

Committee on Community Diversity

Meeting Minutes

January 5, 2010

Administrative Conference Room

Municipal Government Center

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING

1. **Call to Order**

Committee Members Present: Chairman Terry D. Wright, Vice-Chairman Larry Hamilton, Fred Enderle, Bill Vogt, Gordon Wise, Helen Cuff, Barbara Miller, Debra Osborne.

Not Present and Excused: Richard K. Ghere

Commission Members: Mayor Lucy Fess; Vice-Mayor Bill Vogt; John Martin, Joe Wilson, Judy Terry.

Guests: Mr. Kris Lee, Ms. Leesa Baker, Ms. Nikki Warner

Committee Chairman Terry D. Wright called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

2. **Approval of the Minutes** from the December 1, 2009 meeting. There were no corrections or additions. Mr. Wise made a motion that the minutes be approved which Mr. Hamilton seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. **New Business**

- a. Review Tabled Resolution R-103-09.

This Special Joint Meeting between the Committee on Community Diversity and the City Commission came together to discuss Resolution R-103-09 which asks the Commission to approve and authorize the Committee to move forward with listed priorities and projects. Much discussion ensued in regards to this Resolution which was tabled at the last Commission meeting. Ms. Fess opened the discussion by clarifying that while she was aware of the existence of the Diversity Committee and fully approved of the Committee; she did not fully understand what the Committee was seeking. Ms. Terry commented that it was not the Commission's role to give carte blanche approval for what the Committee wants to do. She had talked to school board members and they didn't like the partnering and mentoring suggestion or the naming of facilities. Ms. Terry continued saying that "if you tell us what you want to do first and then gain approval. The Committee is getting ahead of itself and wants carte blanc approval." Ms. Fess interjected saying that she did not think there was a huge problem in the City with diversity. She wants to have an understanding of what diversity means. Mr. Wise indicated that the meaning of diversity had been defined and was in the Committee's Mission Statement. The Mission Statement reads, *"The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own. Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being, but also ways of thinking of knowing. Recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and*

sustaining disadvantages for others. Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.” Mr. Martin asked why the Diversity Committee was not working as a board and giving the Commission specifics of what they wanted to do and then get approval to move forward. Mr. Wright explained that the Committee had worked on their goals with Edison Community College to give to the Commission. The Committee was working closely with Edison on grants, etc. to bring programs to the community, such as Edison’s sponsored program, “Digital Terrorism and Hate” relating to the Internet. He continued to explain that the Committee thought that it should go to the Commission before proceeding with its list of ideas and projects. Mr. Wise indicated that he had missed the meeting on the prioritizing of goals and that the Committee, minus him, had moved forward with the list saying here’s what we want to do and let’s focus on these goals as priorities.

Ms. Fess again raised the issue that the School Board was concerned because they hadn’t had any input regarding the mentoring portion of the resolution. Ms. Fess continued on stating that she was concerned on giving dollars to have this Committee decide on naming facilities. Mr. Enderle clarified that the Commission had already adopted a resolution (R-110-07) on the process of naming facilities. This Committee is only part of process, as the application is submitted to the City Manager, takes comments from the Committee under advisement, then the City Manager or Planning Committee submits the proposal to the Commission. The Commission has final approval for naming or renaming. Mr. Enderle asked the Commission that besides the school’s input, what else bothered them regarding this resolution (R-103-09) which has been tabled. Ms. Fess said that it doesn’t define socio-economic or African Americans. Mr. Hamilton stated that the Committee did try to define diversity as best possible. Ms. Fess asked what the definition was. Mr. Hamilton clarified that this Committee is not about numbers or quotas. This is about inclusion – including all people and organizations within the City. Encompassing respect and acceptance. Ms. Fess stated that she has always tried to be inclusive when it comes to forming a committee or whatever. As an example, she explained that when she worked for the American Red Cross, she was asked to ensure diversity representation on the board and she couldn’t do that because we have such a small city. Mr. Hamilton expressed surprise and asked for clarification that as a county-wide board, diversity could not be represented with members of our community. Ms. Fess responded that she had asked several African Americans but they had declined; she finally did have a member of the Indian American community represented. Mr. Hamilton said that if the Diversity Committee had known of this issue, seeking diversity on a county wide board, it could have assisted her in the selection process. The Committee could have sought or created a network to aid in diversity membership from the community. Ms. Fess continued, indicating that she would rather have seen specific programs brought to the Commission and checking in with the school on mentoring, then bring a list of goals. Mr. Wright said that it had been brought to the Committee’s attention that previous mentoring programs were not successful and the Committee was trying to assist, not take over from the school. Ms. Fess said that there have been many letters to the editor in the local paper on the success of mentoring. Mr. Wright stated that those letters were from students regarding the educational mentoring which was different from the mentoring of inclusion and diversity of people.

