

City of Morgantown

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

*Annual Report
for
Program Year 2015*



December 31, 2015

Commission Address:

**Morgantown City Hall
389 Spruce Street
Morgantown, WV 26505**

Human Rights Commission Annual Report for 2015 and Priorities for 2016

During calendar year 2015, the City of Morgantown Human Rights Commission (HRC) met on the third Thursday of each month except during the months of May and October. In addition, the HRC made formal presentations of two resolutions at the City Council meeting on August 25. On March 25, in collaboration with over 27 community organizations, the HRC organized a Town Hall Meeting on Human Rights at the Marilla Center. Sixty persons from the community attended this event.

The Commission's work has been augmented in 2014 by the significant contributions of volunteers. Assisting with the Town Hall Meeting and its preparation and follow-up was Bob Jones, a former WVU faculty member. Aaron Kapansky, a graduate Social Work student, provided research and staff support for the HRC's Diversity Representation Committee. Paulette Livengood, staffer at the Northern West Virginia Center for Independent Living, provided support to the Inclusive City Planning Committee by helping to process data related to mental health needs collected at the Town Hall Meeting on Human Rights.

Dave Bott and Chelsi Baker, City staff persons, provided helpful information as well as important assistance with the Commission's web site, news releases, and other services to help keep the public informed on the HRC's service to the community.

The specific accomplishments of the Commission in relation to the priorities established for 2015 have been...

1. Organizing and conducting a Town Hall Meeting on Human Rights for the purpose of developing goals, objectives, and action plans for addressing priority human rights needs as identified by the 2014 Human Rights Need Survey. The four priorities receiving top attention in the Survey and the Meeting were housing, income, livable wage job availability, and mental health/drug resources.
2. Establishing an Inclusive City Planning Committee, chaired by Jan Derry, to process the 2014 Human Rights Need Survey, the input from the Town Hall Meeting on Human Rights, and other information sources to initiate preparing a three year plan for making progress toward building an inclusive city.
3. Completing a national the Municipal Equality Index national survey sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign through the work of a committee chaired by Fran Whiteman. This committee initiated advocacy for the establishment of LGBT liaisons for the City Hall and for the Police Department as have been established in other communities.
4. Implementing a 24/7 human rights public telephone information, contact, and message line at City Hall through the leadership of Marlene Robinson-Savino.

5. Researching best practices to establish criteria, nomination and presentation procedures for International Human Rights Day Awards for honoring annually City organizations and individuals who make outstanding contributions toward protecting human rights. (This award procedure will be implemented in 2016.)
6. Continuing preparing a proposed plan for the City Council for strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion standards for City employees and volunteers through the work of a Diversity Representation Committee chaired by Marlene Robinson-Savino.
7. Supporting the WVU Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in its organization of an advisory committee for the Annual WVU Community Human Rights Film Festival which is to begin its first program in January 2016.
8. Drafting a Resolution Supporting Title XIX Waiver Programs.
9. Developing for City Council a Resolution on Requiring Compliance with Accessibility Design Standards to promote increased awareness by the Council, City departments and the general public of local needs and the importance of Fair Housing, ADA, and universal design accessibility standards. The Resolution was approved by City Council on a 6-1 vote.
10. Developing for City Council a Resolution Supporting A Just Transition for Coal Workers. The Resolution was approved by City Council by a 6-1 vote.
11. Planning a first annual HRC special meeting to honor International Human Rights Day for the community with Jon E. Cawthorne, WVU Dean of Libraries, making a presentation entitled “The Lens of Human Rights Through Research: Cases, NAACP, and Pearl S. Buck”.

Priorities for 2016

1. Complete the proposed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan to recommend to City Council to strengthen diversity representation in the City.
2. Complete a first draft of a three year Inclusive City Plan.
3. Implement an enhance International Human Rights Day program which includes making awards to City organizations and individuals protecting human rights.
4. Develop a proposed ordinance establishing Universal Design standards for multi-family housing for new construction/major renovations in the City.
5. Advocate for LGBT liaisons being established in City government as has have been effectively established in similar communities. Submit the 2016 Municipal Equality Index application.

6. Maintain HRC contact phone line, web site and intermittent email message service and track types of citizen concerns to keep in touch with public priorities.
7. Continue to support the WVU Division on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the implementation of the annual WVU Community Human Rights Film Festival.
8. Follow and review City development of AAP, ADA Transition Plan, and compliance with Fair Housing standards.
9. Co-sponsor workshops on Fair Housing.
10. Coordinate with the Municipal Green Team in expressing public concern for the rights of Mother Earth and in identifying shared concerns of sustainability for the City.
11. Meet with the Neighborhood Coordinating Council (and each neighborhood association as invited) to provide updates on HRC progress no less than once during the year.
12. Assist the City Council by advising on emerging issues and by making written reports to the Council no less than annually.
13. Make diverse presentations on the Human Rights Commission to increase both local and state awareness of the work of the HRC and to reach out to better understand emerging issues and public concerns.

Commission Membership for 2015

Jan Derry, Chair
 Matt Blair
 Kristen Cooper
 Billie Murray
 Anne Marlene Robinson-Savino, V. Chair
 Don Spencer, Secretary
 Fran Whitman

Dave Bott – Administration Representative
 Tim Hairston – Liaison w/ State HRC
 Anne Marie Lofaso – Law School Liaison
 Paulette Livengood – Report Assistant

2015 Commission Members Completing Service June 30, 2015

Mike Fike, City Councilor; Brian Jara; Anne Marie Lofaso
 Bob Jones – Research Consultant; Aaron Kaplansky – Research/Staff Assistant