

City of Morgantown
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes November 20, 2014

Present: Jan Derry, Chair
Michael Fike, City Councilor
Brian Jara
Anne Marie Lofaso
Marlene Robinson-Savino, Vice Chair
Don Spencer, Secretary
Fran Whiteman

Meeting called to order by Jan Derry, Chair, at 6:40 p.m. The meeting agenda was approved without changes.

Public Session: Emily Zadjuna, a first year student at WVU, spoke in support of the development of a Gay-Straight Student Alliance at the local high school. She distributed a paper entitled “10 Steps to Creating a GSA” as well as a brochure addressing Queer Homeless issues. The information stated that some current estimates identify 20% - 40% of homeless youth identify themselves as LGBTQ and that 62% of LGBTQ homeless youth commit suicide. 19% of transgender people are homeless at some point in their lives. Because the topic had not been requested to be on the meeting agenda, the chair limited discussion but invited Emily to make an advance request to be on a future agenda.

Communications: Fran Whiteman and Don Spencer provided a report on having attended the Fairness WV Annual Conference and Gala awards presentation in Charleston on November 15th. At the occasion the Morgantown Human Rights Commission received Fairness WV’s annual Ian Gibson Smith award for leadership in advocacy. The award presentation information was as follows:

“The Ian Gibson-Smith Award is given annually to people or organizations that exemplify LGBT activism through outstanding service, professionalism and performance in daily life. These individuals or organizations have made great strides in eliminating discrimination against LGBT people.”

“The Morgantown Human Rights Commission is recognized for its dedication to ensuring LGBT rights and encouraging a political commitment to fair treatment under the law in the City of Morgantown.”

“The award is named after Mr. Gibson-Smith, a Shepherdstown native and co-founder of the IanThom Foundation. The foundation funds efforts in LGBT rights, women’s health and reproductive freedom, education, youth related issues, environmental awareness and various arts organizations.”

(“Past recipients of the award include West Virginia Delegate Stephen Skinner and Sue Julian, former team coordinator for the West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence.”)

Jan Derry reported that Mayor Selin has asked CLIC (Citizens Living Initiatives Corporation) to work on Morgantown’s relationship to the “Best Cities for Successful Aging Program”. This program focuses on 1) upgrading participation of older adults in volunteer and paid roles which benefit older adults, 2) strengthening higher education and work force development programs to help older adults refresh their skills to benefit the city, and 3) recognize older adults as assets to the city and celebrate their

contributions to improving the lives for all generations. The Mayor will be looking to the HRC to serve as link with CLIC to support this initiative.

Don Spencer presented web site information on the League of Minnesota Human Rights Commissions, the Eugene, OR, Human Rights Commission, and the Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance.

Minutes: On a motion by Marlene Robinson-Savino, seconded by Brian Jara, the minutes of the October 16, 2014 meeting were approved. Fran Whiteman and Anne Marie Lofaso abstained from the vote because of absence from the October meeting.

Progress Reports: Mike Fike reported that City Council is favorably considering including support of Employment and Housing Non-Discrimination as a 2015 legislative priority.

Fran Whiteman reported Morgantown's final score of 65 (out of 100) on the nationwide Municipality Equality Index. Her report included information comparing scores with other cities as well as recommendations on ways for Morgantown to increase its score in 2015. The recommendations included establishment of LGBT liaisons for the City Manager and Chief of Police in 2015.

There was no progress report at this time on the Human Rights Film Festival to begin during 2015.

Brian Jara reported on recent conversations at WVU relating to the development of an AP civil rights history course for high school students. Jan Derry suggested contact with Donna Molloyhan, a teacher at MHS. Don Spencer mentioned that information was available on high school courses on civil rights through the Teaching Tolerance Program of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Fran Whiteman provided a report on her review of the HRC bylaws. After review of the material and consideration of the 14 month administrative delay in processing the recommended bylaws, she discussed one option considered in her committee of changing the document from being enhanced bylaws to being internal operating procedures. The HRC, like other City Commissions, is not required to have bylaws *per se*. Internal operating procedures can be open for administrative and policy public review but maintained by the Commission itself. By consensus the Commission approved changing the bylaws document to Internal Operating Procedures. Formal action will be taken on the proposal after revised copies are distributed for the December HRC meeting.

Marlene Robinson-Savino reported on the work of the Committee on Diversity and Representation. She summarized the work of the Committee to date on working to find ways of promoting diversity in both volunteer and staff workforces within the City. She noted that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on December 15th when the Committee will be meeting with Jeff Mikorski, Debbie Smyth and Linda Little at city Hall.

Human Rights Need Survey – In the absence of Bob Jones Don Spencer provided information on the four recommendations developed by/with Bob as a result of the preparations for the presentation to City Council on October 30. The four points addressed in the written report in the packet can be summarized as: 1) make the survey report available to the public; 2) convene a town hall meeting after the MLK event to discuss the priorities identified in the need survey; 3) make it possible for the public to make suggestions on an inclusive city plan; and 4) develop an inclusive city plan with collaborative input from the 27 need survey partnering organizations.

New Business – As a result of the discussion of human rights observances throughout the year at the October HRC meeting, the secretary assembled a draft annual calendar of human rights observances for possible use on the HRC’s web site. It was agreed that all members would review the calendar before the December 18 HRC and bring proposed human rights-specific additions or changes to the December meeting.

Jan Derry and Don Spencer agreed to meet and prepare draft for an annual report on 2014 HRC accomplishments, priorities for 2015, and prospective related budget items.

The Commission identified 1) action on the Internal Operation Procedures, 2) review of the annual report and 2015 priorities, 3) preparation of a plan for the town meeting, and 4) amending the calendar of human rights events at top priorities for the December 18 meeting. The commission also decided to follow its 2013 December meeting practice of meeting at 6 p.m. and all bringing snacks and/or holiday goodies to share.

The meeting was adjourned by the chair at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Don Spencer
Secretary