

City of Peekskill Human Relations Commission
November 19, 2019
7:00 pm
Paul Schwerman Conference Room, City Hall

CORRECTED Minutes of the Meeting

AGENDA

City of Peekskill Human Relations Commission

November 19, 2019

1. UPDATE - New HRC members & Residency requirements
2. UPDATE – HRC Members Absences
3. UPDATE – Monthly Videos
4. UPDATE - Saturday Academy: Move to 2020?
5. Peekskill Census Complete Count Debrief
6. New Business

Members present: Mai Miksic, Chair; Susie Erdey, Co-chair; Lorenzo Dominguez; Marlene Jackson; Joe Schuder; Eileen Sullivan; Mishiba Taylor.

Members absent: Yao Lawrence Cunningham, Myriam Pauta.

The meeting was called to order by Mai Miksic at 7:05pm.

The minutes of September meeting were provisionally approved.

Mai asked members to introduce themselves to Lorenzo Dominguez and Eileen Sullivan, the two newly appointed members whose first meeting is tonight, and asked Lorenzo and Eileen to do the same.

Lorenzo Dominguez introduced himself and said that Ramon Fernandez approached him about openings on the Ethics Commission and Human Relations Commission. Lorenzo was interested in both openings; he has a long-standing interest in diversity and inclusion issues. He identifies as Mexican-American; his educational background includes international cultural studies, cultural anthropology from UCLA, international public law, diplomacy; he has been Director of Communications at NY Life for 20 years, and he has lived in Peekskill for 6.5 years.

Eileen Sullivan introduced herself as a Peekskill resident for 18 years; she has taught in middle school and is committed to disability advocacy and rights. She also works with Arts 10566. She became interested in the HRC when it was revitalized two years ago; she sees the HRC's role as being a clearinghouse or hub where the community can come to for information, direction, inclusion, getting to know community. She believes that the results of the Community Needs Assessment conducted last year the Peekskill Community Congress shows that Peekskill has everything needed to be all it can be. She stated that she "hates politics, and cares about good governance."

The issue of changing the HRC's monthly meeting date because the HRC's meeting on the third Tuesday of the month gets bumped by the Common Council work session and full council meeting whenever a legal holiday falls on the Monday before the HRC meeting. Susie Erdey will create and send a Doodle poll to HRC members to find a mutually agreeable time to meet, beginning in January 2020. She will review the calendar of meetings for all other City of Peekskill Boards and Commissions and identify which nights, if any, do not have meetings scheduled.

1. Peekskill Census Complete Count Debrief

Mai Miksic, Mishiba Taylor, and Joe Schuder attended a September meeting hosted by representatives from the federal Census Bureau for this region re: how to organize a Complete Count Committee (CCC) for Peekskill. They reported that it was well attended. Joe observed that he thinks the process is bottle-necked; Jennifer Brown at the Field Library is working with Westchester County on a separate census effort. Mai is concerned because there seemed to be many competing ideas around the table at the meeting re: organizing the CCC. A suggestion was made re: recruiting block leaders to do census education. Peekskill has been a very undercounted census tract. The 2020 Census would be the first time Peekskill is organized to be counted. Peekskill is significantly far behind on organizing compared to other regions (NYC, other areas of Westchester). Joe commented that the census process was not explained, no history was given, no suggestions were offered on how to proceed; Census Bureau representation was very weak; segmentation could work but only if carefully done (religious organizations, low-income housing, seniors, etc.). Eileen referred to the community needs assessment/community profile as providing segmentation options. She believes that HRC could take the lead, be one of leaders in making it happen: the HRC could identify communities, representatives for each community segment. She asked who we would talk to at Census to offer assistance? Mai noted that there was a feeling of hyper-awareness of who was not in the room at the September meeting (e.g., Hudson River Health Care, Peekskill NAACP). Joe cautioned that if we as the HRC take this on, we would become the identified agency to organize the effort. Mai raised the concern that there is no apparent funding available for such an effort. \$20M has been appropriated by NY State, but has not yet been deployed. There would be significant costs incurred to print fliers, stickers; there would need to be a unified message about census participation.

Several questions for Mayor Rainey were raised:

- Has funding for census work been set aside by city?
- Has there been any movement by other organizations to create a coalition since the 9/25 meeting?
- Who would organize the coalition?
- How would we access the state funding?
- Can we identify main groups to be included in coalition?
- Can we suggest nominees for CCC?

2. UPDATE – Monthly HRC-sponsored videos on diversity

- a. Some progress has been made with City and Mike Miner, who is willing to work with HRC on the project but must be paid.
- b. Lorenzo asked: what were goals of Commission for video project? How do we ensure we represent the community? Mai replied that the goal was to celebrate Peekskill diversity, and focused mainly on the various ethnicities represented in Peekskill's populace. Former HRC member Renee Smith picked the monthly themes and was the on-camera host/interviewer; the videos aired only on the Peekskill Government Channel and on former HRC chair Fred Galloway's personal YouTube channel. Lorenzo reported that he recently discovered that there *is* a City of Peekskill YouTube channel, and that it currently airs only videos of former Mayor Frank Catalina. Members agreed that we need to speak with the City Manager to find who controls this YouTube channel. Lorenzo stated that we need a well-developed plan before we engage Mike Miner. He stated that we need short, 2-minute videos so we can air more views, give equal time to all groups. Can we gather what we have done so far and catalogue? If he can see what we have and determine what our goals are, he can create a 1-page proposal for the re-booted video project. Can we have our own social media account – and is that even a good idea??) Eileen stated that she had created a "PIE" out of the Peekskill Community Congress process, and this could be posted to a resource page. Lorenzo asked if we have a private, central repository for resources to share among our membership? Susie agreed and said that she would set up a DropBox to which HRC members would have access. Drafts of resources, such as a resource spreadsheet, could be created and put in that DropBox. Mishiba agreed to get a catalogue of existing HRC videos from Renee Smith; Mai will e-mail Fred Galloway and ask for the same. Lorenzo agreed to draft an RFP.

3. Saturday Academy

- a. Mai worked with the NY State Department of Human Rights to create a PowerPoint presentation on how to file a human rights complaint; the presentation is posted on the City web page. She would like to do a Saturday Academy presentation for the Peekskill City School District but this requires an

application two months in advance of the Saturday Academy session. She suggested that we table this for now.

4. New business

- a. Joe Schuder reported that he has been appointed to the Downtown Revitalization Initiative committee, and he will be working with the arts community. The hope is to put art throughout the city – especially art that is dedicated to diversity. Eileen asked if we have any official HRC representation on the DRI committee? Joe replied that his role on the DRI committee has no connection to his role on the HRC. He stated that the DRI committee is meant to create an open, public arena for propositions on how Peekskill might spend the \$10M grant.

Next meeting: Tuesday, December 17, 2019, at 7:00pm in the Paul Schwerman Conference Room at City Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Susie Erdey
Co-chair, Human Relations Commission