



**City of Lambertville  
Human Rights Council  
7:00 PM, Wednesday, April 29, 2015  
Phillip L. Pittore Justice Center,  
25 South Union Street  
Meeting Minutes**

**STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE.**

John Woods, the chairperson, thanked Mayor DelVecchio and the members of city council. He welcomed the committee to the first meeting of the Lambertville Human Rights Council and called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. This meeting was noticed on the city website and the bulletin board at city hall. The Democrat and the Times received meeting notices.

John opened with a dialogue about the responsibilities the group is charged with. He asked what can we do for those who are vulnerable.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.**

Mr. Woods led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL.**

Mrs. Ege called the roll as follows:

*Present:* John Woods, Kari Osmond, Council President Stegman, Police Director Cocuzza, Public Assistance Director Kuhl, President, SHRSD – Dan Seiter and Councilwoman Asaro.

*Absent:* Beth Caruso and Christine Miller.

**MAYOR DELVECCHIO.**

Mayor DelVecchio welcomed everything and thanked them for their commitment to the Lambertville Human Rights Council. He said this is big, something new and while the current governing body is forward thinking, they won't always be in office.

Councilwoman Asaro made history twice in this room. Lambertville is the second friendliest LGBT community in New Jersey. The council was looking ahead to the future and the people representing the community can change and we won't have the government we have today. He asked the group to pick what they want to get involved in. He thanked John Woods for agreeing to chair this board and he thanked everyone for their involvement.

**MEET AND GREET.**

Mr. Woods asked for everyone to introduce themselves. The members present gave a brief introduction.

Cynthia Ege – City Clerk for the City of Lambertville said she was a lifetime resident of the city resides on Music Mountain, served 12 years on city council, planning board, zoning board, school board, and was the South Hunterdon Municipal Alliance Chairperson.

Daniel Seiter – President, SHRSB, he is excited for this opportunity and thinks this will bring to light what is happening in our community. He has two children, one a sophomore in college, and a daughter who is a sophomore at the high school.

Beth Asaro – Councilwoman, is in her third publicly-elected term; married, has a daughter in 9<sup>th</sup> grade; has lived in Lambertville for 18 years, grew up in nearby Hopewell, NJ and is a Mobility Sales Director for AT&T where she has worked for over 28 years . She previously served on both the LPS PTA board and the LPS School Board with Dan Seiter. In partnering with the Environmental Commission, Beth was instrumental in bringing the Third Can organic recycling pilot to Lambertville. Recently, resident Marcia O’Connell, former LPS School Board member, and Beth reached out to Mark Collins at SHRSB to restart the Gay/Straight Alliance. The school recently held a “day of silence” and more than half of the school participated.

Bruce Cocuzza – Police Director said he has been employed by Lambertville for 16 years. He was a NYPD for 24 years and has 2 children and is recently an empty nester.

Steven Stegman – Council President, said he moved to Lambertville from the Bronx in 1988. He has his degree in Mass Communications from Ithaca College. After graduating he worked in the family business as a plumber. After visiting Shad Festival, he moved to Lambertville and opened a store called Boomerbillia. His first location was on Church Street where Picky Paws is currently housed. He then moved to the 5 and Dime building in 1990. Mayor DelVecchio gave him is nickname as he did for most of the business community. He served on the Zoning Board of Adjustment and then was asked to fill an unexpired term on council. He currently works for the State of New Jersey as the Deputy Director for Travel and Tourism. He met his partner Paul in 1984 and they have been together for all but 2 weeks since.

Kari Osmond – Mayor’s representative, has resided in Lambertville for 5 years. She lives on North Union Street and came when the State was redistricting. She currently works for Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman. She is a former board member of the Garden State Equality.

John Woods – Chairperson, said he is not a lifer but has resided in Lambertville since 1983. He has had a career in mental health field and has worked in urban communities like Newark and Camden. He likes to focus on the positive to help people to recover. He has served on a number of nonprofit boards and has expertise working with people who

are vulnerable. He is also a certified diversity person from Temple University. He lives with his partner Phil who works for Adult Protective Services. They have a cat that is 18 years old. He currently serves on the zoning board of adjustment. He believes in working as a community and the best example is when Ferry Street pulled together and asked Mayor and Council for rezoning of their street from the CBD to the R2. The Mayor asked him to chair and he was very excited.

