

**CITY OF MONROE
SPECIAL MEETING
OPEN CONVERSATION ON RACISM COMMITTEE**

February 23, 2021 - 1:00 P. M.

AGENDA

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This Meeting will be conducted virtually in accordance with the Monroe City Council's Rules of Procedure for Electronic Meetings.

1. Call to Order
2. Discussion of Preparation for March 4, 2021 meeting
3. Approval of meeting minutes:
 - A. August 25, 2020 minutes
 - B. September 11, 2020 minutes
 - C. October 20, 2020 minutes
 - D. December 7, 2020 minutes
 - E. December 10, 2020 minutes
4. Adjournment

Open Conversation on Racism
Zoom Meeting
August 25, 2020 – 7:00 P.M.

This was a Zoom meeting hosted by the City of Monroe and recorded via Zoom.

Councilmember Anthony opened the Zoom meeting at 7:00 P.M. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Councilmember Anthony stated that invitations were emailed out participants so that they could RSVP for participation in the meeting. Residents living outside of the city limit had audio capabilities only.

The Open Conversation on Racism Committee members consist of Councilmember Surluta Anthony, Open Conversation on Racism Chairperson, Councilmember Angelia James and Councilmember Freddie Gordon, committee liaison Debra C. Reed and minute taker Sheila Couick. The committee was organized due to the mass groups protesting nationwide in reference to racial injustice.

Councilmember Anthony introduced Dr. James Samuel, Co-Founder and President, The Insight Consultants, Incorporated. Dr. Samuel is recognized locally, nationally, internationally for his powerful motivational and facilitation abilities. His powerful professional platform skills place him in great demand as a consultant, facilitator, presenter, and keynote speaker. He is the author of the book, *The Roots of Racism*, Vantage Press, NY, 2001.

Dr. Samuel introduced himself to all in attendance on the Zoom meeting stating that he wanted to provide meaningful communication on model communication for diversity.

Dr. Samuel' introduction:

Dr. Samuel commented on the name Union County stating why this name was chosen. Dr. Samuel stated that past history is more than the story of one person. There are glorious events in Union County due to the settlement and un-glorious events due to slavery and de-humanization. Dr. Samuel stated that there are hidden forces from history in everyone which are kept alive by what we do, say and act. Union County has history and heritage. History has two sides – half black, half white, half bound, half free, half perseverance and half persistent which we all share. Dr. Samuel stated that no one alive today has participated in slavery; however, 154 years later everyone is still in slavery due to the legacy of slavery. Parents are passing the legacy to their children. We are not responsible for previous generations, but we are responsible for what we do now. Dr. Samuel stated that memorials honor those who rebelled against the nation for legal rights (white men who honored slavery). America has produced great achievements; however, slavery is not a great achievement.

Monroe – Union County is posed for economic growth. The future of the City and County depends on what is done in the coming days.

Dr. Samuel stated that racism has roots. Racial barriers if not removed will continue to hinder the growth. Monroe and Union County can call to unite to undo the century of racism. Dr. Samuel defined racism as prejudice and hatred towards another person. Racism is not an inherited quality and it has many roots.

Dr. Samuel talked about the Four Levels of Racism:

1. Personal – individual beliefs shared in a family;
2. Interpersonal – shared with friends;
3. Institutional – organizational professionals;
4. Societal - Philosophy world views.

Unconscious Bias – unseen force in mind still exist.

Anti-racism people must become a non-racist person. People need to see beyond color of each other. Denial of color is too closely related. A person's color is the first thing a person is taught to see.

Racism is not too big to handle in our time. If you're not a part of the solution then you are a part of the problem.

What does the name Monroe, Union County mean? What would it mean if it was something else? Monroe, Union County needs to become a place of unity.

Questions and Answers:

Dr. Benita Sanders asked, "How Does Racism effect education and employment?"

Dr. Samuel responded the education leads to success. Education helps to contribute to success. Everyone has access to equal education and academics. Greatest threat today is charter schools. Many charter schools are the leading edge to segregation of schools. Without education racial progress will not change.

How does racism effect employment?

Dr. Samuel stated that his business partner, Jan Barton conducts Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Training. This is a problem that can not be resolved without leaders who understand inclusion.

Employment will need to reflect the community.

Emily McGinnis stated that schools have the responsibility to hire people that look like the students, and are open to spread viewpoint to share employment with all race and religion. Do away with recruiting of black athletes – they are more than that.

Rev. Oscar Gardin thanked Dr. Samuel, Surluta Anthony and Council for making this happen. Rev. Gardin asked Dr. Samuel about his view of the confederate monument. Rev Gardin also stated that the City of Monroe has not done a good job on hiring a reflection of the community. Service maintenance only area with a reflection of community. Qualified candidates are not hired. City of Monroe needs to take a hard look at who they hire.

Dr. Samuel stated that he fully concurs that the leveling of the playing field is employment. He stated that it takes 11.5 black families to equal 1 white middle class family. Census has reported that the wealth gap between black and white shows that a college black family makes less than a white family high school graduate.

Matthew Belk, owner of a software company in Monroe stated that integration is difficult due to hiring people that you know. Business owners need to break their habits and meet. Meetings which could be done through Zoom now. Dr. Samuel stated that two things are vital: 1) Lack of contact with other people and 2) inherited that you stay with the same people.

