

Community Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2021

A meeting of the Appearance Review Commission was held electronically on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. Chairperson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present were

Kathy Anderson
Gil Antokal
Veronica Boyajian
Rebekah Childers
Judy Hoffman
Bill Lundquist
Susie Wexler, Chairperson

Absent were:

Jason Caplan
Zach Raimi

Also Present:

David Fitzgerald-Sullivan, Communications Coordinator, at Village Hall
Jeri Cotton, Secretary

Public Comment:

There were no public comments on non-agenda items that were received prior to the meeting. There was no one present at Village Hall for Public Comment and no one on Zoom.

Document Approval

Mr. Antokal moved to approve the minutes from the December 1, 2020, Community Relations Commission meeting. Ms. Hoffman seconded the motion. The motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Anderson, Antokal, Boyajian, Childers, Hoffman, Lundquist, Wexler (7)

NAYS: None (0)

Discussion

1. Review of Commission's Functions and Duties

Ch. Wexler noted the Commission will look at the duties and functions of the CRC as they currently exist. The Commission has not been active in a long time and she

wanted to ensure everyone is on the same page. Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan noted any changes would need to be approved by the Village Board.

The commissioners discussed, "Membership consists of 9 members appointed to 3-year overlapping terms."

Mr. Lundquist asked if the commissioners are just reappointed. Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan explained the Mayor usually reaches out to the Chairperson and Desiree Van-Thorne reaches out to the member about their willingness to continue.

Ch. Wexler noted Commission membership is 9 members. There are currently 7 members plus non-voting members. Ch. Wexler will reach out to the Volunteer Engagement Commission. She asked if there is a certain demographic that is missing on the Commission. Mr. Antokal explained in the past, the Commission could have as many ex-officio (non-voting) members plus 9 voting members. Ch. Wexler believes 9 members will broaden the Commission's reach and depth in the Village.

The commissioners discussed, "Duties: Study and recommend means of developing better relationships among all residents in all community activities."

Ms. Childers asked what it means to be an advisory board. Ch. Wexler noted the Commission's purview is to make recommendations to the Mayor and Trustees.

Ms. Boyajian asked if the Commission comes up with ideas and runs with them or if they ask other groups for assistance. She would not want to reinvent the wheel independently. Mr. Antokal explained the ideas the Commission came up with in the past were presented by the staff liaison. If the Board is interested, the Commission could then engage with other groups to get something started. Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan explained at the last Fine Arts Commission meeting before Covid, a commissioner reached out to a sustainability commissioner with an idea for a co-promoted program.

The commissioners discussed, "Identify and evaluate the social, recreational and developmental needs of Village youth and how they might participate in all aspects of community life."

Ms. Childers asked how this differs from other groups. Mr. Antokal explained the parks are a different governing body. The student intern program was important to the Commission as we wanted to engage the youth who wanted to do service within the community. The park district did not go in this direction with the Village youth. They offer other types of programs, but did not initiate this type of program in the past. Ch. Wexler explained this Commission is the umbrella to bring together the different entities with their own expertise. Ms. Childers if the Commission want to beautify all the utility boxes in Deerfield and want the youth to assist. This program would partner with the schools and Fine Arts Commission. Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan explained the public mural program on the AT&T building is a partnership with the Fine Arts Commission and the

schools. The government agencies are very collaborative and there is an open line of communication.

The commissioners discussed, "Initiate and conduct educational and informational programs to promote diversity."

Ch. Wexler noted there is a youth movement and a diverse movement without defining who is in each grouping. Diversity, equity and inclusive are words that represent values that need to be elevated at this point. Ms. Boyajian suggested adding fairness as a value. Ms. Childers asked if diversity is included in other Commissions. Ch. Wexler explained each Commission has their diverse scope. The human/humanity piece of the Village falls under this Commission. Mr. Antokal explained the former Youth Council was very defined and served youth up to high school graduation.

The commissioners discussed, "Award village assistance to senior residents in accordance with established eligibility criteria."

Mr. Antokal explained the Commission removed this from their purview about 12 years ago. If there was a senior having difficulty paying their property tax, they could apply for a stipend with the Village. Mr. Antokal explained there were some seniors who were letting their children take possession of their assets, so they could apply for this type of stipend. The Commission decided they did not want to police this activity so this was eliminated as part of the commission's responsibilities. Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan believes the program is still in place but is done through background checks by police department and social worker. He noted most seniors needing assistance typically go through the township.

Ms. Hoffman noted the Commission does not receive submittals for any of these programs. Ch. Wexler asked for some guidance on whether this should be taken out as it is no longer in our purview. Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan will check with Village Manager Kent Street.

The commissioners discussed the Functions & Duties:

"The Community Relations Commission is established to foster and promote understanding, mutual respect, cooperation, and positive relations in a diverse inclusive community.

The Community Relations Commission is also to promote increased participation in all aspects of community life and a sense of shared community among all residents. The Community Relations Commission shall act in an advisory capacity to Village President and Board of Trustees. The Community Relations Commission shall have the following functions and duties:

1. Study and recommend means of developing better relationships among all residents in a diverse and inclusive community of Deerfield.

