. Minutes are reviewed and approved at each meeting so they can be corrected if there are any omissions. Based on the record, Eva said Peter, in addition to several he could not attend, missed two virtual meetings he wanted to attend. For the first meeting, Peter received the call-in number, but it did not work. He called the Chair after the meeting to report that there was a problem for which Eva responded she is not sure why it didn't work. Council does not have tech back-up. For the second meeting, Ana, as Secretary, responded to Pete's email request for the call-in number, but by mistake she didn't include the phone number. She apologized for the error and, as requested, is now adding the phone number with the zoom link which had not been done routinely since the Council started holding virtual meetings.

2. Concern Leadership & Elections: Eva W. read from the Minutes of April 22, 2019 relating to the election of officers: that it was announced at the February meeting that the election of officers would be held at the April meeting. Marty Levine, the Mayor's representative, encouraged all members, especially those interested in serving, to attend. Eva Weller was appointed as Chair in February 2019. Jeré Eaton was elected treasurer in November 2017. Corey Paris was elected as Vice-chair and Ana Gallegos was re-elected as Secretary on April 22, 2019. Shobhna Bhatnager was elected Treasurer on January 25, 2021. At the June 7, 2022 meeting at The Hampton Inn, Corey said he is not leaving, but is considering his role as MMC Vice-Chair because of the demanding duties and time as state representative. After discussion, there was consensus to keep all the leadership in place.

Carmen informed that she will form a committee to update the MMC bylaws. She asked for four volunteers to join the committee to review and update the Bylaws and for interested members to contact her.

Eva reported that on November 21, 2022 MMC leadership-- Eva Weller, Chair, Corey Paris, Vice-chair, Ana Gallegos, Secretary, and Shobhna Bhatnagar, Treasurer met with Mayor Simmons, Carmen Hughes (IDEAS) Lauren Meyer, Mayor's Special Assistant and Janeene Freeman, Director of Partnerships & Community Engagement and presented the list of events completed and co-sponsorships since 2020 to receive feedback, review budget and review the process for bringing new members onto the Council. Mayor Simmons expressed her gratitude to the Council for all the initiatives the MMC has done to benefit the community. Following the meeting Eva, Ana and Shobhna met with Lauren to review attendance and need for financial policy review.

3. Concern regarding payment to performers: Review of Minutes 4/25/22 prior to Stamford Day 2022. Eva read section of minutes relating to motion made by Ana Gallegos to give a "monetary honorarium to the dance groups and singers". James H., Sonal P., Shobhna B., Malinda P., Eva P. and Ana G. were in favor. Peter D., Debbie G. and Pilar disagreed. After discussion about the possible future financial impact, Ana withdrew the motion. As this is a policy decision, the Chair was to follow up with the Mayor's representative. A discussion was held about the motion, but no payment was offered to performers. Some members in attendance remembered this discussion and they agreed with the summary in the minutes. Eva stated that a process is in place - Council votes on a proposal to hold an event, then votes on a budget proposal and after the event reviews a report on final expenses. No funds were paid to performers for Stamford Day 2022.

Peter responded that it's a concern if people promise payments, without putting to a vote since MMC is using taxpayers' money. After Peter's remarks, Carmen reminded Peter and everyone that the Council's culture is not to humiliate or be disrespectful to other Council members. Shobhna replied that it's disturbing to hear this treatment for a member who has been diligent in her role with the MMC. She added Eva and Ana have been working well as a team. They put together Stamford Day -- one of the best and well attended of all our events. As Ana mentioned before in this meeting, one of the groups was confused with another organization that Ana is part of and gives an honorarium to performers.

Debbi G. said it has been a challenge to read these emails, especially when she just had open- heart surgery. If there is a problem, it should be taken care of internally. Ana has been devoted to the MMC.

Ana said that she understands that we must be careful with government and taxpayers' money. She stated that she never offered anyone money to participate in Stamford Day. She added that she is a United States citizen and to obtain citizenship, she had to prove to the government that she is a person with a good character and honest. Because of these values and her faith in God, she and her daughter have many blessings. She said that it is not fair that she has been treated with such disrespect because of her act of kindness for donating \$50 for gas to one group, which she shared previously with everyone in a meeting.

Sandra B. said that it's a concern of hers, how information was shared and in the public forum it was done. The emails should not have gone beyond the Council. She added that because of this kind of behavior, she considered resigning from the MMC.