Michael Hall asked if the monument in the courtyard square was racist? Dr. Samuel stated that the monument as a symbol in itself is meaningless, but the value we place on it carries on. What does the statue mean – what does it say – what is on it? The monument symbolizes the black people don't have the right to exist as white people. Michael Hall stated the fact that it sits on public land paid for with tax money. Dr. Samuel stated that when statues were built they were put up before civil rights were passed. The status of the statue says that you are not free. Need statues for those who were against slavery.

Kathy Bragg stated that this is an opportunity to share with others. It goes back to where you live and wages that people live on. As a community we need to work on ways to increase employment and wages. Dr. Samuel stated that most people think about economic disparity and Field Order 15 (land divided amongst slaves).

Chairperson Anthony commented that if other participants had questions to please ask as time was getting short.

Ryan Cureton stated that he lives in Monroe on Charles Street and that everyone is making money off of blacks due to where they live. Once out of school they don't have same opportunities as whites in employment. Always asking for things from Council – how do we have the leaders come together to solve issues in the communities? Schools are not educating inter-city. How do we get equality in the communities? Dr. Samuel stated that this was a two-fold success for black community. 1) Have to come to understand and inspire self to do better and 2) Teach children importance to get education and employment. Start in the home to make children believe that they are somebody.

Kathy Bragg asked what is the next step.

Dr. Samuel responded “Need to get a leadership around this committee. Create a group of people to learn what is unconscious racism. Learn about racism, bias, inclusion. Start at interpersonal level. Why is it important to have inclusion and equality?”

Michelle King asked “Need to know if we are committed to doing the right thing?” Fix the problems that have been addressed. Commitment from leadership and churches.

Chairperson Anthony commented that the committee would have to go back to Council and ask for another session. Chairperson Anthony asked Dr. Samuel if he would consider doing another session. Dr. Samuel stated that he would love to continue with this going forward.

Ryan Cureton commented that there was a need for a county commissioner from Monroe to serve.

Chairperson Anthony commented that we were at the end of the allotted time for the Zoom session. Chairperson Anthony thanked the participants and Dr. Samuel for their commitment to move forward for a united purpose.

Zoom meeting adjournment at 8:31 P.M.

Open Conversation on Racism Committee
Zoom Meeting
September 11, 2020 – 11:00 A.M.

In Attendance: Chairperson Surluta Anthony
Councilmember Angelia James
City Attorney Mujeeb Shah-Khan
HR Director/Liaison Debra C. Reed
Minute Taker Sheila Couick

Chairperson Anthony opened the meeting stating that Councilmember Gordon would not be in attendance.

Chairperson Anthony commented that she had talked with the Mayor in reference to this committee and that this committee is not a regular council committee.

Chairperson Anthony stated that there will be two more sessions before reaching the established goal. Request for Proposal will not be written the same as other Request for Proposals.

Chairperson Anthony provided an overview of the August 25, 2020 ZOOM meeting. She stated that the format for future meetings will be open to all residents in Union County and in the City. She stated that Councilmember Gordon has commented on hosting an open meeting in person at the Country Club or Dowd Theater however this would depend on Governor Cooper's announcement on October 2, 2020. The next meeting would also include public participants not just committee members.

Mujeeb Shah-Khan commented that the committee needed to wait for Governor Cooper's announcement prior to deciding on a meeting format.

Chairperson Anthony stated that the next meeting could be either in person or virtual. Possible date for next meeting could be October 20 at 7:00 p.m. If meeting is in person then a location would need to be secured.

Chairperson Anthony commented that the goals for the next meeting would be as follows:

1. Get people comfortable with discussion and get them open to the conversation.
2. Get more people engaged.
3. Ability to hand off to county/chamber/city?

Chairperson Anthony adjourned the meeting at 11:17 a.m.

Open Conversation on Racism Committee
Zoom Meeting
October 20, 2020 – 1:00 P.M.

In Attendance: Chairperson Surluta Anthony
Councilmember Angelia James
Councilmember Freddie Gordon
City Attorney Mujeeb Shah-Khan
Debra C. Reed, HR Director/Liaison
Sheila Couick, Minute Taker

Chairperson Anthony opened the meeting at 1:00pm welcoming everyone.

Chairperson Anthony stated that Request for Proposal invitations were sent out to five individuals and that the City received two Request for Proposal back before the October 9 deadline. The purpose of this meeting will be to review the proposals received and to select a facilitator based on the proposals.

Chairperson Anthony asked the committee members to review the proposals and for comments.

Chairperson Anthony commented that Dr. James Samuel and Mr. Ratchford both stated in the proposals that they would meet with the committee to help prepare and coordinate the sessions. Chairperson Anthony also commented that Dr. James Samuel had already met some of the participants during the August 25, 2020 ZOOM meeting.

Mujeeb Shah-Khan commented that there was approximately \$200-\$500 difference in cost between the two proposals.

Chairperson Anthony commented that Mr. Ratchford's proposal is further along in the process that what the City is at this point.

Councilmember Freddie Gordon commented that he did not know Dr. James Samuel, first meeting was the August 25 ZOOM meeting. Councilmember Gordon commented that he was looking for open discussion. Councilmember Gordon commented that he did not know Mr. Ratchford and he commented that the price was not a concern. Councilmember Gordon stated that Dr. Samuel did not factor in everything and Mr. Ratchford did factor in everything.

