

**Unity in the Community**  
General Membership Meeting  
6:30 P.M., Sunday, August 21, 2011

Masjid Dar Al Noor  
5404 Hoadly Road  
Manassas, VA 20110

Members Present: Humaira Ali, Jim Amaral, Kathy Clark, Ric Clark, Dexter Fox, Bob Gaskill, Lydia Gonzalez, Taalibah Hassan, Wali Hassan, Akram Khan, Illana Naylor,  
Guests: Cemal Gummus, Mohammad Mehboob, Yaqub Zargarapur

Chair Dexter Fox called the meeting to order at 6:34 P.M. A quorum was present.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

### 1. Chair's Report.

1a. Dexter Fox stated that he is still working on a Facebook Page for Unity in the Community (UITC), has been in continued conversation with David Lubell of Welcoming America to refine the working model of UITC's sponsored study circles, and paid, by personal check, a \$46.00 renewal fee for UITC's Post Office box. Jim Amaral moved that UITC reimburse Dexter Fox in the amount of \$46.00 t for paying the fee to maintain a Post Office Box. Bob Gaskill seconded the motion. The motion passed.

1b. Dexter reported that Taalibah Hassan has agreed to work with him in coordinating the Immigration & Human Rights Cinema (IHRC) with George Mason University (GMU). Dexter, Taalibah, and Charvis Campbell of GMU are already discussing films and format for this fall's cinema events. In addition, GMU's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (SCAR), formerly known as the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, will be helping with the post-screen discussion of films. Films under consideration for the fall include Light in the Darkness (produced by The Working Group); Honk! (a French film about capital punishment in the U.S.); Papers (a film about undocumented youth in U.S.); and A Better Life (a commercially released feature film concerning birthright citizenship issues). Dexter stated that the screenings of this fall's films will probably occur on Sunday afternoons as the day and time of day seem to best fit the schedule of students in the GMU-SCAR program.

1c. Dexter stated that he and Illana Naylor represented UITC at the Manassas African American Festival on August 6, 2011. The event was held at Metz Jr. High School. Both Dexter and Illana reported that the event was well attended and numerous conversations about UITC and its work were held. Dexter stated that UITC will have a presence at the Manassas Hispanic Festival on September 18, from noon to 5:00 P.M. This event will be held at the Loy Harris Pavilion. Dexter stated that assistance staffing the UITC booth will be greatly appreciated.

1d. Dexter read a part the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) recently revised policies that have to do with the deportation of undocumented immigrants. Currently, there are about 3000,000 open deportation cases. As processing this number of cases has overwhelmed DHS staff, all files will be reviewed and reclassified appropriately so that the caseload backup will be unclogged. Reclassification will place undocumented immigrants who are in deportation proceedings, who are not perceived as potential threats to public safety, and who have not committed any known criminal acts will be classified as "low priority cases. Low priority cases will include, but not be limited to, longtime lawful residents, veterans, "dream act" children, children brought to the U.S. by their parents or another adult relative, pregnant women, victims of domestic abuse, and spouses of U.S. citizens (including spouses of same-sex partners). Individuals in deportation proceedings who are classified as low priority will get a letter from DHS stating that their cases have been administratively closed. After having their cases closed, the individuals may apply for a work program permit. Decisions about work permits will be made on a case by case basis. (Undocumented immigrants currently not in deportation proceedings cannot apply for work

permits. Individuals should not attempt to be placed in deportation proceedings in an attempt to get a work permit.) Undocumented immigrants who are serious felons, known gang members, and repeat immigration violators shall have their cases reclassified as high priority for deportation. Dexter stated that he will forward a copy of the revised policy to anyone who requests a copy.

1e. Dexter stated that UITC has maintained its checking account with Wachovia Bank and that recently, Wachovia took the name of its parent company, Wells Fargo. No changes have been made to the account itself.

1f. Dexter announced that ICE (Immigration & Customs Enforcement) will be holding a town hall meeting in the Washington D. C. area to get citizen input on its deportation program in preparation for making changes to same. The meeting will take place on the campus GMU's Law School in Arlington, Virginia, from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. on August 24, 2011. A citizen rally and demonstration has been planned in response. Those wishing to participate in the response should meet at 5:00 P.M. on the day of the meeting at St. Charles Borromeo Roman Catholic Church in Arlington, Virginia. From there, demonstrators will march to the GMU campus across the street from the church.

2. Secretary's Report. Electronic copies of the minutes of last month's General Membership Meeting were distributed to all members via email in advance of this meeting. Paper copies were also available at this meeting for review by those in attendance. The minutes were accepted as presented (with one abstention).

3. Treasurer's Report. Gregg Reynolds was absent; however, he submitted a treasurer's report to Chair, Dexter Fox in advance of the meeting. UITC in the Community (UITC) has a balance of \$1,375.34, \$558.53 of which is in the general fund, \$150.00 in the humanitarian fund, and \$666.81 in the study circles fund. The report was accepted as presented.