### **REVIEW OF ORDINANCE MISSION & PURPOSES.**

Mr. Woods read the responsibilities and mission from the ordinance into the record. He presented the following information for review and consideration: Freehold Township Human Relations Council's brochure, New Jersey Directory of County and Municipal Human Relations Commissions, City of York, Pennsylvania's Directory.

Discussion ensued. The group focused on the following vulnerable groups: the Hispanic community and Seniors. Confidentiality of the people who were in need of assistance was discussed and the members felt this was an important area to understand. They also asked for information from the police director on what is a human rights violation. The police director will obtain a copy of the policies issued by the State of New Jersey's Attorney General's office and share them with the group. The police director informed the group that a hate crime is any criminal act with a biased intent.

The Clerk was asked to circulate the ordinance as a pdf to the membership.

Freehold Township's Human Relations Council's brochure was reviewed. The group liked the idea of the Humanitarian Award for a high school student. Council President Stegman thought it would be a good idea to find out when the following groups meet to obtain information and guidance: Hunterdon, Lawrence, West Windsor-Plainsboro High School, Hamilton and West Windsor.

The members reviewed the directory and thought it would be a good idea for the members to reach out to other groups who are established and ask the following five questions:

1. What is your mission statement?
2. How and when was your council created?
3. How do you interact with the community?
4. How do you define the scope of your mission?
5. What has been your focus?
6. What have been your biggest success and/or failure?

Five of the members agreed to reach out to a group and survey them, asking the questions as outlined above and they are as follows:

Community Diversity Council of Hunterdon County – Council President Stegman  
Lawrence Township Human Relations Committee – Councilwoman Asaro  
West Windsor-Plainsboro H.S. Human Relations Council – Dan Seiter  
Hamilton Township Human Relations Advisory Commission – Kari Osmond  
West Windsor Human Relations Committee – John Woods

The group also discussed googling and researching the following topics:

Resources and using the web to see how human rights commissions are defined,  
Fair Housing Act, what elements the group should focus on,  
Human Rights Council – Councilwoman Asaro will contact them to see who is  
doing a good job.

Boundaries/focus: to help frame areas that may not be appropriate.

### **NEW BUSINESS.**

Meeting Schedule: Chairperson Woods opened the floor for discussion on the meeting schedule. It was decided that the group would meet quarterly during the following months: June, September, November. Mr. Woods will contact the Clerk to determine dates available to meet.

Members cannot meet on the following dates:

4<sup>th</sup> Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday – Dan Seiter

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday – Bambi Kuhl

Last Thursday – John Woods

**OLD BUSINESS** – None.

**CORRESPONDENCE** – None.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

Council President Stegman acknowledged Councilwoman Asaro and her dedication to bringing the Human Rights Council idea to the City Council. He said he got involved after the draft ordinance was written. He credited Beth for encouraging the City Council to make a commitment to establishing the Human Rights Council because she argued that even though we are in a time where Lambertville is a very welcoming and accepting place to live, we shouldn't take the current political and social environment for granted.

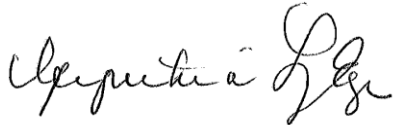
Councilwoman Asaro said there is always a rebound factor when social boundaries are pushed, and the Human Rights Council would be one way to help insure that Lambertville remains the friendly and welcoming community it is today. She also said she liked the idea of resurrecting the Welcome Wagon. John Woods supported this as a

possible idea to consider. Council President Stegman said if the scope widens, we should involve the Chamber. This group could evolve into other interest groups.

**ADJOURNMENT.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Cynthia L. Ege, CMR, RMC, City Clerk



The April 29, 2015 Meeting Minutes were approved at the June 30, 2015 session of the Lambertville Human Rights Council.