Chairperson Anthony commented that Dr. James Samuel was asked to define racism and identify and give a brief history at the first session. The next conversation will be in a different format.

Councilmember James commented that introductions around the table was needed at the first presentation.

Chairperson Anthony commented that the decision for a facilitator was leading towards Dr. James Samuel.

Mujeeb Shah-Khan commented that the facilitator needed to know the following:

- What the committee wants.
- How does the committee want to lead the conversation?
- What is the vision of the committee – reach a solution or have a conversation?

Mr. Shah-Khan also stated that Mr. Ratchford has worked with cities and Dr. James Samuel has worked with both cities and corporations.

Chairperson Anthony commented that the initial goal was to start the conversation and the solution was to hand off the project to another organization/group. Citizens are asking questions.

Councilmember James commented that issues/concerns needed to be addressed as they arise.

Chairperson Anthony commented that issues/concerns can be solved but maybe not in two sessions or 4 hours. Councilmember James asked what comes next after the two sessions. Chairperson Anthony commented that we could partner with county or chamber to share cost.

Councilmember James asked if this was different from the Diversity Advisory Committee and what was this committee? Debra C. Reed commented that the Diversity Advisory Committee is an internal committee dealing with recruitment issues within the city and the training of city employees on diversity. This committee also reaches out to the community leaders for assistance with recruiting.

Mujeeb Shah-Khan commented that the Diversity Advisory Committee is internal to the city and the Open Conversation on Racism Committee is a broader area – not just City of Monroe. Further partnerships have not been discussed.

Councilmember Gordon commented that this is an open conversation and if we are going to open up the discussion we will need to go outside of the original group of participants. Invite other organizations if this goes beyond two sessions to help with cost or see if there is someone else in community who can lead it.

Debra C. Reed commented that both proposals included similar summaries.

Chairperson Anthony commented that steps to be taken were mentioned in the first meeting. The next meeting would be on the format and logistics for the meeting. Today's meeting was review the proposals received and make a decision for a meeting facilitator.

Councilmember Gordon commented that if the prices are similar then he is deferring the selection of the facilitator. Need prep time with the facilitator that is chosen before the first session. The question was asked if this could be done virtual or would it have to be in person. Debra C. Reed commented that it could be accomplished either virtually or in person and that this was included in both proposals.

Chairperson Anthony commented that the first session needed to be done before the end of the year.

Mujeeb Shah-Khan commented that a recommendation needed to go to Council for consent on the facilitator. A meeting needed to be scheduled with the facilitator before the end of November and the first session needed to be done in December with the second session being in January. Mr. Shah-khan also asked which of the facilitators can accomplish the task that is the committee's vision?

Chairperson Anthony commented that Dr. James Samuel donated his time for the first meeting and built a relation.

Chairperson Anthony made the motion to select Dr. James Samuel as the facilitator. Councilmember James second the motion. Chairperson Anthony polled the Committee:

Councilmember Gordon – agree

Councilmember James – agree

Councilmember Anthony – agree

With all Councilmembers being in agreement the motion passed.

Chairperson Anthony commented that this would be presented to Council at the November 3, 2020 meeting and would be placed on the consent agenda. Mujeeb Shah-Khan suggested that it be placed on the regular agenda allowing for discussion. Item will be placed on the consent agenda and can be moved to the regular agenda if needed for the November 5 Council meeting .

Mujeeb Shah-Khan commented that a staff report would need to be created along with a contract not to exceed \$5,000 for Dr. James Samuel.

Councilmember James commented that a meeting dated needed to be established with Dr. James Samuel. Mujeeb Shah-Khan commented that a meeting date could not be scheduled until Council approves the selection. Mr. Shah-Khan suggested contacting Dr. James Samuel to let him know that he is being recommended and to ask for dates for next meeting with committee.

Chairperson Anthony made the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved by all in attendance.

Meeting was adjourned.

**Open Conversation on Racism Committee
Zoom Meeting
December 7, 2020 – 1:00 P.M.**

In Attendance: Chairperson Surluta Anthony
Councilmember Freddie Gordon
Councilmember Angelia James
Assistant City Attorney Ashley Britt
HR Director/Liaison Debra C. Reed
Minute Taker Sheila Couick
Dr. James Samuel, Insight Consultants

Chairperson Anthony opened the meeting by introducing the Councilmembers in attendance, stating that this meeting was being recorded and was being conducted based on the virtual meeting standards. This meeting was to prepare for the December 10, 2020 meeting.

Chairperson Anthony commented that the December 10, 2020 meeting would be at 7:00 p.m. and that invitations had been sent out to participants along with the ZOOM meeting information. There is room for 50 participants for discussion, however, others can join and listen. This meeting will be to discuss the format and time frame.

Chairperson Anthony commented that the foundation had been laid from the August meeting such as the foundation, basis for racism, different components and identified the dissymmetric and institutional. Chairperson Anthony asked Dr. Samuel where do we go from here and the format for this discussion. The time for the December 10, 2020 meeting needs to be set.

