

City of Morgantown

Human Rights Commission

Meeting notes from May 20, 2021

Present: Ash Orr-Chair
Jan Derry-Vice Chair
Bonnie Brown
Jena Martin
Rosalyn Lauderback-liaison
Kristen Cooper-Volunteer

Meeting called to order by Ash Orr at 6:40 p.m. The agenda was reviewed. Ash asked to have HR 1,5.1, The Peoples Act added to the agenda under new business. The modified agenda was approved by Jena Martin and seconded by Jan Derry

Minutes from the March 18, 2021 and April 22, 2021 were both approved by a motion made by Jan Derry and seconded by Ash Orr.

Public Session: no participants identified themselves for the public session

Communications:

Jan Derry gave an update on fellow commissioner, Don Spencer's recovery from cycling accident. He has been discharged from the hospital and is now in rehab. Recovery has been slow with some setbacks, but Don continues to make progress.

Bonnie Brown requested that her personal email be used for HRC activity. bonniembrown19@gmail.com. Bonnie also shared that she has been following up on our desire to digitize the HRC historical records and has found that the WV Regional and History collections was interested as long as no other entity, such as the city itself, has the responsibility to do so. An email will be sent to the city attorney to clarify if the city has any legal obligation to be doing this already.

Bonnie also reported that when trying to access the city's website, there were some issues regarding accessibility. Edit: a friend of Bonnie who is an Instructional Designer ran her accessibility checker in our group. PDFs and agendas are not up to date on accessibility. We need to enable the checker tool. Bonnie has more details about this issue and is willing to resolve this issue with Jan.

Tim Hairston with the State Human Rights Commission board was not available to provide a state update.

Priority items:

1. Land Acknowledgement and Indigenous People's Day- no real update to report. Bonnie expressed concern about getting these passed before October. Due to the recent city election, council members will be changing. Ash reported that she has spoken to some of the newly elected members and they believe that the new members will be receptive to passing these before October.
2. Annual report distribution- Since the city clerk has never set a date for this presentation, the commission decided to wait until the new council was in place then we can present the report and at the same time, push for the passage of the Land Acknowledgment and Indigenous People Day at the same time.
3. Access to Accurate IDs Act: not updates currently
4. Civilian Police Review and Advisory Board: The FOP has filed a law suit against the city for passing this Ordinance. However, it is believed that the lawsuit really won't amount to much since all the controversial issues within the Ordinance have been removed.
5. Ordinance to ban conversion therapy on a Municipal Level: Ash presented a draft resolution prohibiting conversion therapy within City limits. Ash shared that Fairness WV assisted them in drafting the resolution. A bill banning conversion therapy was in the WV State legislature however it died in committee. The commission was very disappointed that no action was taken on a state level and hope other cities will take similar action.

After much discussion it was decided we had questions and concerns that needed addressed before we could submit this to council. More research is needed regarding licensing and authority, and consequences if violations would occur. The HRC decided to wait until after the new council was in place. We were all encouraged to seek out like minded people to speak in support of the resolution, once presented.

6. Diversity Equality Index (DEI): Ryan Simonton, City attorney send out draft language to be included in a personnel rules update for City Council. These updates are intended to incorporate the diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives from the DEI plan. HRC comments included adding all protected classes to the equal pay section. The use of "when reasonably possible" was questioned as mentioned in the Outreach for posted vacant employment positions. What are the measures for "reasonable and unreasonable"? Finally, the HRC questioned whether the cities HR department had the software needed to generate the statistic needed for tracking employee and volunteer demographics. Ash will provide Ryan with our feedback.

Progress Reports:

1. Municipal Equality Index (MEI): The HRC is extremely grateful to Kristen Cooper who has volunteered to spearhead the 2021 submission. Kristen reviewed the email she previously sent. Task were assigned to various members. Jena has already completed Section 5, Ash and Rozzy are working on many of the sections. Jan and Amy have Section 3. An MEI work meeting was scheduled for June 14th @ 6:30pm.
2. Project Status Profiles: This was moved to priority items for our next meeting
3. Hate crime prevention forum: No report
4. Anti-discrimination training: Molly Spencer, ACLU is offering training for the new city council members.
5. Municipal Gun Policies: Jan has reached out to Jacob, past chair, to see if he has any past materials related to this. We will wait until Don can rejoin us to get refreshed on the historical work, he put into this issue.
6. Commissions Legislative Docket: The docket was reviewed. This item was moved to the priority items for our next meeting.
7. The People's Act: NAACP met with Senator Manchin regarding his opposition to the People's Act due to the filibuster. NCCCP is submitting a resolution to the city council seeking the council's support for the Act. They are hoping other cities will follow suit, putting pressure on Manchin to the Act. Bonnie reported that according to polls by Represent WV, 71% of all WV voters are in support of this Act. She did note that she had not had time to research the quality of the poll so was just reporting their findings. The HRC is very much in support of this resolution.

New Business:

1. Liaison with NAACP and PFLAG: Ash asked the Commission we were interested in having a representative from NAACP serves as a liaison to the commission. Dee Dee McIntosh has resigned from serving as the PFLAG representative. We are very much in support of having liaisons from NAACP and other groups represented on the minority council.
2. Liaison updates: The Minority Council has only had one meeting which is frustrating to Ash, who wants to see this council serving the purpose for which it was designed.
3. Meeting with Chief of Police: Now that the new chief has been appointed, the HRC wants to extend an invitation for the Chief to join us at the HRC meeting for

a conversation. Topics discussed in the past included crime statistics for the city and their areas of focus. We would also like to bring back the discussions about community involvement in preventing and responding to hate protests/civil unrest and policies that address police brutality. **Ask chief ASAP, Ash is handling.** The HRC has no interest in villainizing our police force and look forward to a cooperative relationship with the Chief.

Looking ahead: Volunteer Outreach Members held a brief discussion around the need for skilled volunteers to work with the HRC on various projects. Bonnie's familiarity with the University may be helpful for reaching out to more students who are seriously looking for an opportunity to contribute.

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 17, 2021 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Motion for adjournment was made by Jena, adjourned 8:10p.m.