

*City of Morgantown*  
**Human Rights Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes for February 18, 2016**  
**Public Safety Conference Room**

**Present:** Billie Murray  
Kristen Cooper  
Jan Derry, Chair  
Marlene Robinson-Savino, Vice Chair  
Don Spencer, Secretary

**Meeting called to order** by Jan Derry, Chair, at 6:35 p.m. The agenda was approved as distributed.

**Public Session:** There were no public participants attending the meeting.

**Minutes:** On a motion by Marlene Robinson-Savino, seconded by Billie Murray, the Commission approved the minutes of January 28, 2016. On a motion by Kristen Cooper, seconded by Marlene Robinson-Savino, the Commission approved the meeting minutes of November 19, 2015. On a motion by Billie Murray, seconded by Don Spencer, the Commission approved the minutes for the International Human Rights Day meeting of December 10, 2015. All votes were passed without dissent.

**Communications:** The Commission members discussed HR 4012, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, currently being considered by the State Legislature. It was pointed out that the name relates to religious freedom but by implication allows lack of mutual respect for diverse individuals by allowing individuals to withhold services to persons who offend one's conscience. Such legislation has been passed in Indiana where it has invalidated all local government ordinances protecting against discrimination and led to law suits against city councils and human rights commissions. It was agreed that this bill in West Virginia would lead to increased discrimination on matters relating to employment, housing, and other civil and service related matters. It was announced that Fairness WV will be convening a lobby day in Charleston on February 9 to work against HB 4012.

A written report by the ACLU on the status of HB 4263 and SB14 on juvenile justice reform was distributed.

The concealed carry gun legislation (HB 4145) was also discussed. Persons would be able to carry weapons without screening, training, and permits (except adolescents 18-21). This bill was considered to be a form of radical individualism without sensible, constructive regard for the common good in communities such as Morgantown. The Commissioners spoke of the need for advocacy against the bill in the interest of supporting law enforcement officers whose work is likely to become more dangerous. HB 4145 will contribute to impulsive over-reactions to ill-will, hatred and fear which, especially when alcohol and drugs are involved, and will not only jeopardize individuals' safety but also promote a less secure public environment which will discourage diverse economic, social, and educational investment and growth.

Kudos were expressed for the PSALM third grade student's art exhibit at the Morgantown Art Center available during this month of February. The exhibit is being provided under the leadership of St. Francis art teacher, Nora Sheets.

Efforts are underway to organize meetings to address recent housing discrimination issues. Jan Derry and the Northern WV Center for Independent Living will provide leadership in convening the meetings.

Information on the Empty Bowls event scheduled for Mylan Park on February 27 was shared.

**Priority Items:** The status of the Commission membership initiated at the January meeting was continued in anticipation of July 1 transitions.

Don Spencer led a review of the Morgantown Human Rights Ordinance (Article 153.01) as a result of recent contact with the Human Rights Campaign organization. He shared a proposed redrafting of the ordinance provided by Xavier Persad at the HRC at the Commission's request. It was agreed that this draft should first be referred to Professor of WV Constitutional Law Robert Bastress before further consideration by the Commission. On a motion by Marlene Robinson-Savino, seconded by Billie Murray, the Commission voted without dissent to refer the document to Dr. Bastress.

Spencer presented a first draft of a proposed Universal Design (UD) Incentive Ordinance for review by the Commission. Spencer also reported that he had informed the City manager that the Commission is working on a UD ordinance project. Jan Derry indicated that the Commission's work on Universal Design is timely and can be reviewed at a State workshop on UD in May.

**Progress Reports:** Don Spencer reported that first film on February 2 at the First Annual WVU Community Human Rights Film Festival attracted 168 participants in addition to panelists and staff. The second film had to be cancelled due to weather, and the third film on Muslim relationships attracted 65 participants as well as another excellent panel.

Marlene Robinson-Savino reported that the 24/7 phone line is up and running. She provides a report on the topics expressed in a January phone call relating to alleged employment discrimination. She stated that it will be important for the answering service for the line to be checked each week.

Robinson reported that the Diversity Plan Development Committee had no report at this time.

There were no new progress reports on municipal plan development relating to Affirmative Action, EEOC, ADA or Fair Housing.

#### **New Business:**

Relating to the Human Rights Commission's role in welcoming people to Morgantown as part of building an inclusive city, the Commission reviewed the web page information of Iowa City entitled, "New to Iowa City?" After the discussion on a motion by Don Spencer, seconded by Marlene Robinson-Savino, the Commission voted to make contact with Chelsi Baker, the City Public Information Officer, to determine whether a similar web site section could be developed, "New to Morgantown?"

A list of persons working as community volunteers in overseas locations was provided for the commission for possible public acknowledgement. Jan Derry stressed the importance of members

of the Commission helping to further expand a list of persons who should be considered for recognition in a human rights day awards ceremony.

There was consensus that with David Bott's authorization of available funding the Commission would proceed with the preparation of a Let's Do Right by Rights banner which can be used at the film festival and other special events.

**Regular Meeting Items:**

The Commission reviewed the Annual HRC calendar, the Commission's annual plan, meeting dates for 2016, and February-March HR Observances Calendar events.

In Commissioner Reports, Jan Derry discussed the federal Community Integration Act and its likely impact on the WV DHHR's illegal action in changing community-based services to institution-based services. The Human Rights Campaign's efforts to generate support for a federal Equality Act were also briefly mentioned.

The next Commission meeting will be held on March 17, 2016.

The meeting was adjourned by the chair at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Spencer 3/6/16