Dr. James Samuel commented on the proposal, which mentions the methods for the sessions. Dr. Samuel commented that he did not previously have the number of participants for the discussion however now that he has this information there will be a large meeting in a virtual environment. Dr. Samuel commented that ground rules will need to be established. Dr. Samuel stated that the group members need to be informed that they will take ownership for the outcome. Ownership rest with the 50 participants who should be bridge builders, change advocates or influencers/stakeholder. If they have ownership, then they will be more involved in the outcome of the meeting. Participants should be bridge builders, change advocates and influencers/stakeholders. Participants need to understand who was chosen and why they were chosen. The spirit of the group should be that everyone understands that this is a safe place to share their comments. Discussion on racism is tough and not everyone will agree. People need to come into the meeting with good intent and have mutual respect for everyone. Dr. Samuel commented that this will not be an easy conversation due to the topic of racism which makes people uncomfortable. Dr. Samuel will handle this if disrespect is shown and bring the participants back to goal of mutual respect for the common good.

Dr. Samuel commented that he would like to talk about the format of the meeting. How is the meeting going to be handled – ZOOM meeting or another program. Dr. Samuel ask for information on the 50 participants – how were they chosen? The audience is important as to how the information is delivered. Need to journal on who is saying what which can be a challenge with 50 people. How do we handle this? This type of conversation cannot be handled as a one and done conversation. Dr. Samuel asked Chairperson Anthony to describe how each of the participants was chosen.

Chairperson Anthony commented that the meeting would be ZOOM and the 50 participants are the same participants that were included in the August 25 meeting. The participant group will be enlarged some. The participants chosen are either change agents or bridge builders and they come from a large walk of life – business owners, serve on committees in the City, educational, non-profit, however, all are thinkers. Chairperson Anthony stated that they are not bashful and that mutual goals for the common good.

Councilmember Gordon asked Dr. Samuel about stating that the items talked about at the first of this meeting at the December 10 meeting in reference to the parameter of the meeting. Dr. Samuel stated he would do that and explain to the participants what this session is about, what we are doing and what the process will be and get the participants to state what success would look like. A goal needs to be established by the participants to own. Dr. Samuel stated that this would be done at the beginning of the meeting by establishing parameters to ensure that everyone feels safe. Then a group think session will be established to formulate goals and then the session will begin. Without goal setting and structure there would be no way to guide the process. Dr. Samuel would be able to control the session if it was to go astray. At the end of the proposal it states that Dr. Samuel will provide to the Committee an “action oriented items” of the findings and suggestions for next steps. Participants will need to take small steps and establish smart goals – one success oriented goal at a time in order to build credibility and authenticity.

Chairperson Anthony commented that goals should be:

- Acknowledge of general racism.
- Understanding racism.
- Action Plan – where do we go from here.
- Hand off to another group – collaboration with other group or groups.

Chairperson Anthony commented that Union County Commissioners and Chamber of Commerce members have been invited. Dr. Samuel asked how many County Commissioner there are and how many Chamber of Commerce members were there. Chairperson Anthony commented that there were five County Commissioner’s and one member of the Chamber of Commerce member. Dr. Samuel ask if the County Commissions and the Chamber of Commerce would be part of the 50 participants or call in. Chairperson Anthony replied that they were part of the participants.

Dr. Samuel asked how could we let the participants know that they are part of this Committee?

Chairperson Anthony stated that during the opening and welcoming the participants will be told what the goals are. Dr. Samuel ask if there would be introduction with another moderator. Chairperson Anthony stated that this had not been discussed. Dr. Samuel stated that if a moderator introduces each person then each person comes into the meeting anonymously since they have not spoken. Dr. Samuel suggested that each person introduce who they are and acknowledging their role in the community and it would help Dr. Samuel understand who they say they are. Dr. Samuel stated that this would allow each person to weigh in on the conversation easier. Dr. Samuel stated that he did not want this to be a “gripe” session and wants each participant to weigh in on the conversation and he wants to be seen as a neutral facilitator. Dr. Samuel stated that up front work will need to be done to make each participant feel comfortable. Dr. Samuel asked for a list of participants prior to the session that listed name and who they are in the community.

Councilmember Gordon stated that a list can be provided and ask if introductions would use a lot of time with limited time. Dr. Samuel commented that the participant introduction would take time and have less time on discussion or we could go with anonymity with participants and have more time on the discussion. Dr. Samuel commented that the contract was limited in scope at \$4,900 both contractual and in scope. We are looking at each session being 2 hours and with this being said the first hour of the first hour would be introduction of participants. The Committee will need to make the decision on this. Chairperson Anthony stated that each participant could be allowed 30 seconds for each participant to introduce themselves and a list could be provided. Chairperson Anthony asked Debra C. Reed if this list could be supplied. Debra C. Reed stated that a list could be provided prior to the meeting.

Dr. Samuel commented that a moderator would be needed to handle the introductions. Chairperson Anthony stated that she would be the moderator for the introductions.

Dr. Samuel asked if there would be screen sharing capabilities? Bruce Bounds, City Information Technology, stated that this could be done and would set Dr. Samuel up as a co-host screen sharing. Dr. Samuel stated he was not sure if this would be needed but if needed would be good to have.

Dr. Samuel stated there are three methods of facilitation:

- 1- Action Oriented – process begins with attempt to get participants to state problem and share problem. Method of Learning by Doing will lead participants to close the gap of racism. In order to close the gap the action oriented process would be used by stating that this is a safe environment, share information and how can this be achieved by ownership.
- 2- Consensus Oriented – achieve support from large group by gaining approval on as opposed to agreeing. Agree to disagree without being disagreeable. Gain consensus by asking the group to share in an agreed upon approach or agree that there will be a disagreeable result. The highest agreed of acceptance will be acted on. Voices will have been heard. Some participants will have to buy into the process however they may not agree with the process.
- 3- Solution Oriented – when a goal has been stated and participants need to be focused on achieving a desired outcome. Designed for open and large sessions and prevents the group from discussing the problem without acting on the solution (focusing on the symptoms of the problem). Group will self-divide – emotional participants and intellectual participants. The facilitator will monitor this. People will start sentences with “I feel...” or “I think....” which will identify which group they will fall into.