Corey and Carmen said the meeting was a good discussion. That it's important to remember to treat others the way you want to be treated. Both feel confident of the respect, resilience and stability of the Council and that we should move forward. Peter said that he was blocked and not able to get into the two meetings related to Stamford Day. Ana read the email Peter sent on April 24, 2023, prior to Stamford Day, where he said "Sorry, I won't be able to attend. Thanks Peter." Corey asked members to send any back-up documents to Carmen.

Projects/Events Updates:

Juneteenth City-wide celebration. Carmen Hughes thanked the MMC for partnering on Juneteenth. She thanked Eva Weller and Ana Gallegos for attending. She thanked Ana for packing the bags and welcoming attendees. Carmen said it was a successful event with around 300 people in attendance. Carmen informed about the bylaw process. She said that bylaws will be sent by email before the July meeting. The committee, under her leadership, will revise the bylaws and present them at the September meeting. In October they will be voted on. The Mayor and IDEAS appreciates the Council's hard work and its importance.

Stamford Day 2023: Eva thanked Shobhna and Ana for coordinating Stamford Day, which was a wonderful and successful event. She thanked all Council members who were present and leading activities and those who were not able to attend, but helped in other ways. Eva asked Ana and Shobhna, as Co-chairs, to present the report. She said that the summary of the MMC assignments from the committee meeting were included in

the minutes. Some last-minute changes were made. Eva W. asked Sonal and Malinda to oversee volunteers and Passport assignments, instead of Sandra B. and Debbie G. respectively who could not attend for personal reasons.

Treasurer, Shobhna B. reported the proposed approved budget for Stamford Day was \$4,415. The amount spent was \$2,751. Eva W. added that the actual expenses were less because we were able to obtain significant in-kind support, as was done with other initiatives.

Stamford Day, May 21, 2023			
Activities	Proposed	Expenses	Items
50 Quilt- 100 passports and 48 tablecloths (community tables)	\$200	\$287.01	Crayons, clipboard, pencils, erasers, paper, copies, glue, red, blue, green tickets, stamps, tablecloths
Snacks (500 bags)	\$500	\$0	In Kind Board member (Shelly N.) Goldfish, chips, cookies snack, water
Water	\$150		
100 Passport – Kona Ice	\$250	\$200	100 ice shaves vouchers for children’s (\$2)
Advertising - Lawn Signs	\$450	\$225	15 signs & picked up so no delivery charge
Printing	\$200	\$0	In-kind quilt, passport, program, flyer
DJ	\$450	\$400	DJ
Raffle	\$200	\$180	12 x \$15 Gift certificates (Ferguson Library)
Coffee/Croissants, bagels	\$100	\$72.87	3 boxes of coffee- (Volunteers, guests, speakers) In kind donuts, bagels, gloves, napkins
40 Tables & 90 Padded chairs	\$840	\$900	(\$693.4) 40 Tables@\$10+90 Padded chairs \$2+ setup 75 Sunday Delivery & Pickup- 125 +Tax- 60
\$5 Vouchers food volunteers (1) & community/ agencies (2)	\$675	\$336.17	2 x \$5 - 32 for non-profits/ community/ agencies \$100 Taste of Grill (20 tickets) \$236.17 Jalapeño (44 tickets + taxes)
Photographer	\$150	\$150	Professional-photographer
Electricity/ parking/	In kind	\$0	UConn parking lot
Other expenses	\$150	\$0	
Tents (3) benches (4) & sandbags		\$0	In-kind \$400 -- T. Swedock
Total	\$4,415	\$2,751	

Ana thanked all the members for helping with their assigned tasks during the planning and at the event. She thanked Eva Weller, Chair and Shobhna for guidance and collaboration. Eva W. reviewed and edited all the documents and contacted presenters. She added that Sonal kept track of registration and volunteer assignments. Ana informed that there were 38 volunteers, 8 were MMC members (Ajmal (and wife), Sonal, Ana, Shobhna, Pilar, Yelena, Malinda and Eva W.). Ana reported said that on March 30 a letter was sent about the opportunity to volunteer for Stamford Day, then on May 17 a letter with updates in English and translated to Spanish was sent to the volunteers and Sonal. Ana presented the volunteer document recorded by Sonal with names, assignments, and signatures. Ana reported that 39 community organizations/agencies were registered, but some cancelled last minute for various reasons. (Example: the bookmobile was broken-down). Ana mentioned that a few didn’t sign-in, but were present like Mill River Park Collaborative. She added that many had expressed their gratitude for being invited. She presented a form recorded by volunteer Tazia with names of registered organizations and their respective signatures. An estimate of how many people attended was requested. Ana reported that 120 people were registered, but some attendees did not want to be listed. 412 tickets were given away. Eva thanked Council members, Sonal, Malinda, Ana and volunteer Cynthia Browser for joining her to prepare 500 bags, on Friday, May 19 at the Hampton Inn. The space, snacks, water and transportation to the event were generously provided by Council member, Shelly N. Ana informed that 64 tickets had been paid to the food trucks: \$100 to Taste of Grill and \$236.17 w/taxes to Jalapeño. She thanked Pilar for coordinating with them. Ana thanked Debbie for helping to revise and update the passport and to Malinda who oversaw the passport activity the day of the event. Ana showed one example of a completed passport with the child’s information and stamped with tables visited. Two gift cards from the Ferguson Library were given to children with the greatest number of stamps. Yelena oversaw the dance groups, singers, and artists. Ana thanked her for making sure the photo release

