



MEETING MINUTES
VILLAGE OF GLENCOE
GLENCOE COMMUNITY RELATIONS FORUM

Virtual Meeting
July 8, 2020 – 5 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Prior to calling the meeting to order, Chair Clark explained the basis for conducting a virtual public meeting in compliance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

The meeting began at 5:06 p.m.

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Community Relations Forum		
Dipti Clark	Chair	Present
Martin Elisco	Member	Present
Margot Flanagan	Member	Present
Rev. Dwayne Gary	Member	Present
Gary Ruben	Member	Present
Maureen Valvassori	Member	Present
Robert Young	Member	Present
Village Staff		
Phil Kiraly	Village Manager	Present
Cary Lewandowski	Public Safety Director	Present
Sharon Tanner	Assistant Village Manager	Present

II. APPROVAL OF JUNE 25, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

Member Young made a motion, seconded by Member Gary to approve the meeting minutes of June 25, 2020. The motion was approved with the following vote:

Aye – Clark, Elisco, Flanagan, Gary, Ruben, Valvassori, Young (7)

Nay – None (0)

III. PUBLIC COMMENT (ON TOPICS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA)

Chair Clark invited members of the public to comment on matters not on the agenda and asked Assistant Village Manager Tanner to read any comments that were submitted by e-mail in advance of the meeting. Assistant Village Manager Tanner read a comment that was submitted by e-mail by Family Service of Glencoe Executive Director Bill Hansen. Mr. Hansen shared that Family Service of Glencoe is a social service and mental health organization that serves the entire Glencoe community and expressed gratitude for the Forum discussing the important issues of racism, social equity and community building. He indicated interest in FSG partnering with the Forum in future events and programs.

IV. DISCUSSION REGARDING FUTURE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES ON RACISM, SOCIAL EQUITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Chair Clark described two recent examples of social media posts, one related to sidewalk chalk in the downtown and one related to the use of racial slurs. Chair Clark stated that she believes these incidents demonstrate the need for allyship. Chair Clark asked whether the Village has policies related to sidewalk chalk. Assistant Village Manager Tanner responded that the Village generally does not remove sidewalk chalk throughout the community. Member Valvassori asked whether the sidewalk chalk messages were part of a sidewalk chalk art program promoted by the Park District. Village Manager Phil Kiraly added that the Village does not have a practice of removing sidewalk chalk and does not encourage it either, and that the Park District has an upcoming sidewalk chalk art event but he does not believe that the chalk messages written in the downtown were related to that event. Member Young asked whether the Village knows who wrote the chalk messages, Assistant Village Manager Tanner and Public Safety Director Cary Lewandowski said that they do not know. Member Young asked whether individuals involved in writing or removing chalk messages could be invited to meet with the Forum.

Chair Clark shared that she and Rev. Gary met with Writers Theatre Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and the idea of holding a community discussion, potentially in a virtual format, about first-hand experiences was discussed as a means of sharing information with the community. She suggested that a discussion could also include information and ideas about what they can do if they see another person being treated improperly. Chair Clark expressed that she believes it is important to take incremental steps to build programs and activities.

Member Flanagin suggested that it may be helpful for the Forum members to be trained on how to host and facilitate a conversation on these important topics. She expressed concern that if the Forum hosts a program and it fails, it may be difficult to encourage people to attend future events. She shared that she read a newspaper article about what other communities in the area are doing to facilitate conversations on these topics and suggested that the Forum may wish to reach out to some of the experts identified in the article. Member Flanagin said she agrees that an incremental approach is prudent and expressed that in the past, when the Forum took an incremental approach, it lost some momentum when it moved to larger initiatives.

Member Young said that since the recent car caravan Rally for Racial Justice was well attended, he believes there are people who would be interested in participating. Chair Clark expressed that she believes it is important to hear first-hand experiences of people.

Chair Clark commented that training for the Forum may help the Forum host a meeting in which individuals share their experiences. Member Elisco agreed that training for the Forum would be valuable and suggested that the Forum consider how it would use such training. He suggested that the Forum begin meeting with representatives from Writers Theatre to hear from its staff as a first step in developing goals and future initiatives.

Member Young agreed with Member Elisco's suggestion to meet with Writers Theatre staff and stated that it is important to go into the community to receive feedback.

Member Valvassori shared that her goal is for the Forum to be viewed as a safe place for people to have conversations. She agreed that it would be beneficial to meet with Writers Theatre staff and agreed that training is important. Rev. Gary stated that he believes it is important to coordinate future meetings with Writers Theatre and provide potential meeting dates.