Dr. Samuel stated that racism cannot be solved with emotions or with intellectual solutions.

Dr. Samuel stated that he is looking forward to these sessions.

Chairperson Anthony commented that she is excited and that the correct choice was made. She stated that she was looking forward to the sessions.

Councilmember Angelia James asked Dr. Samuel if 50 participants were too many? Dr. Samuel commented that he had been in the field since 1995. Dr. Samuel stated that his experience has been the fewer the better when there is an uncomfortable topic. Suggestion would have been 20-25 participants. Dr. Samuel has a concern with the call in participants due to what could potentially be said. Chairperson Anthony asked Debra C. Reed to comment on the call-in participants. Debra C. Reed commented that the call-in participants would only have listen capabilities only the participants can talk.

Chairperson Anthony asked Dr. Samuel if this was better for him? Dr. Samuel stated that this was better.

Dr. Samuel stated that if the amount of time in the contract expires then he would be willing to do free work if the committee goes over the time limit. Chairperson Anthony thanked Dr. Samuel for his willingness to do this. Councilmember Gordon stated that we could possibly lose some participants after the first hour. Councilmember Gordon stated that we should be able to accomplish something in two hours.

Dr. Samuel asked if participants are going to be required to come in as video and audio? Debra C. Reed commented that last time we had about 33 participants. We are going to try to reach out to each participant and state on the follow-up that each participant will need to sign in on ZOOM with video and audio. Chairperson Anthony stated that feedback from the first one was that people didn't have time to comment. Bruce Bounds commented that this will be conducted as a ZOOM webinar which is different from a ZOOM meeting. Bruce stated that a participant is muted unless they are admitted to the conversation and we have the ability to enforce the rules by muting the participant if needed. Councilmember James asked Bruce if the chat feature was turned on. Bruce commented that it was turned on however could be turned off. Dr. Samuel suggested that the chat feature would be a distraction due to conversations going on multi-levels as opposed to being focused on the conversation. Dr. Samuel commented that we didn't want people shadowing the meeting with their own meetings. Dr. Samuel suggested turning this feature off. Bruce Bounds commented that he would check into turning this off. Dr. Samuel commented that the ability to mute someone would be helpful if someone got off the topic. Debra C. Reed commented that there were 43 names on the list with 9 of those being staff and some participants will fall off however we will reach out to see who will be participating and provide that information to you. Dr. Samuel stated that the August 25 group was great.

Councilmember James asked if there was a particular topic for discussion or was it going to be open conversation? Dr. Samuel replied that the topic would be on racism. In order to drill it down to specific on the topic of racism we should let the participants lead us. The participants need to have the ability to name and claim the greater problem of racism in Union County and Monroe.

Councilmember Gordon asked Dr. Samuel if we could contact him between December 7 and December 10 if there were any other questions. Dr. Samuel stated that we could contact him via phone or email if needed free of charge. Dr. Samuel asked if there would be another meeting after December 10 before the second session? Chairperson Anthony stated that would be a good ideal. Chairperson Anthony thanked Dr. Samuel for his flexibility with these meetings.

Chairperson Anthony stated that this meeting was productive and ask for a motion to adjourn. Councilmember James second the motion and Councilmember Gordon agreed with the motion. All in attendance approved the motion.

Meeting adjourned.

**Open Conversation on Racism
Zoom Meeting
December 10, 2020 – 7:00 P.M.**

This was a Zoom meeting hosted by the City of Monroe and was recorded via Zoom.

Councilmember/Chairperson Anthony opened the Zoom meeting at 7:00 P.M. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Councilmember Anthony stated that this was the second discussion in reference to racism. Councilmember Anthony reviewed the agenda for the meeting and stated that everyone in attendance had ownership in the outcome and autonomy. We are all on this meeting for various reasons, some are bridge builders, some are change agents, some are advocates, and some just want understanding. Councilmember/Chairperson Anthony commented that each person will be asked to introduce themselves, tell why they are on the call and to not take over thirty seconds in doing this. Dr. Samuel will introduce himself.

The following introductions were made:

Councilmember Surluta Anthony – Councilmember/Open Conversation on Racism Committee Chairperson
Angelia James – City of Monroe Councilmember

Freddie Gordon – City of Monroe Councilmember

Lakeysa Medlin – Citizen of Monroe, Community Advocate and local historian. Leader of diverse book club that has been doing this for four years and are all in for change and understanding why racism is still prevalent.

Russell Asti – Citizen of Monroe, retired attorney.

Edith Covington – Citizen of Monroe, retired from state employment.

Michele King – Citizen of Monroe, consultant by nature advise business on how to run a company in the best interest of their employees.

Mrs. Dellyne Samuel – wife of Dr. Samuel.

Swindell Edwards – change agent, bridge builder and Pastor in the community.