4. Vice Chair's Report. Lydia Gonzalez had nothing to report.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

5. Everyday Democracy-Study Circles – Status Update. Cindy Brookshire was unable to attend today's meeting and sent a written report via email to Dexter Fox to read aloud. In the report, Cindy stated that the City of Manassas has won an achievement award from the Virginia Municipal League for all of the neighborhood work it has been doing over the past four years, including the Neighborhood Improvement Circles of which UITC has been a cosponsor. Four members of VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) will be living in Georgetown South this fall and will help boost the work that Frank McMillan of VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement) has been doing to activate residents in the community. On Tuesday, August 16, 2011, Cindy and Jill Spall extended invitations to principals and PTO presidents of Manassas City Schools to a working dinner at the Boys & Girls Club in Manassas. The dinner will be a one-time study circle to talk about common issues and to generate ideas of ways to increase parental and community involvement in the schools. Cindy will give a report on the dinner meeting at UITC's September meeting.

Cindy also forwarded an email she received from Raymond Beverage, Chair of the Prince William Commission on Aging and Board President of the Independence Empowerment Center - Center for Independent Living, regarding a request to move an OmniLink bus stop from the Harris Pavilion to the same location as an OmniRide bus stop on Prince William Street. Beverage reported that this past February and March, the Manassas Old Town Business Association complained about released prisoners from the Prince William – Manassas Regional Adult Detention Center who have been hanging around Old Town where they have wandered into stores and, in one incident, disturbed some women who were having lunch. Two members of the Manassas City Council made the request to move the bus stop. Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission's (PRTC) Executive Director Al Harf denied the change. (PRTC is the multi-jurisdictional agency which operates OmniLink.) At the current time, the Manassas City Council and PRTC have reached an impasse regarding the issue. Beverage feels, however, that the location of the bus stop is simply a symptom of another, more important problem – inadequate community policing. He further believes that the more important issue is being ignored by the City Council. Members of UITC expressed concern about moving the bus stop as doing so would make it more difficult for those released from the

Adult Detention Center to secure affordable transportation to home. Dexter Fox offered to attend the next City Council meeting when it is expected the topic will be discussed. He will do this as a way of monitoring the issue and will speak on behalf of UITC if he believes such needs to be done.

6. Nominating Committee – Status Update. Committee Chair, Bob Gaskill reported that he is still in the process of contacting and talking with potential candidates for the 2011-2013 terms for UITC Chair and Treasurer. The incumbent treasurer, Gregg Reynolds, has indicated that he is willing to serve another term; however, he will step down from the position if someone else is interested in the seat. The incumbent Chair, Dexter Fox, does not plan to run for another term. Bob stated that he is following several possible leads and should have recommendation at the next UITC meeting. He also expressed his concern about the need for strengthening the active membership of UITC. (All interested in running for UITC Chair or Treasurer should contact Bob Gaskill as soon as possible or should nominate themselves at the September UITC meeting.)

7. International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP). Illana Naylor asked that members of UITC announce the IDPP event within their faith communities and community groups. Fliers about the event have been created and emailed to members of UITC. Additional fliers may be obtained by contacting Illana or by downloading them from the UITC website. The theme for this year's IDPP is United We Stand and will take place from 4:00 to 6:00 P.M. at St. Paul United Methodist Church located at 1400 G Street in Woodbridge. Gathering music will precede the service at 3:50 P.M. A fellowship potluck meal will follow the service. Everyone is welcome to this interfaith gathering of prayers for peace; universal human rights; an end to discrimination, bullying, and hate activity; and deeper interfaith understanding in our communities and throughout the world. This year's program will feature leaders of faith communities from Prince William County, Manassas, and Manassas Park. Attendees are asked to bring an offering of nonperishable food items which will be donated to the food pantries of ACTS (Action in Community through Service) and SERVE (Securing Emergency Resources through Volunteer Efforts).

## **NEW BUSINESS**

8. Report on VOICE Initiative in West Gate & Iron Gate. Kathy Clark stated that residents of the West Gate and Iron Gate communities recently met at a meeting organized by Frank McMillan of VOICE. Kathy attended the meeting as a representative of UITC. The idea for the meeting came about this past spring when McMillan visited a class for parents of students who were in Kathy's class at West Gate Elementary School. Afterward, McMillan met with the school's principal and some staff members who expressed interest in creating a school discussion group that included neighborhood residents, school staff, Prince William County (PWC) Police Chief Deane, and the PWC Deputy Chief for Public Relations. An associate pastor of the Manassas St. Thomas United Methodist Church moderated the meeting. The meeting lasted for 1-1/2 hours. This first meeting resulted in heightened police visibility in the area West Gate Elementary School as a way to alleviate problems created by increased traffic in the area at school dismissal time and by middle school students who are let out of a nearby school prior to the time when elementary school students are dismissed. In addition, anecdotal evidence indicates that immigrant families are now taking a stronger leadership role within the communities as a result of this meeting.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