Ms. Terry raised the topic of Section 1 of the Resolution with regard to listing of priorities. She said that she would see the Committee introduce what they have decided to do, such as educate public; and then bring it to the Commission for approval. Mr. Enderle remarked that the

Committee could potentially end up spending months doing this and then the Commission says no and the Committee has wasted all of that time. The Committee wanted to give the Commission the opportunity to give input on those items and then be able to move forward. He continued to explain that the Committee wanted to gather input on each of the items from each of the Commissioners, such as on (d) Partner with Schools. If that one is a problem, then the Committee can review as to whether we proceed or not. Mr. Wise commented that item (d) had been a problem within the Committee and the notes reflect that, but after a vote, it was concluded that the majority of the Committee wanted it on the list of priorities. Mr. Vogt mentioned that there are a number of young people with no guidance that don't understand prejudice and mentoring could help them. Ms. Fess interjected that there are teachers, such as Mr. Hamilton, that have taught that at school and since she was not privy to the internal meetings of the Committee, she didn't understand that the goals included obtaining speakers, etc. Mr. Hamilton remarked that people, not at the table, could give you greater understanding. He continued, as for example, the Committee was looking at utilizing their contact with Edison. Such as, if Edison has a speaker coming in that has already been paid and is an expert in a field or topic relating to diversity and already in town, that they would be willing to address additional groups such as city departments, civic organizations, etc. This would be beneficial and advantageous to the community and we could facilitate for people, rather than Edison or Piqua High School or the Y. This would be a resource available to us. Mr. Wright interjected that Edison's program speaker on Terrorism on the Internet is one example.

Guest Kris Lee commented that as a law enforcement officer and an instructor at Edison that he has received diversity training at both levels and it is so important with the roles he is in both community and government. The schools should recognize the importance of diversity and he was unclear as to why people wouldn't think it would be important to have kids exposed to different cultures and races. It would assist them throughout their lives and could be offered as a possibility for others in the community to volunteer to help. Mr. Wright noted that Edison is trying to recognize diversity in order to help their students especially as their student base is from so many different schools throughout the area. Mr. Martin asked if the schools had been asked about this. Mr. Wright responded that this was just a guide. Mr. Enderle stated that this is like the chicken and egg debate and then directly asked the Commissioners the question, "Do you want the Committee talking out there or not?" Mr. Martin said that he thought it was just common sense and continued to remark that of course the Commission was interested in it, thought it was common sense to talk to schools first and ask what they think. Mr. Enderle commented that with all due respect, the Commission wouldn't be pleased with the response. Ms. Terry said that she had received negative responses from the school board because of their confusion as to what the Committee wants to do. She continued to say that it would be great if Edison had a speaker and speaks to the schools, but the Committee doesn't need the Commission's blessing. As she continued, she noted that by reading Section 2; it says it all, and then you don't need Section 1. She also commented that it should be in the Committee's mission. Mr. Vogt alleged that the School Board is guilty of not being diverse. Ms. Terry said that the School board was unhappy that they were not included in this. Mr. Wilson commented that he would be unhappy about this if he was on the Board and was not notified. He believes that that reference should be taken out. Ms. Terry said that the Committee should come back with specifics and vote on it. Mr. Enderle asked if the Commission had any concerns about the Committee talking with people about

anything on this list. Ms. Terry believes that the Committee's heart is in the right place and not concerned that they would do anything to hurt the Community. Mr. Martin agreed saying that the Commission knows the Committee is here to help the community and that it doesn't need the Commission holding their hands. He continued to say that the Commission has faith in the Committee and then asked if anyone on the Committee felt that they were not up to the task. Mr. Wright commented that as the Commission is elected officials, the Committee did not want to put any of them in jeopardy and that is why the Committee wanted the Resolution reviewed prior to moving forward.