Osco Gardin - Pastor of Elizabeth Missionary Baptist Church in Monroe. Director of New Covenant Community Development Center in Monroe, which is a non-profit that collaborates with the schools in Monroe.

Melvin Tate – Pastor of Mt. Calvary AME Zion Church in Monroe.

Michael Hall – Citizen of Monroe.

Lanny Lancaster – Pastor at Central United Methodist Church in Monroe.

John Kirkpatrick – Citizen of Monroe and Pastor of the Rehobeth Temple Church in Monroe. Also the Executive Director of Village Development Center in Monroe.

Tiffany Wilson – Attorney in Union County, advocate, bridge maker, and community leader.

Tripp Helms – District Court Judge for Union County.

Dr. Samuel introduced himself stating that he was President of Insight Consultants, Charlotte NC and had been involved with clients across the United States and internationally. Has been involved in the root of racial injustice and inequality all of his life. He has also authored a book, “The Roots of Racism”.

Dr. Samuel started the webinar by stating that racism does not occur in a vacuum, racism is a product of our own social construct. America has racist and racial undertones and overtones. There is not a community in America that is untouched by racism. Dr. Samuel provided history of racism and stated that racism is an acquired evil – it exists because it has been taught. Ending racism will require courage, meaning that some will have to let go of somethings and take hold of other things. We need to do our best to ensure that racism exist as a rustic relic in a museum. To get there we must get past the

confederate monuments or we will get bogged down with mind set of deferred dreams. Unity is imperative, past give ways to future, and dreamers must be awakened to reality.

Dr. Samuel asked each of the participants to share in the conversation. Dr. Samuel stated that racism is a dreaded and difficult subject to talk about in a diverse setting. Participants tonight will talk openly, together and honestly about racism. Some participants will become uncomfortable talking about racism. Dr. Samuel stated the City Council had approved the sessions and citizens had been invited to participate. This conversation will take place in a racially safe environment. Dr. Samuel stated that participants will become the change that they want to see in the world. Participants will set the confines and limits will be determine by the participants.

Dr. Samuel set the following guidelines for the conversation:

- 1- Respect and value our differences. Everyone who shares is speaking for the good will of the group.
- 2- Discuss historical, social, psychological and personal impact of racism.
- 3- Define how racism hinders the growth of diversity, inclusion and equity.
- 4- Decide what must be done to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in Monroe and Union County.
- 5- Set smart goals (Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely).

Dr. Samuel open the conversation by asking two questions that needed responses from the participants:

- 1- Is this type of open racial conversation necessary? If so why or why not?
- 2- What will success look like to you?

The discussion was opened to the participants to answer the question asked by Dr. Samuel.

Lakeysia Medlin commented that yes, the conversation was necessary. Without it racism will never be resolved. For this to be successful, need to have the conversation but will have to make necessary changes afterward in the community and in family.

Michael Hall stated that the conversation was necessary. Success would be that people in city hall would look like me and decision makers look like me. The community will be reflected in city hall and leadership.

Councilmember Surluta Anthony stated that this conversation was necessary. Success would be that everyone reaches a common goal, begin to work on a plan and change actually begins.

Swindell Edwards stated that this conversation was necessary and something that we need to engage and participate. People talk but don't participate – everyone works together to break it down. Success would be inclusion of everyone participating to eradicate racism.

Melvin Tate stated that this was necessary. For too long people pass by each other asking who are good Samaritans and who are our neighbor. People who have suffered pain have listen to people who have not suffered pain telling us how to feel. Success would look like the communities, would be that anyone would want to live there, have their kids go to school, and banks/businesses would be fair and just to everyone. Acknowledge that we are under served in the area due to poverty. Need to be more acceptable of people that surround us.

John Kirkpatrick stated that this was necessary - everyone needs to participate and bring something to the table. Conversation will be uncomfortable and participants can share how they feel. Some of the younger generation feels that racism does not exist and it was a long time ago. Success would be to take advantage of educating the younger generation. Some in the younger generation have a sense of entitlement. We should not seek entitlement but should understand those who have come before and those that fought for us was not in vain.

Dr. Samuel commented that “baby boomers” have shielded the millennials from the kind of brutality that racism inflicts.

Tripp Helms stated that this was an important conversation and that the effects of racism are tangible. Success would be that the participants tonight would know each other and would know how to move forward. Create a core group of people in Monroe to address racism in the community.

Rev. Osco Gardin stated that this was necessary and agreed with Tripp Helms. Rev. Gardin commented that he had this conversation several times. Success will be that the participants in this meeting are committed to seeing that this is successful. Success will be the end of systemic racism. Everyone from the top to the bottom have to be committed to seeing this change take place.

Tiffany Wilson commented that this conversation was definitely need. Relates to the millennials – they were not part of civil rights movement and they did not understand it - not taught in school. Success would be the move forward with action and change in the community. Need to learn to put aside our feelings and listen to what people have to say. To see people in buildings that look like her.

Michele King stated that this is a much needed conversation. Success will come when we no longer need this conversation. We make preconceived ideas about people – where they live, looking at color of skin, where they work or their job. Too often, we have not listen, heard, and paid attention to our neighbor. Success will come when people feel safe in their community, walking down the street and going to church. This will take action and listening and understanding to where this other person has been and is coming from so we can get together to reach the destination collectively.

Dr. Samuels stated that participants had answered the two questions provided in the opening and thanked them for sharing so freely. Dr. Samuel stated that now the group was going to share any information that they had on the topic of racism.

