

**City of Sterling Heights
ETHNIC COMMUNITY COMMITTEE**

Official minutes of the Thursday, March 3, 2022 regular meeting.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mohammed Alomari
Kelechi Anyaogu
Dunia Arif
Kozeta Elzhenni
Naketa Jones
Iqbal Singh
Vipul Tripathi

MEMBERS ABSENT

Abbott Basal
Willie Dechavez
Susan Kattula
Carmen Williams

OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Community Relations Director Melanie Davis
Community Relations Services Specialist Sue Giallombardo

1. Call to Order – Vice Chair Mohammed Alomari

Naketa Jones is the newest member of the committee, and introduced herself. She is from Akron, Ohio and has been a resident of Sterling Heights for 10 years; she was looking for an opportunity to volunteer with the city and is thankful to be here. Jones added that she is excited about the rich and diverse culture in the city and would like to help move the agenda forward.

2. Roll Call

3. Approval of Minutes: MOTION by Tripathi, SECONDED by Alomari.
Approved 7-0

4. Communication from Citizens:

- Giallombardo stated that City Administration would like the Ethnic Community Committee to acknowledge the people of Ukraine during these trying times and to show their support in some way. Davis suggested a prayer or a moment of silence and will see if anyone is available from the Ukrainian Cultural Center in Warren, to help. Singh suggested setting up a box for donations; Elzhenni suggested taking a moment of silence and added that donations could be made on a personal level. Davis said that she will reach out to the contact at Global Detroit, since they will have a table at the event and are involved in relief efforts. Alomari stated that a moment of silence is a nice idea but said that members need to be aware that there are conflicts all over the world, and asked when is it appropriate to take a stand. Singh added that members are always welcome to express themselves to support a conflict that they are concerned about.

5. Communications from the Sterling Heights Police Dept.-Sgt. Kevin Reese – None

6. Agenda

A. Building Bridges

- None

B. Guest Speaker – Mr. Jawwad Khan, with South Asian American Voices for Impact (SAAVI)

- Tripathi introduced Jawwad Khan, director at SAAVI. Mr. Khan shared an informative presentation, and outlined the goals and mission statement of the SAAVI organization. SAAVI focuses on education, advocacy and outreach, while promoting positivity and goodwill. The organization was very involved with Covid crisis relief. He stated that their organization is very active in Wayne and Oakland counties, and they would like to branch out into Macomb County. They will be hosting workshops that will allow attendees the opportunity to speak with attorneys, translators, and others that could help families acclamate to the neighborhood, apply for social security cards, sign up for ESL classes, etc. Additional information is available on their website: saa-vi.org.

C. Cultural Exchange 2022

- Giallombardo stated that the plans are moving along, there will be over 40 organizations with display tables, displays will be stationed in the gym and some in the hallway, alleviating congestion; this will also allow for more space for performers to gather prior to their performance time. There are 21 groups scheduled to perform. A room will also be open on the second level for groups to warm-up. Volunteers will be assigned to monitor and help coordinate to ensure a smooth flow on the stage. Giallombardo added that there will be appetizers and desserts from 11 restaurants, and volunteers to help serve.
- Giallombardo stated that sponsorships are also going well, and reminded members to pay for their ads and submit artwork if they haven't done so already. She thanked members for purchasing ads and helping to solicit ads.
- Giallombardo stated that the program is near completion and will be printed in the next week.
- Elzhenni will be M/C during the entertainment, but any member is welcome to assist and introduce any groups that they are affiliated with.
- Anyaogu stated that he received a nice donation of artwork on canvases, and he will set them up near the check-in table at the event. The pieces will be complementary to visitors, on a first come, first serve basis.
- Committee members are asked to arrive at the event around 5:30 to greet guests and assist where necessary; Giallombardo also reminded members to make their way toward the stage around 5:55 for introductions and photo opportunity.
- Giallombardo told members to contact her with any questions or issues leading up to the event.

7. Old Business:

- Giallombardo reminded members that the showcase at the Community Center is available for upcoming months, and Alomari had volunteered for April. He will follow up with Giallombardo on his availability.

8. New Business:

- Giallombardo asked members if they will be interested in walking in the Memorial Day Parade, as they've done in past years. Giallombard stated that 2 members carry a banner, identifying the committee, and she also invites organizations and performance groups to join the committee.

9. Adjournment. Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.