

City of Morgantown  
Human Rights Commission  
Meeting Minutes for May 21, 2020

Present: Jacob Powers, Chair  
Kristen Cooper, Secretary  
Jena Martin  
Jan Derry  
Ramsey Kinsella  
Don Spencer (Program Associate)  
Dee Dee McIntosh (PFLAG Liaison)

**Meeting called to order by Jacob Powers, Chair, at 6:36 P.M. The meeting took place online due to pandemic restrictions.**

The agenda was distributed, there were no changes to the agenda, and it was approved.

**Public Session:**

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

**Minutes:**

The April 2020 minutes were reviewed. Jena Martin moved that the minutes be approved as written: Jan Derry seconded the motion. The minutes where approved unanimously.

**Communications:**

The HRC wrote a letter to the editor of the Dominion Post in support of a recent editorial about a discrimination incident. The letter ran in the paper and Jacob Powers reported that he received a great deal of response to it. Jacob will send a copy of the letter to everyone on the Commission.

Regarding recent activity with the Commission's social media, email or phone line -- Jacob Powers reported that he has not received any emails and that he is posting information about upcoming Covid-19 testing on the Facebook page. Jan Derry suggested that Jacob continue posting information about census participation. Jena Martin suggested the creation of a short video showing how easy it is to fill out the census information to share on social media. Jacob will look into the video idea.

Tim Hairston was not present to report the State HRC.

**Priority Items:**

A notice about Covid-19 awareness for minorities was reviewed. The Commission also reviewed an announcement about the upcoming testing program taking place in the county. This information will be posted on the HRC social media accounts.

The Minority Liaison Coordinating Council was discussed. There have been objections to some of the wording of some of the groups (e.g. Afro-American, Women, and Muslim). Don Spencer pointed out that there is precedence for those designations. It was suggested that Don relay that information to the City Council in response to their objections. Additionally, the City Council would like to open up participation to everyone (not just those we have recommended) and add more organizations. For example, for LGBTQ, there are other organizations from which to choose a representative (such as the LGBTQ Center at WVU). An updated list of organizations will be submitted to the City Council.

Additional Commissioners were asked to participate in the MEI submission program. Dee Dee McIntosh and Jan Derry will assist Don Spencer and Kristen Cooper. Ramsey Kinsella will also be available to help as needed.

Jan Derry wrote an introductory letter for the Anti-Bullying ordinance. Jan asked that everyone review the letter and send her any revisions by Wednesday, May 27. She will distribute a revised version of the letter before she sends it to the various agencies. Jan is seeking information about contact names for the mailing. It was suggested that she contact Carol Allen.

The orientation scheduled for May 7 had to be rescheduled. It was decided that we will pick a new date after the new commissioner (replacement for Kate Levine-Freedman) has been named.

In regards to the new commissioner, it was decided that we should post information on social media to encourage people to apply for the position. Marty Shamberger was suggested as a replacement.

### **Progress Reports:**

Jan Derry reported that the Commission received the budgetary funding for the next fiscal year that we requested. Don Spencer is still looking into printing of welcome cards and posters prior to the end of this fiscal year before the funds become unavailable.

Regarding the Complaint Process – Jacob Powers has not been able to set us a meeting with City Attorney and Jena Martin. He will work on getting that meeting scheduled.

### **New Business:**

New officers need to be nominated for the upcoming fiscal year beginning July 1. Kristen Cooper volunteered to contact commissioners about their interest in serving as an officer and report back to the Commission.

Jacob Powers will speak with the City Attorney about implementation and training for the DEI Plan.

A committee will be formed to discuss a Safe Gun Storage Ordinance. Don Spencer suggested that the Commission should be deliberating about this issue and seeking information to counterbalance information going to the City Council. Don is working on contacting other cities that have this type of ordinance in place to request guidance. It was suggested that the ordinance include the City sponsoring a gun safety training event each year.

### **Ongoing Projects:**

Jacob Powers will discuss the Open to All program when he meets with the City Attorney.

The WVU Community Film Series is still being pursued. Don Spencer has sent another email the new head of the Humanities Department in hopes of receiving a reply about participation. Jacob Powers suggested that we add a Facebook Live component to the program.

There is nothing happening regarding the HRC calendar due to the virus quarantine. It was noted that June is Gay Pride Month and that information should be posted on social media.

Indigenous Peoples Day is still on the project list. The Commission is still seeking someone who represents indigenous people to speak on behalf of this change of holiday. Jacob Powers will reach out to Bonnie Brown at WVU for suggestions. It was noted that this initiative needs to be done in coordination with the Board of Education because they have a teaching unit that relates to the topic. This item will be moved to the Priority List for the next meeting.

There has been no movement on the Implicit Bias and Confronting Bigotry Training program.

A copy of the Gun Violence resolution will be distributed to commissioners for discussion at the next meeting.

We are still looking for a representative to serve as a representative for LGBTQ affairs with law enforcement. It was noted that this initiative should be pursued after a new Chief of Police is named.

The only item pending on the Legislative Docket is the Open to All program which was discussed earlier in the meeting.

Jacob Powers is still working on the Inclusivity Mural idea and needs suggestions for canvas locations.

The National Night Out was briefly discussed. It was suggested that we discuss it with the mayor to find out how the program is organized and run in the city.

### **Announcements:**

The next meeting will take place on June 18, 2020 and will be via video conference.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm.

Submitted by Kristen Cooper