



**MINUTES OF THE  
DIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**

Oakton Community Center  
4701 Oakton Street, Skokie, IL 60076  
**Tuesday, April 10, 2018 – 7:00 P.M.**

**ATTENDANCE AT MEETING**

Board Members Present: Commissioner/Chair Maureen Yanes  
Commissioner Khemarey Khoenun

Staff Present: Executive Director John Ohrlund  
Assistant Superintendent of Recreation Jon Marquardt  
Park Services Office Manager Dima Kirland

Committee Members: Jerry Clarito  
Michael Delanois  
Sharon Carey

Public Present: Jill Murphy  
Jelly Cardandang  
Beth Lindley  
Mark Collins  
Nancy Kim Phillips

**CALL TO ORDER**

Advisory Committee Chairman Maureen Yanes called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Commissioner Yanes thanked everyone for attending. There were a few new attendees and introductions were made.

**BOARD UPDATES**

Commissioner Yanes: Mr. Clarito, Mr. Delanois and Ms. Carey are Board approved members of the committee. Others interested will need to apply.

Assistant Superintendent Marquardt explained the Holi event and how the Park District is going to execute the celebration at the Festival of Cultures. The Holi event celebrates the rite of spring in the Hindu community and is primarily celebrated as a secular event. The night before Holi, evil is burned out followed by a celebration of bright colors. The Holi event celebration will take place on Saturday, May 19, 2018. Mr. Marquardt stated

that District employee Mrs. Fouzia Khan, is of Indian decent and is organizing the event. Mrs. Khan has already secured sponsors who are well known in the Indian community and have successfully run Holi events in the past. Mrs. Khan herself is familiar with the celebration as she has attended Holi event celebrations in India. It was suggested by Nancy Kim and Jelly Cardandang that it would be good to recruit more Hindu residents to assist in planning in the future.

Family camp was tabled for the next meeting.

*Welcome Wagon discussion took place:*

- The Skokie Police Department has a version of a welcoming program for new residents.
- A welcome wagon program existed in Skokie years ago.
- A welcome wagon could take many forms including as a physical office, resource center, on-line assistance or regularly scheduled events.
- Mark Collins said Niles Township Government is ready to be involved. He said the Township umbrella is bigger as it includes Morton Grove and Lincolnwood. The more comfortable people feel, the more involved they will become.
- People use the library for all kinds of reasons; it is often used as a community center.
- Input from newcomers is needed instead of telling them what they need.
- All agreed that the Village, the Library, the Niles Township, schools and the Park District should all be involved. This can't fall on the shoulder of one entity, it needs to be collaborative.
- Consider model welcome wagons in other cities.
- Village of Skokie at one time offered meetings on different subjects monthly to help newcomers navigate schools, healthcare, public transportation, etc.
- This could be a people resource instead of a pamphlet staffed by a group of volunteers.
- The many different languages spoken pose a big challenge.
- Most newcomers who move into Skokie know someone who lives in Skokie and they feel more comfortable reaching out to them rather than to an agency.

- A volunteer from each community could reach out to newcomers of their ethnicity.
- Start small, perhaps with one community.
- Not only geared to new residents but to get non-users and established residents out as well.
- It is important for residents to know that each governmental entity is separate but that all agencies work together, so when residents complain about an issue, they are reaching the right organization.
- Have an ambassador from each agency sit in one room and answer questions.
- Maybe have a list of people who speak different languages so it can be handed out to newcomers. Skokie Police, the schools and the Park District are all developing staff who speak other languages to assist in communications.
- DuPage County trains interpreters who then get certified.
- The ELL (English Language Learner) parents' center has trained people to be interpreters and they are available.
- At the Festival of Cultures, the Village of Skokie will have a map for people to mark where they live. The Village is looking at using this information to create names for neighborhoods in Skokie, representative of the "personality" of the neighborhood.
- Maybe Skokie Cares is a good place to discuss a welcome wagon concept.
- The committee should develop lists of community needs and of community resources (schools, service agencies, governmental agencies, etc.)
- The Chamber of Commerce already has their welcome packet.
- How do we best reach out each community and sustain this community. The people that are affected should be driving the conversation rather than a committee telling them this is what you need. We just have to continue trying. We are servicing them because we assume this is what they need.
- We want to sustain the interest for current residents as well as new ones.
- The library has community board with information for all agencies; not just library information.
- Need to capture the newcomers' needs.

- The problem is that people don't want to get involved; it is always the same people who get involved, and they get burned out.
- The network of the Festival of Cultures is a huge asset, beyond organizing the festival. The festival has been taking place for years and residents of Skokie still don't know about it.
- People do not look at literature in the mail, they get too inundated.
- Consider magnets so people don't throw contact information out.

Commissioner Yanes congratulated everyone for a great discussion but noted there is a long ways to go. Major government entities need to get together and look into this.

Information on a racial justice summit at the YWCA was handed out.

The Stand Against Racism event was discussed.

Commissioner Yanes announced the community spaghetti dinner at Public Works on May 6.

Next meeting date will be determined in the near future.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Maureen Yanes adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm.

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Maureen Yanes, Commissioner

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John Ohrlund, Executive Director

**Vision Statement**

The Skokie Park District envisions a community where all of its residents enjoy a high quality of life through leisure time pursuits, beautiful open spaces, and first rate facilities.

**Mission Statement**

The Skokie Park District will realize its vision through teamwork, community partnerships, sound fiscal management, and creativity in every area of its operation.

**Core Values**

The Skokie Park District will fulfill its mission through:

- Commitment • Integrity • Innovation • Service • Openness • Environmental Stewardship