



MINUTES
Diversity & Community Engagement
Advisory Committee

January 30, 2013
Boulevard Room, Town Hall
Meeting No. 1

Committee Members:	Regional Councillor Colleen Jordan Councillor Renrick Ashby (entered 6:50 p.m.) Sobia Ahmad Denise Burnett (exited 8:55 p.m.) Lee Harrison (exited 8:50 p.m.) Jennifer Hirlehey Roxanne Horwitz (exited 8:15 p.m.) Mohamed Karatella Judy Paty Natasha Prasad, Co-Chair Deborah Thompson (exited 8:55 p.m.)
Staff:	David Forget, Manager of Quality Service & Special Projects Sharlene Murray, Community Development Coordinator Sarah Moore, Committee Coordinator
Guests:	Jennifer Brown, Ajax Public Library Board Member Valerie Silveira, Ajax Public Library Board Member Kim Dowds, PFLAG Casey Malvern, Mental Health Activist
Regrets:	Glenda Jones, Bernadette Santiago

1. Call to Order

Co-Chair Prasad called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None

3. Approval of the Minutes

Moved by: L. Harrison
Seconded by: J. Paty

That the Minutes of the Diversity & Community Engagement Advisory Committee Meeting held on November 28, 2012 be adopted.

CARRIED

4. Presentation/Discussion Items

4.1 Ajax Public Library Board Presents 'Politicians Unplugged'

Ms. Jennifer Brown and Ms. Valerie Silveira, Members of the Ajax Public Library Board, provided an overview of the Library Board's mandate and its status as a legal entity to which the Chief Librarian & Executive Officer is accountable. Ms. Brown identified a focus of the Board as community advocacy. She and Ms. Silveira presented information promoting the Board's "Politicians Unplugged" initiative, a community education and awareness forum to inform residents about the Board and connect the community with its elected officials.

Each month throughout 2013, a different elected official (mayor, councillor, MP, MPP, school board trustees) will be highlighted. The initiative will include a display in the Main Branch Library with a photo, ward map and brief biography, as well as information on favourite books and books related to the individual's issues of interest. A two-hour question and answer session will be held, to be moderated by a member of the Library's Teen Advisory Council. Ms. Silveira provided details of the first event that took place on January 20, 2013, showcasing Councillor Marilyn Crawford. Councillor Ashby will be featured for the month of February. His interview will take place on February 24, 2013.

Ms. Brown informed the Committee that questions are structured to reflect Ajax and matters that reflect the Councillor as a person; i.e. why did you run for elected office? What challenges have you encountered? She indicated that sessions will be recorded and posted for viewing on YouTube. A live Twitter feed will also be broadcast during the sessions. Members of the Committee were encouraged to attend to support their local politicians as well as assist with sharing information about the event within the community.

The event contributes to succession planning for the Library Board. Information on a current Board vacancy was provided.

Members inquired what outreach had been taken to include youth and student populations. It was proposed that information on the event series be shared with local school and student associations. Regional Councillor Jordan commended Ms. Brown and Ms. Silveira for their community engagement and initiative.

4.2 PFLAG: Transgender Awareness/Positive Spaces

Ms. Kim Dowds, Community Manager for PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Durham Chapter, delivered a presentation relative to transgender awareness. She introduced the Committee to the PFLAG organization, noting that it has both parent and youth focus. Ms. Dowds reviewed recent legislation changes impacting the Ontario Human rights Code. Enactment of Toby's Law (Bill 33) has added consideration of transgender on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression.

Demonstration of the website www.nohomophobes.com illustrated live Twitter feed and daily tracking of the use of hurtful and derogatory vernacular against homosexuals. Members discussed why certain phrases are being used more than others and acknowledged that cultural change has impacted vocabulary connotation. Ms. Dowds encouraged Members to

challenge those individuals who use such language passively by asking them “What do you mean by that?” or “Why did you say that?” as a means of engaging behavioral awareness.

The history of transgender was reviewed. Ms. Dowds indicated that North America has reverted from historical transgender acceptance. Traditionally, native tribes were often represented by two-spirited leaders and gender was not as clearly defined as it is today. Similar paradigms towards transgender exist today in India and Pakistan, where eunuchs are representative of blessings.

Ms. Dowds educated the Committee on relevant terminology and definitions such as *gender identity*, *gender expression*, *passing*, *transition*, *transphobia* and *heterosexism*. The Committee participated in discussion regarding shifts in gender identity through product marketing, with emphasis on children's toys. Several recent news stories relating to Transgender were discussed. The presentation concluded with identification of positive spaces. Ms. Dowds encouraged organizations to review programs, services, facilities, communications, and policies for inclusion. Opportunities for staff sensitivity and awareness training were reviewed.

4.3 Mental Health Advocacy

Ms. Casey Malvern, Ajax resident and Mental Health activist, shared her personal journey with Borderline Personality Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Bulimia Nervosa. Ms. Malvern spoke about how she took a negative situation and turned it into a positive by becoming an advocate and activist for Mental Health. She is currently a community correspondent with Partners for Mental Health, was named a Scotiabank “Game Changer”, works with community organizations including The Youth Centre and Ontario Shores, and has spearheaded several multimedia awareness projects including the #IAM campaign (in which she gathered and shared positive stories about mental health through social media), as well as creation of her short film, ‘Rendezvous with Madness’.

Statistics relevant to mental health in Canada were shared - every eight seconds, one Canadian commits suicide. Ms. Malvern stressed the importance of breaking down the stigma surrounding Mental Health so individuals will seek support. She shared a video showcasing her portfolio of community involvement.

Members applauded Ms. Malvern for sharing her courageous story and for all of her efforts towards changing mental health.

