



**MINUTES OF THE  
DIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**  
Oakton Community Center  
4701 Oakton Street, Skokie, IL 60076  
**Wednesday, November 29, 2017 – 7:00 P.M.**

**ATTENDANCE AT MEETING**

Board Members Present: Commissioner/Chair Maureen Yanes

Staff Present: Assistant Superintendent of Recreation Jon Marquardt  
Park Services Office Manager Dima Kirland

Public Present: Nancy Kim Phillips  
Alex Mukanda  
Kate Shin  
Nadeem Pazwa  
Catherine Counard  
Jerry Clarito

**CALL TO ORDER**

Advisory Committee Chairman Maureen Yanes called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Commissioner Yanes thanked everyone for attending. Introductions were made later in the meeting.

**BOARD UPDATES**

Commissioner Yanes reported the District's Board and Administrative Policy and Procedure Manual is being updated and the policy on committees may be slightly revised. The Board confirmed the name Diversity Advisory Committee. The Board has authorized the Diversity Advisory Committee to be composed of up to eight residents of the District. Commissioner Yanes distributed applications and asked attendees to apply if they are residents and wish to serve on the committee. The application will also be posted on the District's website. Committee members will need to agree to a 2-year commitment and attend 6 meetings a year. Commissioner Yanes said she hoped that a full committee will be formed within four months.

Ms. Phillips and Dr. Counard recommended a description of the committee be drafted so it can be posted on the Park District and library websites.

Commissioner Yanes further explained that the District has four standing committees; parks and recreation, diversity, marketing and finance. Under those committees, advisory committees can be formed.

Discussion took place on committee format and membership composition and the residency requirement.

Commissioner Yanes reviewed the following suggestions from the last meeting.

- Offering free cultural events, in addition to those the District currently holds.
- More events like Festival of Cultures and Coming Together that should be heavily promoted.
- Library uses concepts from the Harwood Institute to invite community members for conversations about their aspirations for the Skokie community.

Ms. Phillips explained that Harwood Institute helps organizations be more outward facing and more open to listening to community aspirations and what is important to the community with a model and tools to accomplish this. Themes include: What kind of community do you want to live in? What is important to you in Skokie? What are the challenges to that? What gets in the way of meeting your aspirations for your community and what you think about it? The Harwood method is a different approach being attempted at the library. Training is provided and recommended. Ms. Phillips said that she and Ms. Dostert are willing to partner with the Park District in planning a community conversation. Ms. Phillips recommended checking the library website for more information.

Commissioner Yanes stated that a reoccurring theme at IPlan and other community meetings is the many languages in Skokie; thus the need to communicate information as accurately as possible. Mr. Marquardt is the head of the District's staff diversity committee. Mr. Marquardt talked about Skokie Park District initiatives: creating a welcome sign that will include about 50 different languages, currently underway, 55 staff members can speak other languages and are available as translators. Nametags are being ordered that include the second language spoken by staff members. Mr. Marquardt is also researching the possibility of using Google home as a translation service.

Mr. Mukanda said he works as a medical translator where the translation has to be exact. One wrong word can change the conversation between the doctor and the patient. Mr. Mukanda also translates for schools and he discussed the challenges he encounters at the schools.

Commissioner Yanes said that another topic from the last meeting is that Niles North and West students are actively working on diversity. Mr. Marquardt is working with the

DECA club at Niles North on a customer service survey focused on customer engagement and language barriers. Mr. Pazwa was a member of that group in high school and thought it is a good idea to have them involved.

Commissioner Yanes stated that with the major American holidays coming up in the next month, the committee needs to look at all the major holidays the various ethnic groups celebrate in Skokie. The District should continue to be sensitive to all these holidays. Commissioner Yanes discussed creating a calendar to include holidays. Mr. Clarito suggested reaching out to the Festival of Cultures members to help with the calendar.

Mr. Pazwa said that Eid is an important holiday in the Muslim world. Holi festival is big in the Hindu world. Holi is a colorful festival that is enjoyed by all, especially the younger generation.

Commissioner Yanes talked about a conference session she attended where a community in Portland spotlights a different diverse group every month. For instance, February – African month, June – family pride week. In Skokie, there are a lot more groups. Mr. Clarito suggested the Park District provide space for groups and they can invite other people to join.

Mr. Pazwa stated that Holi would be a good holiday to share with all cultures. Naperville currently has a Holi event. It is nice to see different cultures enjoying the festivities. The younger generation attended Naperville events in good numbers. It was nice to see different cultures, they were interested in learning. The next Holi is in March of 2018. All agreed this would be a good Park District event. Promotion of the event was discussed. Mr. Marquardt said that District staff would be the organizers of this event and that he will share the committee ideas with his staff.

Mr. Clarito said that the first suggestion of the committee is for the District to celebrate Holi with an event. Commissioner Yanes asked Mr. Marquardt if staff will have time to get this together before March 2<sup>nd</sup> and he responded yes.

Mr. Clarito also suggested that all members of the committee practice the Harwood model to reach out to the community.

Mr. Mukanda suggested a program where people of Skokie can share their talents. Gather people who have talents and have them share their talents with the kids to showcase their talents the community. Ms. Phillips said the library has a similar program.

### **Action Items:**

1. Plan a Holi Festival of Colors for the first weekend of March, 2018. Mr. Marquardt will coordinate with staff.

2. The committee to investigate the Harwood model. Check what training is available.
3. Address residency requirements with the Park Board and apply for membership on the Diversity Advisory Committee.
4. Begin development of a diversity holiday calendar.
5. Draft description/definition of the committee, what it does, why it exists, etc.

**Resources:**

-Harwood Institute - <https://theharwoodinstitute.org/overview/>

-Holi Festival - <http://www.holifestival.org/>

**Calendar:**

-Holi Festival: Begins the evening of March 1 and ends the evening of March 2, 2018

-Casimir Pulaski Day: March 5, 2018

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Maureen Yanes adjourned the meeting at 7:57 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