2. Encourage residents to be "service-oriented" in the opportunities to assist one another in the community and the neighborhood.
3. Promote and support initiatives with federal, state and local governmental agencies, commissions, businesses, schools, civic and religious organizations, neighborhood and community events aimed at increasing goodwill and civil engagement among the residents and the global community at large.
4. Recognize and approve honors or awards for persons, firms, or entities that serve or advance understanding, mutual respect, cooperation and positive relations between and among residents of Deerfield.

The Community Relations Commission shall consist of members broadly representative from the community at large. The Commission shall consist of 9 voting members and additional ex officio members as the Commission deems necessary.”

Ch. Wexler believes the overview is taken from somewhere else and should be refined. Ms. Childers believes #3 feels like the overview of acting as an umbrella to bring together the various organizations and helps promote and support the partnerships in the Village. Ms. Childers thinks the word identify is important and engagement is something the group should focus on. The commission should help identify programs or support programs that are happening. Ms. Anderson suggested removing Functions & Duties and putting this information in the overview.

Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan noted this was pulled from different sections. Ch. Wexler believes one could say #2 is folded into civil engagement among the residents and global community at large. Engagement of youth is more clearly articulated in the points of action. Ms. Boyajian questioned whether the Commission should identify groups of people. Ch. Wexler suggested if the first paragraph of the overview is omitted, as it is covered elsewhere, the one thing not already listed in language below is “Identify and evaluate the social, recreational and developmental needs of Village youth and how they might participate in all aspects of community life.” She suggested the Commission may want to articulate youth separately even though they are residents. Ms. Boyajian asked if youth don’t have voices, the disabled also do not have voices. Ms. Anderson suggested moving, “Identify and evaluate the social, recreational and developmental needs of Village youth and how they might participate in all aspects of community life” down and discuss individuals whose voices are not necessarily heard. She suggested amplifying the voices of all citizens. Mr. Antokal explained the former commission heard from various organizations when working on the Community Relations awards. Heard from religious organizations, schools, sports organizations, etc. The Commission would get information from members of the community including religious organizations, schools, sports organizations, etc. Ch. Wexler noted this would spotlight and celebrate the goodness in Deerfield.

Ch. Wexler suggested updating the language to read, "Study and recommend means of developing better relationships and engagement among all residents in a diverse and inclusive community of Deerfield." This would highlight all residents instead of calling out one segment. Ms. Childers explained if the Commission calls out one group, it would exclude other groups. Ch. Wexler noted the world is changing and we need to be a place where everyone can have their best life in Deerfield. Ms. Boyajian believes if we call out one group, we have to call out many groups. The Commission needs to be fair and not spotlight one group and exclude others. Ch. Wexler believes all residents is broad enough. She would not want to be so equal that we are not equitable.

Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan will put together a final wording and send it out to the Commission.

Ms. Boyajian moved to approve the Commission's functions and duties with the modifications listed above. Mr. Lundquist seconded the motion. The motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Anderson, Antokal, Boyajian, Childers, Hoffman, Lundquist, Wexler (7)

NAYS: None (0)

Items from the Staff:

Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan reported Give Where You Live Deerfield will take place on Monday, January 18, 2021 on the west side of the Jewett Park Community Center. Mayor Rosenthal has spearheaded this successful event in the past. As she is not seeking reelection, this may fall into the Commission's purview.

Items from the Commission:

Mr. Antokal noted the Commission used to receive a report from police detectives at the beginning of each meeting. It was a good opportunity to hear what is going on with the community and gang activity in the schools. This is something we have not addressed. There were two officers assigned to provide reports on the Commission.

Mr. Antokal reported the Commission had a student intern program in the past. It was an outstanding program for both the student and the Commission. He would like that program reinstated.

Ms. Anderson believes it is important to determine the ex-officio members as well as what reports the Commission should receive. Ch. Wexler asked the commissioners to think about what groups should be represented on the Commission. She believes this will assist the Commission in achieving the Commission's purview and building out what to do.

Ms. Boyajian noted she reached out to the Deerfield Police Department to see if they could teach self-defense to a group of disabled residents. She believes anything they could offer to teach disabled residents would be helpful.

Ms. Childers noted a report was presented to the Board that was based on a survey about how residents use the downtown. Some of the data ties back to communication, education and relationships. She asked if the Commission could get access to the report and possibly some of the raw data, so they could process the information as well. Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan would look into getting the Commission access to some of the reports sent to the Trustees.

Public Comment:

Mr. Fitzgerald-Sullivan noted there was no Public Comment received during the meeting.

Adjournment:

There being no further business or discussion, Mr. Antokal moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Childers seconded the motion. The motion by the following vote:

AYES: Anderson, Antokal, Boyajian, Childers, Hoffman, Lundquist, Raimi, Wexler (8)

NAYS: None (0)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 pm. The next regular meeting of the Community Relations Commission will be held on February 9, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeri Cotton
Secretary