Melvin Tate commented that he believes in this nation. This started in 1619 and has been with us for 8 jubilees plus 1 it is still with us – 400 years. We will never be able to do anything about racism as long as people are in denial. Racism is apparent. People look at him funny even with a suit on – there is a level of fear. If this is going to put racism to rest, it will be hard work. Feelings will probably get hurt and we will need to be mature, responsible and accountable enough to take it and move forward. Need to think about future generation and prepare to take advantage of opportunity to make Monroe and Union County to be a better place.

Lakeysia Medlin stated that she was a local family historian and when she started looking at her history, she learned some things about Union County that made her unhappy. In 2012, there was a monument build at the bottom of the confederate monument, which was dedicated to the ten slaves that served for the Confederates during the Civil War. One of the men listed was her fifth great grandfather. She stated that Monroe has deep, deep history of racism. She is a part of a book club that meets and discusses books that they have read on racism. She stated that she had been on many calls and workshops where the conversation was started and nothing ever happens. Work needs to happen based on conversations being done. How do we stop it in our community? Ms. Medline stated that by no longer laughing or making comments in the community. Attended a class on Racial Equity Training five years ago. This was 3 days of hard training. There was disagreements and laughter but everyone came out of the meeting wanting change.

Rev. Gardin asked who placed the plaque at the bottom of the monument. Ms. Medlin stated that it was the Daughters of the Confederate wanted the plaque on the monument. They reached out to some of the

relatives of the slaves. When the conversation came about the monument, the decision to remove the monument or remove the plaque, her decision would be to remove the monument.

Tripp Helms commented that he grew up in Monroe and heard the racial stories. The plaque that Ms. Medlin refers to is used by some to claim that the Civil War was not about slavery, otherwise these ten people would not be listed. Mr. Helms commented on the “kissing case”, kidnapping, burning of Winchester High School and the demonstrations that turned violent in 1961. He stated that he studied these stories later in life. There is a reluctance to talk about racial conflicts in Monroe. Monroe is more reluctant to talk about it than in other places. There was actual trauma and a lot of violence or threat of violence. Mr. Helms was curious about whether history has impacted the community and made it harder to talk about racism in Monroe and also what that means for these conversation and engaging the history.

Councilmember Anthony agreed with Tripp Helms that racism does hamper progress. Racism is a safe place because it keeps us from recognizing what has happened. Monroe had a reputation of being very racist and she stated she lived through that time. By not acknowledging and talking about racism, it puts a smear on Monroe and sometime to not talk about racism keeps people from the ownership of it. This keeps racism alive. The death of George Floyd made people realize that racism is alive. People need to acknowledge racism and move forward and know that history cannot be changed.

Michael Hall commented that the truth needs to come out in racial stories and that the act of kindness is never mentioned in the stories and only racist was talked about. Mr. Hall commented on the KKK marching in Monroe and the fathers in his community were all outside with shotguns to protect their homes and family. Once the KKK found out about this they left and didn’t come back.

Rev. Gardin commented that he was born in Ohio and that they had racism, but not like what is in the south. Rev. Gardin commented he first experienced the KKK when he moved to Monroe, NC. He was leaving his church on a Sunday morning and he was delayed at the intersection due to a KKK march down the street. He talked to the police chief at the time due to the police escort. He commented that the state of North Carolina used to be called “Klan Country”. The whole mentality that existed then still exist now. The reason that there is not enough conversation about racism in Monroe is because the oppressors are not interested in identifying their growth contribution to the problem and the oppressed are intimidated to talk about it out of fear of the oppressor. These barriers need to be broken. How serious are we about getting this done.

Councilmember Anthony stated that one of the major problems is not wanting to release power. When a person has enjoyed certain privileges, they do not want to give that up and because it becomes a natural feeling and sense of entitlement. Need to discuss examples of racism to understand what it is so that we can get past it.

Melvin Tate commented that he grew up in York, South Carolina and on Sunday afternoons the Klan would have a rally with three crosses singing keep me near the cross. His grandfather would drive through the rally and would be told that he was not supposed to be there. His grandfather would state why not this is a free country. His grandfather told him to never be afraid of someone that puts a sheet over their head. The whole purpose of the Klan was to terrorize, traumatize, intimate and burn out those they did not wanted in the area. He stated that desegregated schools are almost re-segregated. Policies and practices that are subtle are based on the same systemic principals of racism. Racism has not been in remission just been practiced at a comfortable level and it was ignored. He stated that taxes are not properly distributed; property and utilities are not distributed properly. Racism destroys thing and we need to become proactive and put together preventative measures. We need to look at our strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. We need to see where we are strong, were we are weak, what are our opportunities and what are the threats that might prevent us from getting us there. Mr. Tate asked how

many people were on the call? Dr. Samuel commented that he would have to see how many people were signed up.

Michele King commented that a lot of people probably don't know what to say and were doing self-checks. She commented that when she ran for Council a few years ago one of the things that hurt her was something that was said about her and that was she was going to open up the aquatic center to the blacks and make it free. She stated that it hurt her and still does but she had to get past it. The hate is very real. Majority of the people need to do the right thing. When we hear of something that is injustice we need to stand up and say something. There is a spirit of love and equality in Monroe. Goodness and grace will prevail.

