

City of Morgantown
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes for November 15, 2018

Present: Jan Derry, Chair
Kristen Cooper, Secretary
Jacob Powers
Drew Bucy
Kate Levine-Freedman
Tim Hariston (Liaison with State HRC)
Don Spencer (Program Assistant)
Judith Wilkinson (Volunteer)

Meeting called to order by Jan Derry, Chair, at 6:38 PM.

The agenda was distributed. There was one change to the agenda – replacing MEI Campaign with the Open to All Campaign.

Public Session:

Christine Titus and Megan Burkhart attended the meeting and expressed interest in learning more. Jan Derry referred them to our website for past information.

Minutes:

The minutes for October 2018 were distributed and reviewed. Don Spencer requested a change to the name of the organizers of the Human Rights Film Festival and asked that the note about inviting Meshea Poore to the December meeting be removed. Jacob Powers moved that the minutes be accepted as written. The motion was seconded by Drew Bucy, and the motion passed unanimously.

Communications:

Tim Hariston from the State Human Rights Commission reported that a halfway house is being built to house victims of human trafficking. At an organizational meeting, Tim mentioned that the Morgantown Human Rights Commission would be part of the program. Many people are donating time and materials to fix the home and they hope to have it open in mid-December.

Jan Derry announced that the city is doing their 5 year plan about impediments to fair housing and a meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 28th at 2 pm at Dorsey Knob Lodge. They are looking for public input via a survey that Jan will distribute to the Commissioners. Jan will attend the meeting and Jacob Powers also expressed interest in attending.

Jacob Powers reported that the Commission's Facebook page is getting more traffic. He has been posting information about our meetings as well as news such as Fairmont's passing of a Non-Discrimination ordinance. He asked that the members of the Commission share information from the Commission's page.

Tim Hairston from the State Human Rights Commission had nothing new to report.

The Commission received an email from a transgender individual who encountered an issue at Mon General Hospital. There was a general discussion about how medical professionals deal with people in transition in regards to their diagnosis and care. There was also a question about whether or not the hospital is in the city limits. Don Spencer wondered if we had a responsibility to the individual even though the hospital is outside of the city. Jan Derry will follow-up by forwarding the letter to the City Attorney and contacting the individual to see if he is a city resident. She may also refer him to the DOJ.

Kristen Cooper shared notes from her recent phone meeting with Don Spencer and 2 of the organizers of the "Open to All" campaign in Huntington. The notes detailed the information she and Don received such as the need to create strong committees to organize the campaign and getting support from the Chamber of Commerce, other business groups in the city, as well as WVU. There were many suggestions from the Commissioners and volunteers. They included the following; contacting Brad Grimes at the WVU LGBTQ Center, investigating the real costs behind the campaign that could possibly be added to the Commission's budget, investigating the "All Kinds are Welcome Here" group and see if they could be involved, and creating a concise explanation of the campaign that can be shared with potential committee members and partners.

Prior to the meeting, Jan Derry shared an email response that she received from Chief of Police, Ed Preston, about the City's plans in the event of a large or unruly protest. The Chief was not interested in getting input from the Commission on this matter as they do not want to share their procedures and plans with the public. Don Spencer suggested he and Jan draft a letter to the Chief and ask him to consider receiving public input for their plan.

Priority Items:

The Commission discussed the upcoming Human Rights Day Awards and reception. Kristen Cooper will send out a press release (which was reviewed by the group) next week. Jacob Powers will gather information on Barbara Fleischauer for Jan Derry to use in her introductory speech. Other arrangements such as refreshments, decorations, printed programs and other logistics were discussed and tasks were assigned to individuals. The plaques are finished and Jan Derry will collect them. Kristen Cooper will send out invites to city organizations to encourage attendance at the reception.

The Adopt-a-Shelf at the library was discussed. Jan will confer with Barb Howe at the CCSJ to come up with a list of appropriate books (related to Human Rights) to include on the shelf.

Jan Derry, Marlene Robinson and Don Spencer met with the City Attorney, City Clerk, Head of Personnel and the City Manager to review the DEI Plan. Jan reported that everyone was receptive to the plan but were concerned about the City's capacity to implement it as it is written. They want to look at creating a timeline and addressing the plan in phases. They asked to receive a list of businesses and organizations where they could begin listing jobs. The group agreed that the most important thing is outreach to diverse groups for hiring. The City officials want more time to digest the information and asked that the Commission be realistic in its expectations. As the City reviews the plan they will provide the Commission with more information. It was acknowledged that the current City officials are receptive to the plan and are more likely to take action than previous administrations.

Regarding Inclusionary Zoning, Don Spencer spoke with Ron Delaney who will report back to us after the City takes additional steps. The program will be reviewed again before going to the City Council.

A group met to discuss the idea of a Compassionate City. They are working on a strategy that they will bring to the Commission. Judith Wilkinson recommends going online to learn more or reading the book Twelve Steps to Compassion.

New Business:

The Communications Manager for the City, Andrew Stacy was present at the meeting and discussed his role. He works with the many Boards and Commissions in the city and provides guidance on communication issues. He was asked if he had any special connections at the Dominion Post and he noted that they would be the same contact people as the Commission has contacted in the past. Andrew is available for advice on promotions and publicity. In regards to our Facebook page, he advised us to add the City's social media policy. He also offered to begin tagging the page on his postings. He also suggested we post information about the upcoming Human Rights Day Awards, and look to the UN site for information (and a video) about Human Rights Day content that can be used. He is available to create graphics showing what the Commission has done in the past 2 years to post on our page. Judith Wilkinson brought up the topic of Compassionate Cities and shared information with Andrew so that he might consider promoting the effort.

Other New Business, Ongoing Projects and Announcements will be discussed at the December meeting. The Commission will have a holiday celebration but also work on the Annual Report and Annual Budget request at that meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 20th.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Submitted by Kristen Cooper