Ms. Fess thanked Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Lee for their clarification and assisting in helping her understand diversity more fully. She asked what happens at a meeting if you have a great idea, do you have to come to the Commission for permission. She doesn't want to limit the Committee to have to come back to the Commission each time. She went on speaking that the Resolution's general statement gives the Committee their approval. Mr. Martin asked if any of the Committee members had a personal agenda that would have them removed. He said that he didn't want to limit the Committee and didn't think it makes sense to have to come back to the Commission and ask permission for an idea. Ms. Fess reached out to the guests present and asked, Ms. Baker, Executive Director of the YWCA, if they have to ask permission. Ms. Baker responded that they didn't ask permission but is in their mission statement. She proceeded to explain that it would be great to work with organizations and speakers on diversity and thinks that the Commission needs to be confident with the Committee's ideas. The Commission needs to understand the Committee's focus such as mentoring in areas of career and education. It was obvious that the schools did not understand the focus and that everyone need to be on the same page. The quote, "not a problem" is a problem which needs guidance and direction.

Mr. Wise responded that there were five items, which were mini milestones. We were asked by our Chairman to come up with list of projects with "blue sky" the limit. While Mr. Wise missed the meeting when it was developed, from the "blue sky" list emerged a smaller list, which was to serve as our direction and what we might focus on. Ms. Fess said that maybe before the Resolution was formed, the Commission should have understood intention. "I've always been inclusive and know problems, not usually big problem for us". Mr. Lee interjected that that was one of the reasons for PROD to recognize diversity in the community. Ms. Fees agreed with Ms. Terry that the Resolution should be without specific goals and more generic. Mr. Wilson said that could approve informally the general direction without a Resolution then formally approve the Resolution. Mr. Wise commented that this Committee does not have any one thing in mind of what to do. This was just a list of ideas that were formed and the Resolution was to keep the Commission informed as to what the Committee was considering. Ms. Fess said that that was the problem: too broad brush. She went on to say that while not trying to limit the Committee; she totally appreciates the Committee and does not want to micromanage their activities. Mr. Wise again stated that the Committee was asking to approve focus which was the intent. Mr. Martin advised that the Committee scratch them all out and come back with two more and get approval. Mr. Lee asked if the Commission wanted to be informed. Mr. Martin pointed out Section 2, and said that the Committee should then come to the Commission with specifics as the Commission does not want to micro-manage. Mr. Lee stated that the Committee is asking for direction, not permission. Mr. Vogt said not asking, wants to stop on account of Ad Hoc Committee and

Resolution and feels like Committee is being talked down to and wouldn't blame any of them if they walked away.

Mr. Hamilton asked to come back to the topic regarding personal agenda. Especially the aspect of the challenge, from Mr. Martin, to the group regarding a personal agenda. One aspect, on a personal agenda, in 1992 he approached the Commission on the subject of ownership identity. It was his anecdotal experience in determining that people of color had not been included in expanding ownership identity. Mr. Hamilton stated that if you looked around Piqua nothing was associated with people of color. He challenged that and suggested that if there were no local people of color in Piqua to be considered, and then people on the national level should be considered. He elaborated that the topic had never been considered as part of diversity. He wanted people to have an opportunity to offer their voice on issues, not only about people of color but gender, maturity, etc. Diversity is not just race. The sticking point of ownership identity is not so much the City but the Commission approved that certain kinds of action that the City would take on bias, etc. This is what you, the Commission, said in the Resolution to adopt this Committee. Not so much the City but the Commission approved that certain kinds of action the City would take on bias, etc. This is what you said in the Resolution, passed in 2007 and now people are bucking that in terms of application on what you already agreed to in the Resolution, which was to acknowledge, take leadership role and expand growth, etc. The Commission and Government has represented wealthy and powerful to set an agenda. He continued to say that too often the voice of the people is not well heard and the Commission has the support of the elite and the Commission should state to the people – you are encouraged and welcomed and empower people to get involved. Speaking to the Commissioners, Mr. Hamilton continued, I assure you, even if I have a personal agenda it is with Piqua in mind, with my city. I love my community and want a place or means for people to become involved, all people.