Swindell Edwards commented that change requires risk. To eradicate racism participants must not only have conversations but also must be risk takers. Sometime the only black invited into meetings or rooms is for tokenism or because they feel comfortable with you. Mr. Edwards stated that he experience this in the military as he was the only black officer in a command. Don't appease the African Americans due to them being present include them in the decision making process. There are events happening downtown in Monroe and they do not know about it. Look at the business downtown, asked the question who owns the buildings and why are the prices different when black businesses want to come downtown. Some people have the attitude that they intimate us from opening businesses downtown. This committee might need to have a meeting with council, realtors, building owners and ask do they want their history to eradicate Monroe or see history enhanced with the people of the upcoming generation. Participants on this ZOOM meeting will need to take risk, commit, and fight to make town/community greater than other people see us.

Dr. Samuel thanked everyone for their comments and stated that it was time to get something done using the smart goals (Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely). Keep in mind that there is another session sometime in January. Everyone on the ZOOM as the potential to make a change. Begin by formulating some draft goals – what can we practically do to help make change?

Rev. Gardin commented that he was grateful that there were three councilmembers on the committee and their commitment to seeing change is paramount. Therefore, he would like to challenge Council to take this seriously and begin to cultivate a climate throughout city government where diversity is real, inclusion is respected and where the subject matter is in place in leadership.

Swindell Edwards asked the three councilmembers as they present this to the Council to let the community know if there is push back from the other councilmembers so that they can support them.

Tiffany Wilson asked the councilmembers on the ZOOM webinar if they take the ideal of creating a diversity and inclusion community committee. This committee would meet every three months on set topics that would be for the public to address in a panel format. Dr. Samuel repeated that Tiffany Wilson requested that the city develop a diversity inclusion committee with people from the community. Dr. Samuel stated that this was definitely a "SMART" goal and asked how the panel felt about this goal. Dr. Samuel asked if this was something that could be reported back at the January meeting or at least by February. Chairperson Anthony commented that this could be reported back by the next ZOOM webinar. Dr. Samuel stated that a motion needed to be made for this committee. Councilmember Angelia James stated that the city has a diversity committee and asked Debra C. Reed, City HR Director, to talk about this committee. Dr. Samuel asked if the city had a DEI Committee already. Debra C. Reed stated that the city's Diversity Advisory Committee, is an internal employee based committee and that they meet with the community once a year through a roundtable discussion. Dr. Samuel stated that the internal city diversity advisory committee is different than a DEI (Diversity, equity, and inclusion) committee. A DEI committee

should not be owned by Human Resources and it needs to be owned by the participants not Human Resources.

Tiffany Wilson made the motion that Councilmember/Chairperson Anthony ask Council to establish a DEI Committee made up of citizens from Monroe. Michael Hall second the motion. All participants agreed to this motion and Councilmember Anthony will present this to the Council.

Lakeysia Medlin commented that there was a Union Racial Equity group already established in and asked if they could be involved with this committee. Dr. Samuel replied that we should not ask them to be a part of this committee because the Union Racial Equity group could dilute the influence of the DEI committee. The first guideline was “What can you do – not what others are doing.” Dr. Samuel stated that Tiffany Wilson came up with a great “SMART” goal. Dr. Samuel stated that the Councilmember Anthony stated that she would go Council to ask for a DEI (Diversity, equity, and inclusion) committee. Dr. Samuel stated that the record should show that the participants of this webinar are asking the three city councilmembers in attendance on this webinar to go to Mayor and City Council and request a response to establishing a DEI committee. If approved by City Council then ask for inclusion from others citizens and committees by nomination to the DEI Committee.

Melvin Tate asked if the jail could be added to the DEI Committee? Dr. Samuel asked what was meant by “jail”? Mr. Tate stated he wanted “justice” added to the diversity, equity and inclusion. Dr. Samuel stated in the corporate world DEI includes diversity, then equity and then inclusion and that we should not change the format of DEI.

Melvin Tate stated that he had a concern with building relationships between communities. Dr. Samuel stated this could be done at a later time. Dr. Samuel stated that we would need to define the scope of a DEI Committee when this Committee is approved.

Tripp Helms commented that if going to change for the better, do not immediately try to start by yourself. Need to look around for what is out there – ask for partnership from groups, organizations, and committees that are already doing this. A disadvantage to a DEI Committee is that a lot of the corporate world looks at it as a box to check to say that you have a DEI Committee. Dr. Tate makes a good ethical point to include justice as a way to say that we mean what we are doing.

Michele King commented that by listening to everyone’s comments that there were valid many points and that participants need to understand the City of Monroe structure on committees. Ms. King recommended that the DEI committee moves forward that it should be a part of the Mayoral Committee so that it would get the integrity and momentum it deserves. Ms. King asked for an amendment to the previous motion to include adding the DEI Committee as a Mayoral Committee.

Tiffany Wilson amended her motion to ask Council for a DEI Committee and to add this committee to the Mayoral Committees. Michele King second the motion. Dr. Samuel stated that the amended motion was approved.

Dr. Samuel stated that everyone had added valuable information and that this session was ending with a goal established.

Chairperson Anthony thanked Dr. Samuel and everyone for participating.

Chairperson Anthony thanked everyone for being on the webinar and his or her input.

Chairperson Anthony asked Rev. Lanny Lancaster to close the meeting with a prayer.

ZOOM webinar adjourned at 9:16 p.m.