

Freehold Human Relations Advisory Committee (HRAC) Meeting
March 7, 2024

In attendance: Carrie Conger, Jenny Conger, Councilman Adam Reich, Christine Gregory, Claire Morales, Margaret Rogers, Wanda Richards-Clarke, Rev. Ron Sparks, Joanna Connelly (by phone) and Elisha Carter (by phone)

Not in attendance: Faith Edwards, Wagner Menendez, Sgt. Santana

Visiting community members: Glorymel Roldan, Kymora Clarke and Maleah Evans

Meeting called to order 6:09pm

HRAC Committee Member Spotlight – Reminder will be sent to all Committee Members to complete and submit their short bio by next month as had been suggested by Jenny at the February meeting in order to allow for more people in the community to see behind the logo and know more about the people who are volunteering. Photos will be taken next to the HRAC banner at the next meeting and then also doing a group photo.

Walking Tour – Jenny reported progress at the library is slowing for the moment and the exact date it will reopen is not yet set. Assuming an April opening, the Committee has set a tentative Walking Tour date of Saturday, April 20, 2024 around 2:00 or 3:00pm. Adam will reach out to Kevin Coyne to check his availability and talk to Historic Preservation to set it up. By the next Committee meeting, we should have more information to properly advertise with at least a two week notice of the event date. There will be a website to register for the Committee to get an attendance estimate and to determine whether an alternate form of transportation or carpooling option will be necessary for attendees that may not be able to physically walk the tour. Joanna mentioned that Casa Freehold partners with another group to use a mini-bus and will ask them if they could help us out if needed. A parking validation code will need to be created for attendees to park.

Pen-Pal Update – Claire will contact Superintendent Michael to flesh out the program idea. We will need information on the senior citizen population from Councilwoman Sharon Shutzer. Maleah mentioned that when she was in the 21st Century Program they had a project in which the students visited a nursing home to meet with the residents.

Befriend-A-Neighbor – Christine reported she spoke with Kathy, a contact in Matawan Borough, to talk logistics related to sending cards/flowers to people in the community and received flyers about Matawan's Sending Seniors Smiles program, which indicated that they ask local merchants to get involved as collection sites for cards.

Adam suggested purchasing seed packets/seed cards to give away at events such as the walking tour, encouraging "planting seeds of friendship." We may have to purchase bulk postcards. We will need a list of the senior population in the community from Sharon Shutzer or another Senior Coordinator. Once we get the addresses we may want to drop cards/seeds in mailboxes.

Ron Sparks suggested asking the various organizations and religious groups around town to find ways to celebrate Seniors in their organizations and to provide photos of their senior appreciation events to HRAC to post online. Seed packets etc would be provided to each organization that wishes to celebrate their seniors to incorporate with their activities. We can suggest September as the month to recognize.

Wanda and Adam reiterated the need for New Resident Meet and Greet sessions twice a year.

Casa Freehold would like to participate in getting a Living Library project going.

Through Margaret's work with the Equity Initiative she has found that there is a need for the police to further interact with the community, particularly the youth. There is an open house in attempts to diversify the recruitment of new police officers.

Wanda is planning to meet with Sgt. Santana about getting the police more involved in the community to encourage police to talk with the youth one on one in an effort to reduce their hesitation of reaching out to a cop for help, akin to the youth academy.

Ron is meeting with the Chief of Police. Ron is speaking with Superintendent of Schools, Asia Michael to discuss mentorship program ideas. He is hoping the schools will allow the police to participate, but the prior Superintendents expressed reluctance. One reason being that some children may have parents that are not properly documented and they may have some fears.

Maleah suggested contacting Coach Naspo of All Kids One Field and the organizers of We Are The Future to see if they would try inviting the police to attend their activities in plain clothes to simply interact with the community.

Police have indicated that they prefer organic natural interactions and not mere photo-ops.

Jenny will post reminder on Facebook page about the event on March 20th called "Won't You Be My Neighbor", an event to spread love and kindness in honor of Mr. Rogers (of "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood") at the Library. The event encourages neighbors to find creative ways to decorate their home and yard and find ways to help our neighbors.

Flag Sales – We still have numerous flags to sell. Now that the Spring is coming, it is a good opportunity to readvertise the Limited Edition Flags on social media and to try selling them at every event we can attend. We have to ask the Borough Finance office if it is ok to reduce the price in an effort to sell more to pay down more of the debt faster.

Carrie suggested asking the Porch Fest house providers if they might buy a flag for display during the event and/or offer to have a table for selling the flags.

Other event news – The Memorial Day Parade is in the preparation phase. All volunteers may be as one unified group rather than trying to divide up by committee type. People volunteering for more than one committee can not be in more than one place at a time.

Juneteenth event on Main Street in front of the Hall of Records will take place on June 9th this year. We will try to have a flag raising at Borough Hall before the event starts. The Gala event will be on June 23rd at Bella Vista Country Club.

June is Pride Month – Flag raising at Borough Hall like last year. Invite Casa Freehold etc.

Court Street School is hosting a Roaring Twenties event

Approval of Minutes – February meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Next HRAC meeting is April 4, 2024.

Meeting adjourned 7:26pm.