



RUTHERFORD CIVIAL RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES October 20, 2021

Meeting via ZOOM

Topic: Rutherford Civil Rights Commission’s ZOOM Meeting

Time: October 20, 2021 6:30pm Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join ZOOM Meeting

Meeting ID:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88511197348?pwd=ZHZNcjJGeUxlcj9RandlcXBsSIBuZz09>

Beverly Khan Pal	Sami Abuauad
Steve Way	Esther Gatria
Renjith Pillai	Tarek Salib - absent
Alcides Aguasvivas	Maria Begg-Roberson (Council Liaison) - absent
Shefali Pilar	Joe Pacillo – Lyndhurt (brother in law of Mr. Reciniello)
Ginny Perrin	Joe Reciniello - 125 Hobart Ave
Christie Del Rey-Cone – absent	Raymond Schembri – 22 East Pierrepont Ave
Mark Tenn – absent	John Silverman – 125 Hobart Ave
Lori Rosario-Griffin	Lorraine Russo – 130 Hobart Ave
Jessica Lezcano - absent	
Paul Frazier	
Gretchen Corsillo	

*Present – highlighted

6:40pm – Steve called meeting to order

- Roll call completed
- Steve - read Sunshine Law
- Ester moved to accept minutes from last meeting (Sept 15, 2021) and Lori seconds
- Meeting open to the public
 - Joe Reciniello
 - He owns a rental property at 125 Hobart Avenue
 - In honor of October being the Choose Life month, the Coalition had made a request to the Mayor and Council initially on May 24th to fly the Choose Life flag outside Borough Hall.

- Another request was made May 28th being that the initial request was not addressed.
 - Other requests were made and finally after no response, the Coalition filed a formal complaint on Sept 13th, against the Mayor and Council.
 - The Coalition is made up of multiple churches (as well as the Jewish community) in town.
 - The Council eventually responded that it was a private issue, but the Coalition feels that their civil rights have been violated
 - In 2019, the request to fly the Pride flag was allowed and since then, it has been allowed to fly 3 times. So, why was one flag permitted and one denied?
 - The Coalition feels our elected officials should not be allowed to cherry pick what is allowed and what is not allowed
 - His personal opinion – one flag should fly in this town and that is the American flag; however, if the town allows to fly one cause’s flag, then they should allow flags related to other causes
 - He is aware that the RCRC feels this is not something that we would get involved in because it does not fall in lines with the protected classes as defined by the government
 - Raymond Schembri
 - Located at 22 East Pierrepoint
 - Showed us what the Choose Life flag looks like.
 - He is not sure why anyone would be opposed to choosing life.
 - He understands that the Commission did not pick it up because it did not fall under certain categories that the RCRC addresses but it falls under creed.
 - He feels that his speech and expression has been infringed upon because this topic is a religious belief and should be addressed as such.
 - Choose Life also deals with euthanasia, suicide, and black lives matter.
- Steve Way
 - Commented that the Multicultural Festival was a huge success
 - Dates for next year’s event was discussed
 - Paul – feels that we should have the event earlier in the month (May or June)
 - Beverly – too many competing events in town in May; people are already leaving town or checking out in June
 - Future date discussion tabled for a later date
- Beverly
 - Received a request from an election candidate for RCRC to host a debate
 - Gretchen
 - There is such a tight timetable so we would need to do something by the end of next week
 - Advertise it as a Meet the Candidates Night rather than a debate so that it does not look like the library or the RCRC has any stake in the race.
 - 2 moderators and one would keep track of time (3-5 minutes per answer)
 - Topics should be their views on Rutherford, who they are, and what they have to offer
 - Next Thursday night around 7pm via ZOOM
 - Ginny – thinks it is a great idea, but she is wondering what role the RCRC plays
 - If it is being hosted by the RCRC what are we doing to focus this to our cause

- Just because we have done it historically is not enough reason to host it again this year.
 - Steve says we have been asked in the past because we are not political and so people come to us because they know we are not bias
 - Ginny – the library is not political so they could host it as well.
 - Steve – when people hear library, they may hear of an institution rather than a group of people.
- Beverly – all 4 candidates must be on board otherwise the event should not proceed. And we need to figure out the RCRC role before committing to the event as well.
- Hauge Plaque
 - We have to provide the wording on what is going on the plaque and what is going to be presented to the Mayor and Council
 - The Historic Preservation Committee will present it to the town in the November 8th meeting
 - Mark is working on it and they are close to getting the wording correct for it.
 - Once it is ready to go, Beverly will send it
- Finances
 - In August, Renjith asked for the bank statement and Gordan said he would send it to Jessica and it still has not been taken care of.
 - It should be brought up at the next Council meeting that we need to establish a monthly meeting and there needs to be a protocol to be able to review our finances prior to our monthly RCRC meeting
 - Ginny inquired if the process has ever been smooth, and Steve said it has never been an easy process.
 - Beverly – said she has found some old checks which are addressed to RCRC but we were always told that we were not allowed to have checks written out to RCRC. Also, there were supposed to be 3 bank accounts, but we have only seen 1 so far.
 - Steve comments that there should be no reason why the statements we need cannot just be emailed to us.
- Beverly thanked the public for attending and for their insights. Meeting was then closed to the public.
- Response to the complaint regarding the Choose Life flag
 - Steve read the letter that he sent to the Coalition in response to their complaint
 - Ginny – it is important to note that the way the Mayor and Council handled it left a very sour taste which is probably a significant contributing factor to the Coalition taking such action.
 - Alcides – we were most likely the last resort for the Coalition to reach out to
 - Beverly – should we at least say to the Coalition that we have made a recommendation to the Council? Lori feels that we should not do that since we have already said it is not an issue that we manage or get involved with.
 - Alcides – mentioned how one of the members of the public mentioned religion and that is a protected class but at the same time, this is not one specific religion which is why the individual then used the word “creed” to describe it.
 - Lori – creed does not mean that any belief you have is protected.
 - Ginny - Creed is a belief that you live your life by so it is a very tricky word. When you talk about separation of church and state, your right to have your belief is not infringed

upon. The ability to fly your flag on a pole is not a right. If that belief is somehow being infringed upon, then we have a right to look at it.