Mr. Martin quickly apologized and said if anyone on the Committee thinks I spoke down to them, I apologize. He maintained that he has trust and faith in the Committee and knows that their hearts are in the right place. He reaffirmed that he has no problem with any of the Committee members talking to the schools about programs and is not worried about personal agendas. He said that the Commission has faith in the Committee and know that they will do the right thing and does not want to micro manage.

Ms. Fess said that she while she appreciates Mr. Hamilton's speech she found it hurtful. She elaborated that she appreciates the Committee and has never looked at certain groups of elite or wealth and was offended that Mr. Hamilton included the Commission, past and present. She continued that Mr. Wilson and she have always been inclusive. Mr. Hamilton responded that it was not intended personally and that as a member of the Committee was not his idea but the idea of the entire Committee to present the list. Continuing, he noted this was not on a personal level, the Committee has acted as inclusionary, but the Commission as a whole didn't. He was speaking to it as the Commission as a whole at that time, not inclusiveness in Piqua at that time. Ms. Fess commented that she thought Mr. Hamilton was wrong, and that as an All American City, Piqua is very diverse. Mr. Hamilton commented that people don't always want to see anything as problematic. Ms. Fess brought up the Martin Luther King Bridge which was approved by the Commission. Mr. Hamilton said that it was approved in 2000 but that it was brought to the Commission in 1992. It took 10 years for that. He continued to state that the point is that had it been part of a group effort with Business City leaders that it wouldn't have taken 10 years. His

opinion is that the Commission needs to be more responsible to all of the people, not just part of a group of people. Ms. Fess said that did not occur during her previous two years. She believes that the Commission is open to all people whether socio-economic, race, etc. and stated that she serves the majority of people in Piqua. She commented that she thought maybe there is a personal agenda. Mr. Hamilton asked if she was willing to support what is already approved or defend. Ms. Fess said she was willing to defend as she thinks that Section 2 already gives authorization. Mr. Hamilton said that the consensus had some building concerns. Ms. Fess agreed. Mr. Vogt said that he thought that Piqua had no problem with diversity. Then he remembered that as a citizen of Piqua, the sit in at the Bus Station. The bar inside had glasses for whites and separate glasses for blacks. Ms. Terry said she had heard the story over and over. She said that her Father-in-law, Joe Terry, was no longer here to defend himself. He was dating a woman from Greenville and asked for her hand in marriage and was denied because he was Italian. The sit in at the Bus Station was not the way to conduct business. When Ms. Terry was trying to locate the dates that the sit in occurred and going through pictures, one picture was located with a magazine display showing a plaque that said, "We endorse NAACP". Don't know whether the plaque was there before or after the incident, but all people were served. She saw how hurt Mr. Terry was by prejudice. On a personal level, he is not here to defend himself. Mr. Vogt said he remembered as a child that he couldn't play with certain kids because considered born on the wrong side of tracks. Ms. Fess said that was not a problem for her, she had friends all over town. Ms. Cuff said there was a lot of prejudice even for her with a West Indies accent. If called for a taxi, she couldn't get one because blacks couldn't ride with whites. Ms. Fess continued that when she was in New Orleans in the 50s there was so much racism that it hurt her heart. If you gave a ride to a black person to the bus station, you were almost evicted. Can't correct problems, people can be mean and ugly, just do what's right. We need to go forward. Ms. Cuff said we can improve it moving forward. Mr. Lee said that by talking about the past, can learn from it in order to improve the present and the future. Ms. Baker said congratulations to the Committee and Commission and asked if they recognized what had just happened. A topic that could have been a very sensitive issues, turned into a more constructive discussion.