Member Ruben raised a question of whether it would be helpful for the Forum to utilize a facilitator in a future meeting with Writers Theatre staff in order for the Forum to listen. Member Young stated he believes that the Forum could facilitate a meeting. Chair Clark added that listening and empathy are key. Rev. Gary stated that some people may be reluctant to share their stories if they are unsure if something will be done and said that it is important to communicate how their stories will be used, and it is important for the Village to address how some form of resolution, teaching or training will be implemented. Chair Clark stated that it is important to invite people to share their stories more than once and the Forum needs to reach out to the community. Member Ruben said that he believes it is important for more people to engage in meetings and the topics are important to all community members. He suggested that the Forum could ask other units of government in Glencoe to help communicate what the Forum will discuss at future meetings. Rev. Gary said that he believes some organizations in the Village are waiting to see what the Forum does. He has met with the Glencoe Rotary and other organizations and he has encouraged them to bring concerns to the Forum.

Chair Clark asked the Forum for feedback about scheduling a future meeting with Writers Theatre representatives to share their experiences.

Chair Clark asked Rev. Gary to share his experiences living in Glencoe. He shared that he feels he has been profiled in Glencoe as an African American man. He described an experience in which he was walking his dog and a squad car pulled up next to him and asked where he was going and he responded he was going home; the officer asked him where home was. Rev. Gary said he was the new pastor at St. Paul AME Church and he lived next to the church. He said that the officer responded to have a nice day and be safe. In another instance, Rev. Gary said that he was pulled over by a police officer after his cell phone rang while he was driving. He said that the officer gave him a warning, but he was not on his cell phone. Rev. Gary described his concerns and said that he did not contact the Public Safety Department after those incidents. He shared that he felt that he was profiled. Rev. Gary described an instance of his son driving his car, which has tinted windows, and his son was pulled over but not ticketed. In that instance, he said that he thought the officer was doing their job. Rev. Gary shared his concerns about his son jogging while visiting in Glencoe.

Chair Clark asked Rev. Gary what outcomes he hopes will follow him sharing his experiences. Rev. Gary shared that he believes that people in Glencoe may believe that things like the experiences he described do not happen in Glencoe, because these stories are not shared and heard. He said people need to tell their stories, though people may not share their stories if they think nothing will come from doing so. He said that the Forum and Village should consider how feedback will be used and how information will be shared. Rev. Gary said that he did not raise his concerns at the time because he believed that nothing would come from it and described his personal cultural biases, which shape how we act.

Member Elisco left the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Member Valvassori shared that one of her children is African American and no longer lives in the Village. She described an instance three years ago in which her son was driving home from visiting a friend and was stopped while driving in every town on his way home. She said that the Forum can be extremely helpful in creating a space for people to come forward, and she believes the Forum can learn together and make the Village a better place.

Chair Clark asked whether Public Safety Director Lewandowski could share anything after hearing these stories. Director Lewandowski shared that over the last few years, the Public Safety Department has had conversations with Writers Theatre and its actors. He said that this is a challenging topic because of the difficulty in people changing the ways in which they perceive others and their own thought processes. Director Lewandowski said that he is part of the Forum's conversations because he wants to hear what is going on in the community and wants to be sure that the Village's Public Safety Officers are not doing things that make people feel afraid to come to Glencoe.

He indicated that he participates in the Forum's meetings because he wants to hear people's experiences and wants to be sure that the Public Safety Department contributes to people wanting to come to Glencoe.

Chair Clark asked whether it is possible for incidents such as those described by Rev. Gary to be reviewed to get the officer's perspective. Director Lewandowski shared that the Public Safety Department investigates all complaints that it receives and that the Department will review the incidents that Rev. Gary shared.

Chair Clark asked Member Young to discuss the letter he previously sent to area school superintendents and school board members. He said that in his experience, most people are not aware of incidents that have occurred in the community or the area and are shocked that they happened in the first place. He said he believes that knowledge is power and hearing peoples' stories is important. He asked whether members of the Forum were aware of the incidents that he described in his letter. Members of the Forum shared whether they were aware of the incidents described in Member Young's letter.

Chair Clark asked the Forum to develop action items from today's meeting. Chair Clark and Member Valvassori will work with Michael Halberstam from Writers Theatre to schedule a future meeting with Writers Theatre staff. She also requested that the Forum develop a regular meeting schedule to plan its future meetings.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

VI. ADJOURN

Member Young made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Member Ruben. Said motion was approved by the following roll call vote:

Aye – Clark, Flanagan, Gary, Ruben, Valvassori, Young (6)

Nay - None
Absent - Elisco (1)