Respectfully Subitted for Town Council Meeting 03/27/2024 by Councilor Gary Paul

Remarks with respect to Agenda Item #5

I would like to first apologize that I was absent from the community relation community March meeting due to illness, however I am both confused and a bit disappointed about why the committee would choose to make a motion to rename the committee. When I became Chair of the committee for the last Town Council, we discussed at great length the role of the committee originally created due to some social and racial issues that many surrounding communities were dealing with at the time. Before my term there were discussions about disbanding the committee due to lack of interest or involvement. My committee looked at ways that we could actively engage with the community by being a true resource for ALL of the community. We believed there were many areas in our committee we could help and be a resource for. Our committee believed in not only standing up to racism and discrimination, but in also helping the community connect to services such as financial help, the food pantry, heating assistance and mental health information while also helping to educate the community about how the town operates by holding public informationals with various departments in town. I don't feel or believe that changing the name to the "Community Relations Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)" promotes what the previous committee worked so hard to accomplish or aligns with our current mission statement. In fact, I would say it excludes some. I do not want anyone to feel excluded by putting a label on the name that some may feel has been "Politicalized". I personally want all people to feel welcome and as government officials be the resource we were voted in to be and uphold our mission statement.

""The Community Relations Committee is tasked with being both an advocate and a resource for the community by listening, communicating, and engaging with the community, educating ourselves, standing up to discrimination and racism in all forms.

We do this by encouraging dialogue, promoting unity and understanding, and learning from one another as we continue to build a strong community together, making sure no-one is left behind."

I personally believe as I know we all do that there is no place for racism or hate in anyway shape or form in our community, but I would encourage more dialogue before changing the name and continuing to ask the right questions before doing so such as "*what is this committee's role?" "Does the name change <u>really</u> reflect our mission statement?" "How does a name change encourage and engage our community?"* If the intent were to change the mission statement, then I would recommend the committee discuss formulating a new mission statement to reflect a name change, this name change in my opinion does not.