

Morgantown HRC Meeting Minutes

Feb. 17, 2022

Meeting Hosted via ZOOM 6:30-8:30

Commission Attendance:

Jan Derry, Vice Chair (Chaired the meeting)

Bonnie Brown

Don Spencer

Danny Trejo

Tim Hairston, WV State HRC

Councilman Brian Butcher (7th Ward) – Council Representative/HRC Liaison

Public Attendance:

Deputy Mayor Danielle Trumble, Council Member- 5th Ward

Chris Slater, WVU News

Servando Arredondo, Engagement Mgr., United Way of Mon-Preston Co.

- Meeting called to order at est. 6:35pm
- Approval of January Minutes deferred to March meeting
- News & Discussions:
 - Bonnie asked whether the HRC might decide to issue a statement condemning racial harassment of elected government officials, per recent incident (email with KKK photo) targeting WV Delegate Danielle Walker, agreed to query the Commission via email
 - Given HRC's history of hosting human rights-focused films, Bonnie announced March 9th screening of "68 Voices, 68 Hearts," Indigenous languages of Mexico animated short films
- Danny introduced Servando Arrendondo; they discussed concerns of Spanish-speaking, immigrant population (not represented in Census data), re: the shortage of immigration attorneys and Spanish-to-English language interpreters (1 for all of N Central WV), assistance needed with matters of job discrimination & missing pay, landlord-tenant issues, medical/dental needs, communication with law enforcement, parent-teacher/school communications, vaccine clinics, access to programs like SNAP, TANF, WIC, etc. Funding needed to bridge communication gap and improve service in these human rights areas
- Jan asked how HRC might help> Discussion ensued re: participation of Rotary Club; English as a Second Language (ESL)-trained volunteers; Don asked about the 24/7 telephone translation service used by MPD & programs providing employee I.D.s like those in other cities; Tim mentioned serious safety issues concerning language gap between power companies and customers experiencing emergency shut offs with live lines down, etc.; all agreed work needed to advance City's stated mission of being an inclusive community; Danielle noted that Councilperson Ixya Vega is the Council's Minority Coord. and should be consulted
- Tim reported on news from the State Human Rights Commission, incl. changes in commission membership (resignation of Lisa Younis and C. Joan Parker is new Administrative Law Judge)

- Don urged all to tend to the Comprehensive Plan, noting in-person (3/3/22) and virtual (3/5/22) information sessions to ‘strengthen awareness and utilization of HRC’; Danielle noted the plan is not due until 2023. Don praised the many contributions and years of service of Bob Jones, part of the City’s first HRC, who led efforts on the first Needs Survey in WV, which pointed out the critical lack of community housing ...the HUD portion of the Comprehensive Plan needs public input
- Future make-up of the HRC Commission:
Jan exercised a point of privilege by the Chair to address upcoming changes to the HRC, incl. that she and Don are retiring, and urging those present to be thinking about new members who could be recruited to help ensure the HRC represents the City’s diverse population and human rights concerns (Tim suggested putting the word out through the Community Coalition for Social Justice; Bonnie suggested also spreading the word with the local Dismantling Racism group, et al.; Brian said the City Clerk should be notified at the proper time)
- Don encourages the hiring of a volunteer administrative Secretary for the HRC, who could be paid a small annual stipend for contributing this needed service (topic to be added to future agenda)

The MEI - Municipal Equality Index report

- Don discussed a draft of an antiracism-inclusivity section for the MEI (Municipal Equality Index, a program of the Human Rights Campaign rating compliance with non-discrimination policies) re: greater protections for LGBTQ+ as evidenced in 100 pt. score on previous MEI; he suggested consulting with HR Campaign to augment race-related topics, but importantly, clarify the priorities, not goals; Ash presentation
- Bonnie asked about hosting a listening session of some sort to help ascertain HR concerns/needs of community and set priorities for coming year, using group facilitators, etc.; Jan indicated the City would need to provide money and support for such an effort and there is ~\$4,000 in carryover funding in our budget...important to think about mobility issues, interpreters, and other accessibility -related concerns
- **Jan issued the charge for commissioners:** look at the HRC Annual report, make edits, forward edits to Don and vote on it in the next meeting

Meeting Adjourned at ~8:35pm