

**Town of Amherst Community Diversity Commission
2021 Year-End Report
Submitted to Town of Amherst Board**

**Submitted by: Khalid J. Qazi, Chair
Amherst Community Diversity Commission**

As the Chair of the Town of Amherst Community Diversity Commission, it is my honor and distinct pleasure to submit to you, 2021 Year-End Report for the Amherst Community Diversity Commission.

Allow me to wish you all a Happy, Healthy and a Safe 2022.

Let me start by highlighting our Mission that we remind Commission members at each meeting.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of this Commission is to enhance and increase cooperation, understanding and dialogue among residents of diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic and racial backgrounds, and to promote inclusion throughout the Town of Amherst. Some of the responsibilities of the Commission will be to study the demographics of Amherst; promote town wide events that foster cultural awareness; increase minority participation on government boards and committees in the Town's work place; and to facilitate meetings designed to promote a better understanding of who Amherst is as a Community.

Briefly, here are the major events organized and achievements accomplished by the Commission in 2021:

Town of Amherst Diversity Commission Calendar of Events: For the first time in January 2021, town of Amherst Diversity Commission released a comprehensive Diversity Calendar that enlists the holidays and holydays practiced by the town residents. The calendar was devised with the assistance of student volunteers from Daemen College who thoroughly researched the subject under the direct supervision and guidance of Commission members. Input from the town board was incorporated in the calendar. The town board graciously recognized the students for their contribution.

2022 Town of Amherst Diversity Commission Calendar of Events is currently under preparation.

Black History Month was celebrated by the Commission for the first time on February 16, 2021. A formal program with Rev. Mark Blue, President of the Buffalo Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Lackawanna, delivered the keynote speech, which addressed the importance and historic perspectives of Black History Month, the role of NAACP in Buffalo as well as what local residents can do to advance the cause of racial and social justice in the community. Rev. Blue was presented with a Proclamation signed by town supervisor and all the board members.

The Diversity Commission also organized for the town, **Juneteenth**, also known as Freedom Day, Liberation Day, Jubilee Day, or Emancipation Day, celebrated on the anniversary of the June 19, 1865 announcement made by Union Army General Gordon Granger stating the freedom of the slaves in Texas after the end of the civil war. The event was co-sponsored with the Amherst Center for Senior Services and Amherst Public Libraries, presenting an educational breakfast and lunch, screening of the movie "Miss Juneteenth," and a book donation drive related to Juneteenth for the Amherst Public Libraries. Student volunteers from Daemen College assisted in researching and organizing this event and were duly recognized by the town.

A proclamation issued by the Town Board on this occasion urged residents of African American heritage, as well as all other Amherst residents, to celebrate this historic day.

2021 marked the **first time Juneteenth** was observed as a town and state official holiday.

Hispanic Heritage Celebration: For the first time, Hispanic Heritage was celebrated in the town on October 1, 2021. The event entailed significant organization and resources leading up to and during the event. It was co-sponsored with the Amherst Center for Senior Services, Hispanic Heritage Council of Buffalo, Los Artistats Del Barrio and Amor Heritage.

The celebration included Cultural Performances by Amor and Heritage, Latin Jazz Band, Hispanic Countries Artifact Exhibit and Hispanic History. Mr. Casimiro Rodrigues, Inaugural President of Hispanic Heritage Council of Buffalo, was the keynote speaker.

A Proclamation signed by the town supervisor and all the board members was issued on the occasion.

Rules of Order: With the assistance of the town attorney and deputy town attorney, the Diversity Commission has been able to adopt the Rules of Order. Ann Demopoulos, the Deputy Town Attorney, attended the entire meeting of the

Commission on November 11th, 2021 where the Rules were reviewed, discussed, edited and amended to best address the requirements of the Commission. The Rules have been adopted unanimously by the Commission in its meeting on January 11, 2022 and are fully operational since.

The Commission reviewed **Hate Crimes in Town of Amherst** for the Years 2018, 2019 and 2020 with the assistance of the Town of Amherst Police Dept. We will continue to monitor that situation.

