

City of Morgantown  
Human Rights Commission  
Meeting Minutes for August 20, 2020

Present:       Jacob Powers, Chair  
                  Kristen Cooper, Secretary  
                  Jan Derry  
                  Ramsey Kinsella  
                  Don Spencer, Volunteer

**Meeting called to order by Jacob Powers, Chair, at 6:42 P.M. The meeting took place online due to pandemic restrictions.**

The agenda was distributed, there was one change – the addition of the Diamond Village to New Business, and the agenda was approved with the change.

**Public Session:**

Don Spencer was in attendance and through a series of emails with Jacob Powers had apologized for leaving his position as a program associate with the HRC, and took the time to apologize to the rest of the commission for leaving in a state of anger. He told us that human rights is part of his life and he wants to continue to keep working with the Commission, especially during this important time when so many rights are affected. Though he feels the need to be part of the program, he will relinquish the oversight of the project lists and will work as a librarian and a volunteer for the Commission.

**Minutes:**

The July 2020 minutes were reviewed and one minor change was suggested. Jan Derry moved that the minutes be approved as written with the one change, Ramsey Kinsella seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Communications:**

Regarding recent activity with the Commission's social media, email or phone line -- Jacob Powers received a complaint via email about the Bartlett House. The complaint was sent anonymously and was about a criminal matter. Jan Derry asked if there was anything else we could do about the complaint such as check with the City Attorney or ask to review the rules of the Bartlett House. The City Attorney will be contacted regarding the matter. A second complaint was filed, however it did not fall under any of the HRC's protected areas and the complainant was referred to the State HRC.

Tim Hairston was not present to report the State HRC.

## **Priority Items:**

Jacob Powers sent the final version of the Resolution on Community Policing to the City Manager and is also sending copies to each of the City Council members. The Committee of the Whole meeting will take place on Tuesday, August 25<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. Don Spencer suggested that the Police Review Board ordinance be renamed to include the word "Advisory." Jacob Powers will take that idea to the Monday meeting with the City Manager and other team members.

## **Progress Reports:**

The Black Lives Matter crosswalk will be painted on Arch Street. It has been fully approved and will be executed soon as part of Morgantown's more inclusive city efforts.

Jacob Powers informed the Commission that the City Attorney will now receive a copy of any complaint that is emailed to the Commission so he can determine the jurisdiction.

The city is still working on the Minority Liaison Coordinating Council. The City Manager is asking for applicants to be interviewed, however, the four applicants for the LGBTQ position failed to respond to the interview offers.

The Open to All program was discussed. The question was raised regarding whether or not the Commission has the manpower to execute and run a local program. It was agreed that the first step would be coming up with a new name. "All are Welcome" was suggested, and it was suggested that we ask Eve Faulkes for her ideas.

The Commission is still waiting to hear from Jesse regarding the Inclusivity Mural. Options discussed included using a city-owned building or creating a large banner that would be portable.

It was agreed that we would ask Amy Chandler to do another Doodle Poll to find a time for our Orientation Meeting.

One idea for the Safe Gun Storage Ordinance was to hold an annual seminar on how to safely unload and store a firearm and possibly provide gun locks for attendees. Defense in Depth may be able to help with the program. This would be an information campaign and would not promote the use of guns. Jacob Powers is still doing research on the program.

## **New Business:**

There was a discussion of the Diamond Village of homeless people in Morgantown. Jan Derry asked if the HRC has a role to play if there are people experiencing issues. During a discussion it was noted that the only city in the U.S. that has a municipal response to homelessness is San Diego. It was agreed that

this is an extremely difficult situation to manage from a health standpoint and that we need to support the City in any way we can. The lack of low income housing in Morgantown adds to the problem. Don Spencer agreed to draft a letter to our senators regarding money to the unemployed as of September 1<sup>st</sup>.

The National Night Out was not held this year, but would be a great event to hold next August to connect citizens and the police – especially now that we have a LGBTQ police liaison and will also have a policing ordinance in place by then.

### **Ongoing Projects:**

Jena Martin was not present to talk about the WVU Community Film Series. Don Spencer will contact Jena to coordinate efforts. The main obstacle is finding someone in the Humanities Department at WVU to engage in a conversation.

It was suggested that we bring the idea of Indigenous Peoples Day to the City Council in September, however, it was decided that we would discuss it with the mayor first.

### **Announcements:**

The next meeting will take place on September 17, 2020 and will be via video conference.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 pm.

Submitted by Kristen Cooper