

City of Morgantown

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

*Annual Report
for
Program Year 2017*



December 31, 2017

Commission Address:

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

Human Rights Commission Annual Report for 2017 and Priorities for 2018

New Commissioners appointed by the Morgantown City Council in 2016 have made significant contributions in 2017 and have helped the Commission regain lost momentum experienced in the 2015 and early 2016. The Commission is a “working board” having to perform its duties without on-going assigned administrative staff.

The primary accomplishments in calendar year 2017 have been 1) successfully supporting Council approval of an inclusive “Welcome to Morgantown” Statement, 2) supporting a Council approved resolution of support for immigrants, refugees and asylees, and 3) working with many resources, including City Attorney Ryan Simonton, to develop and support non-discrimination amendments being approved by the City Council. All successes have been made possible by a ground swell of public support for each of the measures.

Specific accomplishments of the Commission during 2017 in relation its priorities set for the year have been...

1. Submitted to the City Council for adoption a resolution calling for the adoption of a City Welcome Statement. With over 75 citizens filling the council chambers in support of the statement, Council approved the statement 5-2 on May 2, 2017.
2. Developed and approved the “Resolution Supporting the Rights of Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylees” and promoted its adoption by the City Council as a City policy resolution. Council approved the resolution 5-2 on May 2, 2017.
3. Redrafted, with final assistance of City Attorney, the City of Morgantown’s city code on human rights be more consistent with LGBTQ and gender identity non-discrimination standards recommended by the Human Rights Campaign organization and ordinances already adopted in Charleston, Huntington, and Wheeling. High levels of public attendance actively participated testifying in support of the amendments. On three meeting nights approximately 100 persons packed the Council chambers with over 110 persons attending the night of the final hearing and vote on the ordinance. Council approved the changes 7-0 on October 17.

The approval was formally supported by the Fairness West Virginia, Greater Morgantown Interfaith Association, Community Coalition for Social Justice, the WVU LGBTQ Center, Mountaineers for Progress, Rise-Up WV and several church groups and leaders.

4. Developed and maintained a Legislative Docket throughout the year.
5. Supported the second year for the Annual University-Community Human Rights Film Festival conducted by the WVU Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and co-sponsored by the Morgantown Human Rights Commission. One hundred fifty persons participated in the five-film festival.

6. Co-sponsored a Housing Fair held at the Mountaineer Mall in March collaboratively with the Community Living Initiatives Corporation and the City of Morgantown Fair Housing Action Network.
7. Promoted the drafting of a resolution in support of the Paris climate agreement by the Municipal Green Team which was then approved 7-0 by the City Council in July.
8. Worked with the WVU Native American Studies program in drafting a resolution in support of recognition of Indigenous Peoples.
9. Completed the draft of the annual 10-page Municipal Equality Index information for submission to the Human Rights Campaign. (Score for submission = 43)
10. Participated in Lobby Day at the State Legislature in March in support of civil rights legislation. The theme of the day was “All Kinds are Welcome Here.”
11. Attended a candlelight vigil in solidarity with families and friends of persons killed in the mass shootings at a Las Vegas and Sutherland Springs as well as the bell tolling for 30,000 victims of gun violence each year unprotected by legislation.
12. Provided a display on the Morgantown Human Rights Commission at the West Virginia Municipal League meeting in Morgantown in August.
13. Prepared a brochure “All Does Mean All” documenting the inclusive American heritage in USA history.
14. Provided input on criteria for City Council to use in selecting and orienting a new City Manager.
15. Conducted an International Human Rights Day Award Ceremony on the third week in December at a City Council meeting recognizing a community organization for outstanding human rights service, Community Coalition of Social Justice, and an individual human rights advocacy and public leader, Charlene Marshall. A key note speech was presented by Rabbi Joe Hample of the Tree of Life Congregation and the Greater Morgantown Interfaith Association with a reception thereafter at the Aull House.

Priorities for 2018

1. Expand diversity of membership of Human Rights Commission and recruit additional volunteers to assist with Commission projects.
2. Expand use of the adopted “Welcome to Morgantown” statement in City service centers and local businesses.
3. Complete work on a proposed City Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan relating to City employees and volunteers for submission to the City Manager for critical analysis and subsequently to the City Council for its adoption.

4. Review and evaluate four resolutions prepared during the past two years relating an incentive program for universal design in housing construction, establishment of a public housing authority, gun violence, and changing the second Monday in October from Columbus Day to indigenous people's day, as well as prepare a new resolution on inclusionary zoning to increase availability of affordable, accessible housing in the city.
5. Study the problems of the "Dreamers" who face expulsion from the USA in March 2018 and identify possible strategies for local intervention.
6. Study the drafted "New to Morgantown" web site program and negotiate with the City Administration on the feasibility of its adoption by the City of Morgantown to assist newcomers to the city in connecting with needed services.
7. With the assistance of the City Attorney, formalize a non-discrimination complaint procedure.
8. Prepare a draft proposed response to the 2018 Municipal Equality Index annual survey for the Mayor to submit in August to the Human Rights Campaign in Washington, DC. Approximately 500 cities participate in the survey.
9. Conduct a fourth annual observance of International Human Rights Day and present Commission awards to an organization and to an individual in the community who have made outstanding contributions toward the protection or promotion of human rights.
10. Re-establish work toward preparing an Inclusive City Plan focusing on citizen needs identified on the Community Needs Survey of 2014, the Town Hall Meeting of 2015, and other pertinent resources to provide steps which allow the City to move forward in addressing substantively priority citizen needs.
11. Explore benefits and feasibility for Morgantown to seek designation as a "Compassionate City".
12. Prepare Annual Report on Commission work and planning for 2019 by 12/31/18.

Commission Membership for 2017

Jan Derry, Chair
 Marlene Robinson, Vice Chair
 Kristen Cooper, Secretary/ Public Relations
 Matt Miller
 Billie Murray
 Dave Saville
 Judith Wilkinson

Tim Hairston – Liaison w/ State HRC
 Anne Marie Lofaso – Law School Liaison
 Don Spencer – Volunteer Program Assistant
 Jacob Powers – Ex-officio (WVU staff person)

2016 Commission Members Completing Service June 30, 2017

Dave Bott, Administrative Representative