

Unity in the Community
General Membership Meeting
5:30 P.M., Sunday, May 20, 2012

Members Present: Dexter Fox, Gregg Reynolds, Ric Clark, Illana Naylor, Bob Gaskill, and Jim Amaral

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 P.M. by Immediate Past Chair Dexter Fox at the request of Chair Kathy Clark in her absence and the absence of the Vice Chair.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

1. Secretary's Report. Paper copies of the minutes for the April 15, 2012, meeting were distributed for review. The minutes were accepted as presented.

2. Treasurer's Report. Gregg Reynolds reported that Unity in the Community (UITC) has a balance of \$1,623.50, \$878.53 of which is in the general fund, \$150.00 in the humanitarian fund, and \$594.97 in the study circles fund. The report was accepted as presented.

3. Vice Chair's Report. Lydia Gonzalez was not present to give a report this month.

4. Chair's Report. Kathy Clark was not present to give a report this month; however, she relayed information through Dexter Fox who reported that the Earth Day event sponsored by Unity in the Community in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and to have been held at Dar al Noor on Sunday, April 22, was canceled due to rain.

It was reported that Kathy attended the Annual Meeting of the Virginia Education Association (VEA) and gave a report on the activities of the VEA Fitz Turner Commission for Human and Civil Rights, of which she is the chair. At the same meeting, UITC member Ric Clark was recognized as VEA's Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the Year. Ric was honored for his ongoing work in seeing that the rights and concerns of bus drivers and other ESP's working in and for Prince William County Public Schools are heard and fairly and equitably addressed by the school system. It was also reported that VEA delegates passed a resolution stating that the right of employees to speak to each other in languages other than English should be protected.

It was reported that a small delegation from Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE) recently attended a stockholders meeting of General Electric in Detroit, Michigan. VOICE has identified GE for action because it had demonstrated a lack of concern for Prince William County residents who have been negatively affected by subprime loans issued by GE's former subsidiary company, WMC Mortgage Corporation. When the value of houses plummeted several years ago, many homeowners in the Irongate, Westgate, and other local communities who were holders of subprime loans found themselves "underwater" in their mortgages. As a result, they were unable to refinance their homes when jobs became scarce. This ultimately led to foreclosures on many of their homes. VOICE has been asking businesses who made subprime loans to help homeowners who are still struggling to meet their mortgage requirements. The next VOICE meeting related this issue will be held on June 3 from 4-6 PM at the First Baptist Church of Manassas (9258 Center Street).

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5. Film Series Wrap Up. The last film for Spring 2012 series was shown today. Dexter Fox expressed his continued concern regarding the low level of attendance of community members for film screenings and follow-up discussions. He also reported that, despite the low level of community attendance, George Mason University (GMU) would like to continue the series in the fall when the Prince William Campus will have resident students. It is hoped that many of the resident students will attend the fall series of films.

6. International Day of Prayer for Peace. Illana Naylor reported that this year's International Day of Prayer for Peace has been scheduled for Sunday, September 23. The First American Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Manassas has agreed to host the event. The Reverend Carol Rogers will be First AME's contact person. The time of the event has yet to be determined. The theme being considered for this year's event is justice.

7. Sharing the Not-in-Our-Town Message. It was reported that Patrice O'Neill, an award-winning producer dedicated to creating inspiring stories which spark audience members to become change agents in their own communities, continues to release films highlighting work on behalf of human and civil rights being done throughout the U.S. Dexter Fox reported that Kathy would like members of UITC to consider the feasibility of planning and hosting a Not-in-Our-Town type of event.

NEW BUSINESS

8. Nature's Revival Garden. Dexter Fox reported that the U.S. Forest Service has proposed an opportunity for UITC, Dar al Noor, and any other interested groups, faith communities, and municipalities to participate in a program called Nature's Revival Garden. The purpose of this program would be to engage youth, with adult assistance, in creating an environmental project that would utilize current expertise within the community and forest service, would include hands-on activities for youth participants, would be scaled to fit into youth program schedules and existing plans of organization, and would be repeatable and expandable. Dexter asked if anyone was interested in this proposal and/or had suggestions of people and groups in the community who may be interested. Suggestions included pairing with the Prince William Chapter of the NAACP in its efforts to revitalize a cemetery in Dumfries and working with VOICE Youth Effort in its efforts to revitalize neighborhoods. Names of people suggested as contacts for possible organizational involvement and/or leads for any funding that may be necessary included Norma Fields, John Steinbach, and Maureen Caddigan. Dexter stated that he will make contact with Norma Fields. He also stated that anyone wishing further information about this program opportunity should contact Taalibah Hassan.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

9. Dale City Fourth of July Parade. Gregg Reynolds reported that the UITC's parade application has been submitted and that he is awaiting further information regarding this event.

10. Illana Naylor reported that the **Manassas Church of the Brethren has applied for a grant** to fund a program that would bring faith communities together for shared community service projects.

11. The **next VOICE Action event** will be held on Sunday June 3rd, from 4 to 6 P.M. at the First Baptist Church of Manassas (9258 Center Street). The purpose of the event will be to celebrate progress on their recent campaigns (especially their work to address the foreclosure crisis in Prince William County, Manassas, and Manassas Park) and to announce the next steps in addressing needs for local reinvestment. It is expected that a total of 400 people from different local faith communities will be present for this event.

11. The **next meeting of Unity in the Community** will be held at 6:30 P.M. on Sunday, June 17, at Buckhall United Methodist Church.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:13 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Amaral, Secretary