was signed for each representative. She presented the respective signed documents. Yelena said that it was a lot of dancers and people, and for a first time event as member in charge, it was confusing and overwhelming. She suggested having a sign to register only dancers and artists. Ana said the MMC had signs for each table, but she was unable to locate them until in the afternoon, when they appeared over one of the tables. Ana informed that extra prizes for the raffle were donated by Family Centers (1), through Monica Jimenez and from the Stamford Veterans Resources Center (5) through Jenny Reinoso-Castellano.

Eva asked members if there were comments, suggestions or questions about Stamford Day 2023. Some comments and recommendations were:

- It was the best event ever
- It was a great and successful program
- Eva, Ana and Shobhna were thanked for coordinating the event
- Have more tickets and bags for attendees
- Have enough water for all who attend the event, not only for people who are participating
- Mark tables with big signs in color to direct people for registration of volunteers, dancers, general registration, quilt, passport, coffee, etc.
- More MMC volunteers needed to participate and oversee activities
- Consider having the DJ announce raffle winners and hold raffles earlier
- Have additional committee meeting before the regular meeting
- Start planning the event early, maybe in January

Eva thanked everyone for their ideas to make Stamford Day an even better event. She clarified that there was a Stamford Day committee meeting on April 24 and everyone from the MMC was invited to attend. Ana also added that Eva always invited members to be part of a committee for every event and stated that is recorded in different minutes.

Budget Report:

Fiscal Year ending 2023

Treasurer Shobhna Bhatnagar informed that the total expenses were \$7,824.28, with a remainder of 1,675.28 for the 2023 fiscal year. Eva shared that since the fiscal year ends on June 30 and there are funds remaining because expenses were less for the Jazz concert (\$500) and Fashion Show (\$1000), she has been exploring the possibility of ordering replacement bags. Council agreed. Eva asked for a motion. Sandra asked if there will be a cost for Fashion Show. Eva said no cost. Shobhna Bhatnagar made the motion to use no more than \$1,500 to purchase bags to give away at future events. Deborah Goldberg seconded the motion. Motion was approved. Eva will explore if this is possible given the short timeframe.

New Fashion Show Event at Mall Rescheduled to July 15: Eva thanked Malinda and James for being the Co-chairs of this new event. Malinda said that they have been planning with the Stamford Mall to co-sponsor the fashion show. The Mall hired a group to plan and run the Mall Block Party. After talking with the Mall's manager, it is going to be a cultural fashion show which is a change from the original plan. She said that she hoped MMC members will participate and represent their country of origin. She added that it was originally scheduled for June 24,th but because of the weather forecast, the Block Party was rescheduled to the weekend of July 15 and 16. Malinda thanked Eva W. and Ana G. for their help. Sonal asked if the fashion show can be done next year. Eva said that we had a meeting with Malinda, James, and the Mall manager and we can explore that next year. Ana informed that most of the groups and models that she had contacted are willing to participate on the new date and they are waiting for updates about schedule.

HBCU: WEE Act Movie Night on August 18th. Eva said that we voted last meeting to co-sponsor & support this event. She asked interested members to let her know if they are available to plan and/or attend the event.

Rhythm & Rumba Salsa Nights: Hispanic Heritage Month. Eva said that she is working with Mill River Park Collaborative on this event-- reviewing possible dates and costs presented by Alisa's House of Salsa.

Announcements:

Eva reported that Mill River Park Collaborative is planning an International Expo and she is waiting for details. Peter shared that the City of Stamford has not filed the required Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports for last year (FY 2022) and that proper filings of city financial documents are important.

Next Meeting: July 31, 2023

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm

Submitted by:

Ana Gallegos, MMC Secretary