Mr. Harrison inquired how outreach and support for the mental health community could be improved. Ms. Malvern indicated the significance of small gestures such as setting up community information booths at Town events, as well as participating in guest speaking engagements through local schools. She indicated the power of education over perception. Regional Councillor Jordan inquired what one can do to help others who may be affected by mental illness. Ms. Malvern emphasized the importance of letting the individual know that you are there to support them, as persons affected by mental illness often feel isolated and alone. Assisting with connecting to resources such as their family doctor was also recommended.

4.4 Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy Update

Ms. Murray provided an update on the Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, noting that eight community discussions are scheduled over the next few weeks. Two meetings have been held to date, which were lower in attendance than expected.

Members were encouraged to attend and were asked to encourage others to attend their respective community meeting. Details relative to a community survey were reviewed and Members were given the opportunity to complete the survey during the Meeting.

The Committee inquired whether local neighbourhood watch organizations had been contacted to participate in the discussions. Staff reviewed marketing tactics to advertise public consultation opportunities including door hangers, launch of a connecting neighbours web site (<http://connectingneighbours.ca>), social media and News Advertiser promotion, as well as grocery store outreach.

Councillor Ashby posed questions relative to the attendance and mood during the sessions thus far. Staff noted that overall, response is positive and people are pleased with their community. Members identified concern with the low participant turn out and indicated the importance to better connect with residents, knowing that nearly 80% commute outside of Ajax to work. Competing priorities, lack of time and interest were noted as potential reasons for poor turnout.

R. Horwitz exited the Meeting (8:15 p.m.).

Mr. Karatella commended the Town on development of innovative initiatives and communications materials but emphasized the need for marketing support. A disconnect between the Town's messaging and community marketing to the end user was discussed. Suggestions for creative tactics such as GO Station give-aways, postal walks, distribution/notification at places of worship and the Welcome Centre, grocery stores and schools were proposed. It was noted that Town events such as Pumpkinville, the Santa Claus Parade and Canada Day Celebration, are well attended and should be used to market initiatives through information booths, onsite survey solicitation, etc.

4.5 Volunteer Recognition Awards

Ms. Moore distributed Volunteer Recognition Awards nomination forms and outlined several changes to the program. It was noted that advisory committee members are eligible to complete nominations as well as be nominated, as long as they are not participating in the award selection committee. She reviewed details of several new community awards and solicited 1-2 representatives from the Committee to participate in the award selection committee. Ms. Hirlehey volunteered to assist. Staff encouraged the committee to consider putting forward a nomination for the Diversity & Community Engagement Award. Ms. Murray encouraged Members to share nomination information with their community contacts. Further details will be discussed at a forthcoming Meeting.

4.6 International Day of Pink

Ms. Moore reviewed an item of correspondence circulated through the staff Diversity & Community Engagement Plan Implementation Committee, regarding April 10, 2013 international recognition and celebration of diversity and stand against bullying. She

indicated the opportunity to partner with members of the Youth Engagement Advisory Committee to present a proclamation delegation to Council on March 25, 2012. Mr. Harrison, Ms. Burnett, and Ms. Ahmad expressed interest in participating.

4.7 Upcoming Diversity Events

Ms. Murray provided details of forthcoming Black History Month and Chinese New Year events. An event celebrating Black History Month will be held at J. Clarke Richardson Collegiate on Saturday, February 9, 2013 and will include displays, networking, keynote speakers, dance, music and vocalist performances. The following day, Sunday February 10, 2013, the Durham Chinese Canadian Culture Centre will host a Chinese New Year Gala at the Ajax Community Centre, to include music, dance, food and karaoke. Both events were noted to be free to attend. Staff agreed to circulate promotional flyers for Members to share with their contacts.

5. Standing Items

5.1 Work Plan

Staff indicated that items are being solicited from across the organization. An updated work plan will be reviewed at the February 27, 2013 Meeting.

6. Correspondence

6.1 Durham Regional Planning & Economic Development Committee Report: 2011 Census Population – Language Release

With consent of all Members present, the item of correspondence identified at the January 30, 2013 Meeting of the Diversity & Community Engagement Advisory Committee was received for information.

7. Update from Council

Regional Councillor Jordan provided a summary of the recent Community Safety Strategy Update presented to Council. She noted that statistics were presented and Ajax's work and commitment to community safety was acknowledged. Details of the forthcoming 2013 Budget approval were shared. A copy of the document is available on the Town's website.

Regional Councillor Jordan indicated that discussion relative to Fair Representation continues at Regional Council. She identified that governance costs could be saved by reducing the number of Regional Councillors. Statistics were shared relative to the ratio of constituent representation for Regional Councillors across Peel, York and Durham Regions. She added that by reevaluating and making the number of constituents per Regional Councillor more consistent, the cost of governance would be significantly less per capita.

Mr. Karatella identified the need to expand marketing of the Town's communications and initiatives to the public. A disconnect between Town projects and community interest and

attendance at public consultation meetings was emphasized. Regional Councillor Jordan and Councillor Ashby reviewed avenues for public comment on the Budget and proposed that communications staff be invited back to the Committee at a forthcoming meeting to further discuss marketing tactics. Council's focus on community engagement was identified as a priority during 2010 strategic planning.

L. Harrison exited the meeting. (8:50 p.m.)

Ms. Burnett provided information relative to free radio advertisement opportunities through the University of Ontario Institute of Technology and Durham College radio station.

D. Burnett and D. Thompson exited the meeting. Quorum was lost. (8:55 p.m.)

8. New Business

None

9. Adjournment

With consent of all members present, the January 30, 2013 meeting of the Diversity & Community Engagement Advisory Committee was adjourned (9:00 p.m.).