9. There will be a community festival from 11:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. on Saturday, August 27. The festival includes food, games, a moon bounce, and a water slide. In addition, a free giveaway of backpacks containing school supplies will take place from 7:00 A.M. to noon on a first-come, first serve basis (a child needs to be present to receive a backpack). This event will take place at the First Baptist Church located at 9258 Center Street in Manassas. A similar distribution of free school supplies was held on Saturday, August 20, 2011, at the Badr Community Center located at 17794 Main Street in Dumfries. (The Badr Community Center is a non-profit mosque and daycare.) The distribution of school supplies will be and was available to all regardless of religious belief or affiliation.

10. The Yes You Can! Young Lady - Young Man's annual "Life Cycle Program" Graduation Ceremony will take place at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, August 27, 2011, in the recreation room of the Manassas Park Fire Department located at 9080 Manassas Drive in Manassas Park. The guest speaker for the ceremony will be Mr. Glenn Vickers, Executive Director of the Manassas/Manassas Park Boys & Girls Club.

11. The Manassas Mosque has invited members of UITC to observe iftar with members of the Manassas Mosque on Sunday, August 28, at sundown (about 7:45 P.M.). The Manassas Mosque is located at 12950 Center Entrance Court. (Iftar is one of the religious observances held during the Islamic month of Ramadan and is often done as a community with people gathering to break their fast together by sharing an evening meal. Iftar is observed following sunset.)

(At this time, 8:05 to 8:45 P.M., a break in the meeting took place so that iftar could be observed with the Dar Alnoor community.)

12. An Islamic Art & Calligraphy Exhibition will be presented from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. on Friday, September 9, 2011, at the Dar Alnoor Islamic Community Center located at 5404 Hoadly Road in Manassas. The event is being sponsored by the Greater Washington Muslim Council, Muslim Association of Virginia, and the Manassas Mosque. Admission is free. Contact Taalibah Hassan at 703-717-3086 for additional information.

13. There will be an interfaith prayer service to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy. The service will take place on Saturday, September 10, from 6:00 to 9:00 P.M. at the Dar Alnoor Islamic Community Center. Participants will include members of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Congregation Ner Shalom, and UITC. Elected and appointed officials from federal state, and local governments are expected to be in attendance. As there will be a large number of people attending this service, reservations should be made by emailing Taalibah Hassan at [Taalibah@daralnoor.org](mailto:Taalibah@daralnoor.org). Reservations need to be sent by August 31. Current Prince William County first responders (fire & rescue), members of the U.S. Armed Forces, and law enforcement officers are encouraged to attend in uniform. As the presence of these people will be acknowledged during the program, it is requested that their names and positions be emailed to [Taalibah@daralnoor.org](mailto:Taalibah@daralnoor.org) in advance of the service. A dinner will follow the service.

14. A Candidate Meet & Greet will be held from 9:00 to 11:00 A.M. on Saturday, September 17, 2011, in the Fellowship Hall of St. Paul United Methodist Church located at 1400 G Street in Woodbridge. The event is cosponsored by SALT (Social Action Linking Together), Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations (VACOLAO), Citizens for United Rehabilitation of Errants – VA (CURE – VA), and the Prince William Education Association (PWEA). For more information, contact John Horejsi ([jhorejsi@cox.net](mailto:jhorejsi@cox.net)) or Kevin Simowitz ([Kevin@virginia-organizing.org](mailto:Kevin@virginia-organizing.org)). Information may also be found on the SALT website at [www.S-A-L-T.org](http://www.S-A-L-T.org).

15. The Manassas Hispanic Festival will be held from noon to 5:00 P.M. at the Loy Harris Pavilion on Sunday, September 18, 2011. Anyone interested and able to represent Unity at this festival should contact Dexter as soon as possible. It is reported that the famous Mrs. C. has volunteered to work the UITC booth for this event. (Mrs. C. is a clown who does face painting and other fun activities with children of all ages.)

16. UITC's observance of the International Day of Prayer for Peace will be held from 4:00 to 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, September 24, 2011, at St. Paul United Methodist Church located at 1400 G Street in Woodbridge. All are welcome to this service which will be followed by a potluck meal. Attendees are asked to bring a non-perishable food item to donate to the food pantries of ACTS and SERVE.

17. A full-day seminar on immigration issues will be held at Grace United Methodist Church on October 1, 2011. Grace Pastor Randy Tucker has asked that representatives of UITC be present for that seminar, if possible. Further information should be coming soon. Please notify Dexter Fox if you plan on attending.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Amaral, Secretary