The Commission is fully supportive of “**Resolution 2021-211: We Are Amherst**”. We reached out to the former Chief of Police, John Askey, and after his retirement reached out to the current Chief of Police, Scott Chamberlin, to assist the department to fully implement the resolution. We stand as a resource to the police department in coming months to accomplish the goals of this important diversity related resolution.

Holiday Display: 2021 marked the fourth year that the Commission installed “A Holiday Display” for the entire month of December. While the previous three were displayed at the audobon library, this year the display was put at the Amherst Center for Senior Services.

Enhancing Cooperation & Coordination with Town of Amherst Institutions: The Diversity Commission took several steps to enhance cooperation and coordination to accomplish its Mission with several town institutions. Some examples are listed here:

- Working with the town IT department to upgrade the Diversity webpage, finalizing the Commission LOGO and informational brochure and, of course the ongoing updates;
- Working with Town attorney and deputy town attorney to develop Rules of Order for the Commission and periodic consultation for different issues that come before the Commission;
- Working with the Town Police Department regarding Uniform Crime Reporting Hate Crimes NY State Penal Law Article 485 and Cultural Competence, as it relates to “Resolution 2021-211: We Are Amherst” moving forwards;
- Working with the town Library System to highlight and display Exhibits from the Commission;
- Working with Amherst Center for Senior Services to present Commission signature programs for the community;
- Working with the School Districts for potential Student Essay Competition on Diversity delayed by Covid related challenges and information dissemination across the town;
- Working with Daemen College Students who collaborated with the Commission on Celebrating Juneteenth and for developing 2021 Diversity Calendar;
- Working with town legislatures with issues of importance to the Commission and the town

Briefly, we would also like to add the following for your review and consideration:

Budget: The Diversity Commission does not have a budget till date. The Commission, in general, and myself, in particular, appreciate your assurances that funding can be available for Commission's programs, even though there is no formal budget at this time. If the Board decides to have a line item in the budget for the Diversity Commission, we will be happy to work with you for that purpose. It is the need of the day.

Press Statements: The Commission prepared several statements that were adopted by the Town Board and released to the public.

Several **Proclamations** were issued by the town board at the request of the Commission. We are ever so grateful.

Finally: While the Commission is continuing to work towards true diversity in order to best represent its residents, we do take pride in that the Commission is as diverse today as it ever has been. We have been fortunate to recruit dynamic members with broad spectrum of backgrounds reflecting multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious composition of our town. Currently, we have perhaps the most diverse Commission since its inception. We will continue to broaden this coalition in coming months and years and appreciate you for providing the Commission the opportunities to do so. Without your leadership, it would not be possible. Thank you!

I want to take this opportunity, on my own behalf and on behalf of the Commission, to express our thank to all who have assisted us in discharging our responsibility as Commission members. Specifically, we would like to thank YOU, each and every member of the town board for your ongoing leadership and guidance in pursuing our goal.

The Commission appreciates designation of Town Board Liaison, Deborah Bruch Bucki RN, PhD, to continue with the Diversity Commission. The Commission is grateful for her leadership and contributions that have ensured continued success in fulfilling the mission of the Commission.

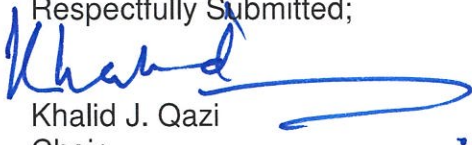
Our deep appreciation and thanks to Town Supervisor and his staff, Town Attorney and Deputy Town Attorney, IT Director and staff as well as the Town Clerk and Town Comptroller for their continued assistance as and when required during the year.

A vote of thanks for leadership and staff at the Amherst Center for Senior Services, Amherst Library Staff, Police Chief and other members of town of Amherst who have been of assistance from time to time.

And, special thanks to Dawn Cerra for always being there ready to help. Her assistance has enabled the Commission to function in a timely manner.

In closing, I want to express my deep appreciation to my **Commission Members** who have given me the respect, regard and the opportunity to be the Chair of the Commission and to represent them here today. They have worked with me to the best of their abilities in order to accomplish the Mission of this Commission. I am so grateful. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted;



Khalid J. Qazi

Chair

Town of Amherst Community Diversity Commission

kqazi@buffalo.edu

Ph: 716-213-7227