

**City of Sterling Heights  
ETHNIC COMMUNITY COMMITTEE**

Official minutes of the Thursday, May 5, 2016 regular meeting.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mohammed Alomari  
William Dechavez  
Kozetta Elzhenni  
Stephanie Guran  
Susan Kattula  
Robert Lulgjuraj  
Dr. Steve Naumovski  
Shawn Taylor

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Sharron Allen  
Omie Brooks  
Iqbal Singh

**OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

Citizen Services Specialist Sue Giallombardo

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
  - Newly appointed member Kozeta Elzhenni introduced herself. She has been a resident of Sterling Heights for 22 years, is married with three children and has served on the Citizens Advisory Committee. Elzhenni is excited to work with the committee.
  - Newly re-appointed member William Dechavez introduced himself. Dechavez has been a resident of the city for 30 years, and had previously served on the Ethnic Community Committee for 10 years, during which time he was very well-versed and active with the Diversity Dinner, the Naturalization Ceremonies and the Cultural Exchanges and initiated two Sister City Relationships. Dechavez was also appointed by the Governor to the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission.
  - Guest Tom Mitchell introduced himself. Mitchell has been a resident of the city since 1965 and became interested in the city's activities since it has grown so much over the years; attends City Council meetings and wants to see what he can do to make the city a better place.
  - Jazmine Early was also a guest; Early is from Columbia, is a member of the Arts Commission, and enjoys volunteering at city events.
3. Approval of Agenda: MOTION by Dechavez, SECONDED by Lulghuraj.  
Approved 7-0
4. Approval of Minutes: MOTION by Dechavez, SECONDED by Naumovski.  
Approved 7-0.
5. Communication from Citizens

- Taylor attended a GATE (Greater Awareness Through Education) event on March 20 in Farmington Hills; the event is geared towards creating awareness through education on social issues; there was an excellent, diversified panel of guests that highlighted a variety of ethnic issues.
  - Naumovski attended a Swearing In Ceremony in Detroit, and added that the ceremony did not compare to the ceremonies hosted by the Committee in July. Naumovski said that there was no interest from the judge, and it was a "cold" ceremony. Naumovski suggested that members of the Ethnic Community Committee attend other ceremonies to perhaps help in some way and objected to the way the event was held. Taylor stated that members should focus on residents of Sterling Heights. Elzhenni said that she works for an Immigration law firm and said that if someone is dissatisfied with something, they should visit their website and voice their opinion.
6. Communications from the Sterling Heights Police Dept.-Sgt. Linda Deprez:
- Deprez stated that Chief John Berg is the new Police Chief and that she attended the academy with him. Berg is very hands-on and proactive with his work and he played an integral part in bringing the Mid East Law Officers Association to the city to work with our police department and the local schools.
  - Deprez asked members to please read the e-mail that she sent to everyone and stated that it was very genuine and sincere, adding that she became very enriched over the past one and a half years and thanked everyone. Deprez said that her replacement will be Sgt. Kevin Reese, the new Youth Bureau Sergeant.

## 7. Agenda

### **A. 2016 Cultural Exchange Wrap-up**

- Giallombardo distributed Final Reports showing the participation, sponsorship, revenue and expenses of the event. Giallombardo added that sponsorship was up a bit from last year, but needs to improve in order for the event to continue to be successful.
- Giallombardo stated that there are a few outstanding invoices from sponsors, some belonging to committee members. Giallombardo will follow-up.
- Dechavez stated that there was no Filipino food; Giallombardo stated that she was working on getting more food *donated*, and that the Filipino restaurant is unable to offer donated or discounted food, but will try again in 2017.
- Kattula stated that there seemed to be less food; Giallombardo stated that the same amount of money was spent on food items, with a couple new restaurant additions, although two restaurants did not prepare as much as was expected. Naumovski stated that there was no Macedonian food and Giallombardo stated that she is always looking for suggestions of restaurants that could help; so please pass the information along and she can contact them next year.
- Guran stated that it's difficult to check-in people at the front table, guests and participants need to know specifically which group they are with. Guran also said that many groups went over their allotted performance time. Giallombardo stated that this is a continuing problem, it's hard to cut groups off but will address the issue for 2017, and enforce the issue better in the correspondence with participants.
- Naumovski would like to see some of the ethnic entertainment groups perform at the Thursday Concerts in the Park (in Dodge Park). Kattula stated that those

concerts are more "mainstream" and that the Cultural Exchange is a more appropriate venue.

### **B. Sister City Relationship - Jaffna, Sri Lanka**

- Giallombardo stated that a resident, who is also a long-time participant and supporter of the Cultural Exchange and other events within the city, would like to create a sister city relationship with Jaffna, Sri Lanka. However, due to unrest in the region awhile back, city administration was not 100% comfortable with the idea. The recommendation does need to come from the Ethnic Community Committee, but there are no official guidelines in place outlining the process.
- Dechavez showed concern with the request coming from someone not on the committee, since committee members should be updating the committee on any issues that happen in current sister cities.
- Naumovski stated that he doesn't think a request needs to come from a member.
- Lulgjuraj asked if the committee provides any assistance to sister cities and what is the extent of the relationships. Giallombardo stated that no assistance is given and there isn't much contact with the sister city once the relationship has been adopted through a resolution to City Council.
- Naumovski added that he provides assistance and is actively involved with Tetevo, however he has political ties and family from Tetevo.
- Dechavez and Kattula stated that the issue needs to be re-visited at a future meeting. Giallombardo added that the request will remain in a pending status.

8. Receipt of Correspondence: None.

9. Old Business

- Giallombardo reminded members that the Memorial Day Parade will take place on Monday, May 30th, and the committee will be participating. She added that members could pass out candy along the route and to let her know if you cannot attend. Naumovski and Lulgjuraj volunteered to carry the banner. Members are encouraged to wear their native dress or patriotic-themed attire. Giallombardo will forward meeting time & location details via e-mail as soon as they are available.

10. New Business:

- Mr. Mitchell said that he is interested in the state of the city's "Master Plan" idea and has been attending various meeting to learn more about it. Mitchell encouraged members to stay informed if they would like to be involved with the process. Naumovski said that he attended the town hall meeting in April that was hosted by city administration, and plans to attend future meetings as well.

11. Adjournment. Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.