

City of Morgantown
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes October 17, 2013

Present: Jan Derry, Vice Chair
Mike Fike, Member
Warren Harger, Member
Anne Marie Lofaso, Member
Anne Marlene Robinson-Savino, Secretary
Don Spencer, Chair
Fran Whiteman
Dave Bott – Administrative Representative
Bob Jones - Volunteer

Visitors: Tyler George, Darlene Harger

Meeting called to order by Don Spencer, Chair, at 6:35 p.m.

Public Session: Tyler George spoke in support of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and upcoming events in support of the federal bill. On Saturday, October 26, 2013 there will be a Day of Action mobilizing contact with members of the U.S. Senate. George is urging West Virginians to make contact with Senator Manchin regarding the ENDA and to write letters to the editor and make other contacts in support of the campaign. Lofaso asked whether marriage equality is included in the bill. George clarified that marriage equality is not included. A similar EHND bill which was introduced in the State legislature last year will be reintroduced this year.

Introduction: The chairperson introduced Bob Jones as the volunteer who has expressed a willingness to assist the HRC by providing leadership with the organization of the HRC need survey process. Jones has academic experience in working as chair of the Alderson Broadus College Social Work Program and as a member of the WVU Social Work faculty.

Communications: A letter was received for the HRC from the WV Development Office inviting comments on the State of WV 2015-2019 Five Year Consolidated Plan. Jan Derry helped the HRC understand the Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME) operations and issues and made suggestion which could be considered as amendments to the Plan. A hearing will be held on the plan on October 29 at 3 p.m. at the City/County complex at 200 Jackson Street in Fairmont. Derry agreed to send out a summary of her recommendations to Commission members in advance of the hearing. Written comments are due by Friday, November 8. Other comments on homelessness shelter needs will be sought from the Task Force in Morgantown.

In other communications Mike Fike reported on the CCSJ Annual meeting in Osage and on the Business and Human Rights Conference with the Law School in which Anne Marie Lofaso spoke. Don Spencer reported on the International Festival at the waterfront on 9/27/13 where a table for the HRC was staffed by Susan Sullivan, City Public Information Officer. An announcement was provided on the work sessions for

completing a mural on diversity to be installed on the rail-trail. Mike Fike and Don Spencer discussed preparation for an upcoming Council work session to determine municipal legislative priorities. Anne Marie Lofaso offered to prepare a description for a marriage equality bill which along with the Employment and Housing Non-Discrimination Act (EHNDA) could be recommended to the City Council by the Commission.

Minutes: Anne Marlene Robinson presented the minutes and notes from the September 19 meeting. Notes on the informal discussion on Fair Housing were abbreviated and several corrections were recommended. On a motion by Warren Harger and seconded by Mike Fike, the minutes were approved as corrected.

First Report on Planning a Need Survey Process: After Don Spencer provided a summary of notes taken on a presentation of a report on a human rights need survey conducted by the WVU Law School, Bob Jones submitted a 5 page proposal on recommendations for an HRC needs survey. The proposal included 1) guiding principals; 2) potential participant groups; 3) a two page survey format; and 4) a planning guide and projected implementation calendar. In the discussion which followed Jan Derry recommended that the definition of human rights be based on persons' rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". Several suggestions were made regarding accessibility to buildings, livable wage, affordable housing, civil rights, and discrimination based on where you are from. Jones will be meeting with Commission members interested in working on the survey process on Thursday, November 14. A second draft will be presented at the November Commission meeting.

Fran Whiteman noted that support for inclusivity could be mobilized by allowing locals businesses to display decals on windows indicating endorsement of working toward inclusivity in the city.

Preparations on Meeting with City Officials on Fair Housing Issues: Jan Derry opened the discussion by clarifying that the intent of having a meeting with city officials was to learn about what officials are doing in their inspection and certification processes. Dave Bott recommended meeting first with City Council and the City Manager to discuss policy rather initially working to improve current implementation. It was also pointed out in a general discussion which followed that the HRC needs to first understand what elements in the law are enforceable and then what impediments exist to the enforcement of those elements. It was noted that if cities are not enforcing federal laws, they are vulnerable to HUD action such as the one taken with Westchester County requiring return of HUD funding.

There are other elements in the law which can be supported by education and incentives such as standards relating to what is now referred to as "Universal Design". Don Spencer shared some web site examples relating to educational material and links provided by Iowa City. Suggestions for local annual wards for incorporating of universal design in construction projects were also mentioned along with the idea of awarding stickers for compliance when inspected.

HRC Banner Wording: Anne Marie Lofaso, Fran Whiteman and Marlene Robinson-Savino supported the idea of using the words “Working to Build an Inclusive City” to be used to accompany the logo for the HRC prepared by Eve Faulkes. By consensus the recommendation was approved.

Next Meeting: The next HRC meeting will be held on November 21, 2013. Top of the agenda items will be confirming a plan for HRC priorities in the current fiscal year and election of officers. Other agenda items will include receipt of a second progress report on need survey development, continued work on Fair Housing planning, and Commissioner reports.

The meeting was adjourned with the approval of the membership at 9:10 p.m.

dls/AMR-S