Ms. Fess asked the Committee if they understand the confusion regarding the Resolution. Mr. Vogt recommended taking Section 1 out which was ~~seconded by Mr. Wise. All agreed~~ **agreed to by all.** Mr. Wise asked about removing the third paragraph. Mr. Enderle reiterated that discussion with the schools did occur and with Mr. Rick Hanes. It was his responsibility to discuss with the Board but it sounds like it was not brought to the attention of the members of the Board of Education. Mr. Enderle suggested that the Commission take it with a grain of salt as they take other disagreements with constituents. Mr. Wise asked about the list of 18 ideas on the final page with the five that had floated to the top. He asked what the Commission's response was. Ms. Terry responded to move #14 right to top. Ms. Cuff interjected that that was what the Committee was doing. Mr. Martin asked if #5 meant a list of names for the Committee. Mr. Hamilton said that the ad hoc Committee played with idea of having a list of ideas for names available for consideration but nothing binding or mandated by the Commission. Mr. Martin said that the problem with the top five proposed was that they are not defined enough for the Commission to say yes or no. Would rather give free reign and then define and bring to us. Again, does not want to micromanage. Suggested bringing ideas more defined and information on where the Committee is headed, which would make easier for the Commission. Ms. Osborne

thought that that would create too many items. Ms. Fess disagreed and commented that they just hadn't understood reasoning, for example, c – speakers to our employees. Ms. Fess continued to say that it now makes sense since the Commission has the background. Since they weren't all involved in the ad hoc Committee, they were not clear on the intent. Ms. Osborne asked for approval on moving forward. Ms. Fess asked why the Commission would have to approve. Ms. Cuff responded that it was to make all of you aware of where we are focused. Ms. Fess was unsure of where to go with this and said that it complimented the Committee. Mr. Wise suggested not looking at it right now. Mr. Enderle said the Commission had tabled the Resolution. The Committee will decide from there. Ms. Fess commented that the Commission has given the Committee more freedom than they wanted to take. Mr. Wright noted that this was the only time that we had heard about the school's displeasure. Ms. Fess said she had received information from her business partner. She commented that she would just as soon have a memorandum on what the Committee is planning to do, then bring in front of the Commission. She commended the Committee on the work they've done. Mr. Martin commented that the Commission does not want to stifle creativity and the Committee has the ability to move forward.

4. **Other Business**

Guest, Ms. Nikki Warner, from the Council on Rural Services was introduced. She explained that the Council serves four counties and is very diverse in serving schools and agencies. It is a not for profit organization supported by the United Way, and has to have local dollars to receive federal dollars. Ms. Warner wanted to inform the Commission of the Martin Luther King Day with national network with Disney. The Council had over 270 people representing groups volunteering for to assist with a food drive. Volunteers would be standing inside grocery stores collecting canned goods, etc. which would be contributed to food pantries. One of the food pantries that will receive is St. James food pantry in Piqua.

Ms. Baker explained that the YWCA was also celebrating on January 18th with a reader's theatre and music at 1 p.m. and everyone was welcome.

Mr. Enderle reminded everyone two members of the Committee's terms expire 3/1/2010 which currently Ms. Cuff and Mr. Wright hold and need to apply for those openings.

Mr. Wilson would like to sit on the Diversity Committee to represent the Commission but the time of the meetings would need to be changed to 11 a.m. to accommodate his request. The majority of the Diversity Committee members could not meet at that time, so another Commissioner would have to be assigned.

Next Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 2, 2010 beginning at 5:00 p.m. in the Administrative Conference Room of the Municipal Government Complex.

Ms. Osborne moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m. and Mr. Hamilton seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Barbara Miller, Recording Secretary
Approved as Amended March 2, 2010