- Steve – how do we want to handle this? Ginny says it should be done verbally and there should be clear talking points.
 - Steve says he will call Mark and Frank about this
 - Ginny said to bring up the financial issues at the same time
- Barnes and Noble Fundraiser
 - December 4th, 2021 - whomever shops and uses our code and the total sales is between \$1500-5000 under that code, BN will give us a 5% kickback (which is \$75). It must be in person.
 - We cannot be there and hand out the code that day but BN will provide the code to customers if they forget the code.
 - The manager will get back to Esther when we are closer to the date and has a flyer already. The manager recommended putting the word out about 2-3 weeks before and then heavy promotion the week of.
 - Steve feels that we need to advertise it now because there will be a shortage of everything, and people will start to shop now.
 - Ginny – in reading the agreement, we could get a money instead of a BN gift card however we would get a better rate if we selected the gift card instead (double the amount). Maybe we could use the gift cards to purchase books for the library or school or different organizations. It may be a better option than trying to raise so much to only get \$75.
 - Ginny asked if we may be able to ask the Public Schools to send out an email blast and if we say that the gift card will help to get books for the district, it may be easier to convince the Public Schools to send out the email blast.
- Bylaws
 - Since Christie is not here, we need to schedule a separate meeting to read the bylaws out loud and see if there are any changes necessary.
- RCRC Mission
 - Ginny – she wants to push the envelope in what we do, and the successes cannot be denied. However, she truly feels that the RCRC should be a mission driven organization and we need to tie everything back to the mission. Everything we do has to tap into that.
 - The RCRC Mission draft dated 5/19/2021 was read out loud.

Our Origins

The Rutherford Civil Rights Commission is a Mayor appointed community advisory board to the Mayor and Borough Council composed of Rutherford citizens. The first organization of its kind in Bergen County, it was founded in 1964 by former Borough Councilman, Robert E. Wesp, whose pioneering maxim, "Do justice, show mercy, walk humbly," formed the bedrock of the Commission's purpose.

Our Mission

The Rutherford Civil Rights Commission serves to promote equality and unity in diversity in Rutherford for the protection of all civil rights against discrimination. Through advocacy, education and collaboration, the commission fosters understanding, acceptance and inclusion of all members of our diverse community.

Our Vision

Our vision is for Rutherford to be an inclusive community that values empathy and understanding, upholds human dignity, respects human rights for all, so that all feel safe, empowered, and welcome.

Our Values

We value all people and their differences and believe that every individual has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of:

race	age
color	mental or physical disability
creed	education
sex	economic status
gender	marital status
affectional or sexual orientation	familial status
gender identity or expression	political affiliation
national origin/ancestry	

Our Action

- **We educate** by promoting civil rights awareness and coordinating cultural and educational programs that cultivate open and effective dialogue.
- **We organize** initiatives and events that advocate community, cultural awareness, cooperation and acceptance of all.
- **We facilitate** opportunities for community members to assemble, be seen and be heard, especially during collective moments of crisis, reflection and civic responsibility.
- **We partner** with local organizations and businesses to co-sponsor, collaboratively develop and support youth initiatives, community events, and educational efforts devoted to civil rights advocacy.
- *** We make recommendations to the Mayor and Council** to initiate and improve Rutherford government program, policies and procedures designed to eliminate discrimination or remove effects of past discrimination.
- *** We provide voluntary non-binding conflict resolution**, an informal process to mediate complaints of discrimination through a confidential, facilitated dialogue in order to help guide parties towards a mutually beneficial resolution of their disagreement. [We should provide link here to how to make a complaint and/ or reach out for support]

*dependent on RCRC bylaws consensus

- Discussion was had regarding adding more depth to the multicultural festival to really enrich our town by also really bringing about equity and a feeling of being seen and heard.
- Ginny – inquired if everyone is comfortable with the * line items. Everyone said it was okay.
- Steve confirmed that there is a phone number for the RCRC that still exists and there is also a Google number. Ginny inquired if anyone listens to it. Alcides confirmed that no one checks it. It will be looked into.
- Beverly – we need to wrap up the last process about how to formalize a complaint
- There will be an open process for open seats in the RCRC.
 - Ginny wants to create a document that we can present to the Council to tell them what we are looking for in a commissioner based on specific roles that we need fulfilled.
 - The bylaws state that the commissioners have a 3-year term. However, everyone got different letters with different terms so we need to finalize the Bylaws to determine

what the term should be. If anyone has an interest in stepping down or continuing, they should be able to declare that soon.

- When a commissioner holds an office, we need to determine what their term is.
- Everyone needs to start thinking about what role they want to play in the RCRC.
- Ginny – for implementation it would make sense to task ourselves with reading the Bylaws in advance and have questions ready in advance.

8:22pm – Meeting called to close