

City of Morgantown
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes for February 22, 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 6:43 PM.

The agenda was distributed. There no additions requested.

Pubic Session:

No one from the public was in attendance for the meeting.

Minutes:

The minutes for January 2018 were distributed and reviewed. One change was made to the Bell Tolling Event attendance list. Marlene Robinson moved that the minutes be accepted as corrected. The motion was seconded by Judith Wilkinson, and the motion passed unanimously.

Communications:

Jacob Powers reported that he has applied to attend a conference regarding the Opioid problem. He is seeking a grant to possible set up a needle disposal program in Morgantown. He will report what he has learned at the next meeting.

Judith Wilkinson reported that she has joined the NAACP. At the recent NAACP meeting Judith spoke to a person who is interested in serving on the Human Rights Commission. Marlene Robinson pointed out that the candidate probably lives outside the city limits, however she will contact the candidate and make an inquiry. Jan Derry will check with the city about how to move forward with recruiting and accepting new Commission members.

Don Spencer gave a report about the author J.B. Vance who spoke at the Mountainlair the previous day. One note that was raised was the idea that the first inclusive experience that many rural West Virginians encounter is in military service. Tim Hariston said that in the mining communities diverse groups came together to work productively together.

Jan Derry reported that the NWVCIL has been funded for 3 years by a HUD grant. This will mean that a community resource for fair housing will be in place in our area. Tim Hariston reported that state Human Rights Commission is significantly low on housing investigators due to low salaries and other reasons.

The Commission's social media/email/phone lines were discussed. Jan Derry reported that the Commission recently received an inquiry about a wrongful termination case in which the complainant was told by her supervisor to focus on African American shoppers as possible shop lifters. However the woman making the complaint lives in PA and the store where she worked is located outside the city of Morgantown. She was therefore referred to the State Human Rights Commission. It is believed that she has already filed a federal complaint.

Jan Derry spoke with Andrew Stacy at the City about checking on the Commission's email and phone line to ensure that they are working properly. Andrew will make any necessary repairs.

Priority Items:

The Commission members reviewed the complaint form. Jan Derry and Judith Wilkinson met with the City Attorney who will working on written procedure to accompany the form. Jan requested that there also be a timeline incorporated into the procedures. It was recommended by the City Attorney that any investigating of complaints/issues be done in the City chambers where it can be recorded. The City Attorney was excited to hear about or upcoming DEI plan. The City Attorney will be attending our March meeting.

Jan Derry announced that two Commissioners have resigned recently – Matt Mill and Dave Saville. Jan will ask the city to begin filing the open slots and make a great effort to have the city's diversity represented on the Commission. Don Spencer and others strongly recommended we seek someone with legal experience to serve on the Commission. It was agreed that we should ask the City if they plan on advertising the open positions.

Regarding moving Jacob Powers from an ex-officio post to a Commissioner, Jan reported that there is a process that has to be followed. During her meeting with the City Attorney, he was surprised that the City Council had appointed someone in an ex-officio position. Jan Derry will investigate the exact process necessary for Jacob Powers to advance to the Commission. It may require the approval of the mayor as well as another interview with the City Council.

Progress Reports:

Don Spencer reported that the Diversity committee met on February 21st and made good progress on the plan. The group will meet again on February 28th. The committee is looking at various appendices

that need to be added to support the plan. Don also mentioned that we made a change from “cultural competence” to “cultural sensitivity” which was an advantageous change.

Jan Derry attended the recent Human Rights Film Festival which included a film about homeless children in Chicago and how they progressed into adulthood.

New Business:

A discussion took place regarding the Public Housing Authority Resolution. Brian McAllister, a local attorney, plans to set up a meeting with the Morgantown representatives from the Fairmont/Morgantown Housing Authority which will include Frank Scafella (Sunnyside Up) and the Human Rights Commission. Don will respond to Brian’s email about the meeting. The Commission reviewed a draft of a resolution to establish a separate Morgantown Housing Authority. A discussion ensued about the price of housing and lack of public housing in Morgantown, as well as the need for Morgantown to have its own housing authority or a dedicated presence in Morgantown. Marlene Robinson moved to pursue the opportunity to work with the Fairmont/Morgantown Authority to establish a Morgantown Housing Authority. The motion was seconded by Kristen Cooper. A vote was taken and the motion was approved unanimously.

A discussion took place regarding the moving of the City’s bus depot to Westover where it will make accessibility extremely challenging for Morgantown residents. Don Spencer recommended that the Human Rights Commission write a letter to the City Council asking that they reconsider the move of the bus depot. However, it is not clear who made the decision to move the depot.

April is Fair Housing Month. Jan Derry will talk to City Councilwoman Rachel Fetty (who is on a city housing council) to see if there is going to be an event in which the Commission can work in partnership with the housing council (such as a Housing Fair).

Miscellaneous

The Unitarian Church is presenting a film series. Information was distributed.

Jan Derry recommended that Commission members consider joining the CCSJ. Annual dues are \$10 and that included receipt of their newsletter.

Announcements

Marlene Robinson announced a special event taking place on February 24th at the St. Paul AME Church to celebrate Black History Month which will include a Soul Food dinner.

Don Spencer distributed an updated legislative docket which includes the Commission’s DEI plan.

Don Spencer distributed a copy of the Gun Resolution that was created last year. He feels it is important to address this issue again due to recent violence in Florida and the overwhelming push for tighter gun laws by the young people in that state.

Don Spencer and Jan Derry attended a Sister City meeting, and it was recommended that we formulate a way of recognizing international people in our City (and should do so before September).

Judith Wilkinson, Marlene Robinson, and Kristen Cooper reported that they are unable to attend the Commission's March meeting on the 15th. It was agreed that the meeting would be rescheduled for March 29th.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Submitted by Kristen Cooper