

City of Morgantown
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes for January 18, 2018

Present: Jan Derry, Chair
Kristen Cooper, Secretary
Marlene Robinson
Judith Smith Wilkinson
Tim Hariston (Liaison with State HRC)
Don Spencer (Program Assistant)
Jacob Powers (Ex-officio Member)

Meeting called to order by Jan Derry, Chair, at 6:37 PM.

The agenda was distributed. There no additions requested.

Pubic Session:

Morgantown City Council Member Barry Wendell was in attendance for the meeting.

Minutes:

The minutes for November 2017 were distributed and reviewed with no changes. Judith Willkerson moved that the minutes be accepted. The motion was seconded by Marlene Robinson, and the motion passed unanimously. The minutes for December were distributed and reviewed. After some minor changes Marlene Robinson moved that the minutes be accepted. The motion was seconded by Judith Wilkinson, and the motion passed unanimously.

Communications:

Marlene recommended that the Commissioners listen to the NPR series on sexual exploitation of people with developmental disabilities. It is archived on the NPR site so it can be accessed.

The Commissioner Update included the fact that the Diversity Committee was unable to meet on Tuesday, January 16th due to bad weather. Also Judith Wilkinson reported that she attended three MLK events in Morgantown that were all fantastic and included great speakers. She noted that she was glad the Human Rights Commission had a table at the event.

Suggestions were made regarding the Human Rights Award event in December. It was agreed that it needs to be advertised better. Judith Wilkinson suggested that next year we have a table at the entry with a small selection of snacks and beverages. It was also agreed that we need to create a database of interested parties and organizations so we can notify them of the upcoming event. Tim Hariston

reported that the CCSJ was very happy to have received their award. Kristen Cooper offered to create a database that includes CCSJ members and others.

Don Spencer attended the Bell Tolling on Gun Violence. It took place at the First Presbyterian Church and there were about 12-13 attendees including Judith Wilkinson, Eve Foulkes, Barry Wendell, and Rabbi Joe Hample.

Don Spencer will be speaking at the Unitarian Church on Sunday, January 21st. He will be showing a human rights film and speaking about the work being done by the Human Rights Commission.

The 2018 Legislative Session has taken place and Jan Derry reported that Democratic senators and representative are frustrated and dissatisfied because Democrats can't get any traction on their bills. They are only able to get bills into consideration if they are sponsored by a Republican.

Don Spencer reported that February 8th is Civil Liberties Lobby Day in Charleston. Julie Warden is in charge of organizing that effort. A notice from Julie Warden was distributed. There will be discussion of several LGBTQ issues including free speech, bathroom bills, religious freedom act, civil liberties, pastor protection, an EHND bill that adds sexual orientation and gender identity violence to the definition of hate crimes. A list of partners for the event showed that there is no involvement from Northeastern West Virginia where these issues are of great importance. Don is unable to attend but recommended that someone from the Human Rights Commission attend.

Priority Items:

The 2017 Annual Report was reviewed. It included updates based on recommendations for the December working session. There was a discussion about the best way to get the information to the City. It was decided that the report should go to Linda Tucker and Paul Brake with the request that it be distributed to the City Council. Marlene Robinson moved that the 2017 Annual Report be accepted. The motion was seconded by Judith Wilkinson. The motion passed unanimously.

The Human Rights Commission's budget request was reviewed. Jan Derry made some changes to the original requested amount for a trainer based on government allowances. Don Spencer read from the proposed Diversity Plan which requests a full week of training (and that doesn't include harassment and EEOC information). Don believes it will cost more than \$3,000. Marlene suggested that we create a partnership with the City as far as paying for the training. Based on the results of that endeavor we can add more money to our budget request for next year. Don Spencer noted that logistically the training will require more time and money than we have requested. Jan Derry noted that we can grow the request in the next budget.

Discussion of the hotline and email for reporting human rights concerns will be carried forward to the February meeting.

The complaint procedure was discussed and it was recommended that we ask the City Attorney to attend our February meeting to discuss the form and the process.

A discussion of the Commission membership took place. Marlene Robinson suggested we send a certified letter to Billie Murray urging her to attend meetings or resign her post so that we can move Jacob Powers onto the Commission as a voting member. Jan Derry pointed out that we respect the diversity we promote and look to have more diversity on the Commission. It was suggested that the application for the Commission be changed to include gender, race, etc. so we can seek out diversity. Barry Wendell suggested that we seek out candidates ourselves and steer them towards applying for the Commission.

Progress Reports:

The Diversity committee didn't meet but Don Spencer distributed a draft of the plan. He asked everyone to read it and come to the next meeting with suggestions. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, January 31st at the public library. At that time the committee will go through the document and make changes. Following that the plan will be read by a sociologist who can comment on the content. The plan will then go to John Behune (City HR Director) and the City Attorney for their suggestions. The committee will meet again to review the suggested changes, accept the final version, and then submit it to the City.

The Human Rights Film Festival schedule was distributed. Don Spencer asked that each Commissioner come to at least one of the 3 films.

Jan Derry announced that Senate Bill 54 (regarding any public housing be built based on Universal design) is moving forward. There was a discussion about the new County Courthouse not being ADA compliant and the possibility that someone will be suing County Commissioner Tom Bloom because of that.

New Business:

The draft of a letter to George Lies at the Sister Cities Commission was circulated. It encourages the Sister City Commission to give honorary citizenship pins to individuals who support human rights in Morgantown. The group discussed working together to present a recommendation to City Council. The purpose will be to aid foreign residents in establishing their identity for opening bank accounts and other situations. Marlene Robinson expressed concerns about the citizenship and wondered if there is a compelling reason to do this. Marlene feels that an identification card should not be obligatory for an immigrant, and she questioned where citizenship information will be kept and if it will be made available to the Immigration Department. It was not decided if we would send the letter to the Sister City Commission.

Jan Derry announced that Christal Crouso is the new director of the Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority.

Jan Derry relayed information from a presentation she attended regarding human trafficking. It was reported that Morgantown is one of the most vulnerable cities for human trafficking due to gambling, transient population, proximity to Pittsburgh, and Marsalas Shale operations. It was recommended that the Polaris Project is a good place to get more information.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Submitted by Kristen Cooper