

City of Morgantown
Human Rights Commission

Re-established July 2012

Commission Personnel Orientation

March 2022 Digital Packet Edition

30 Topics with 65 Links



Address:

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AN ORIENTATION TO THE MORGANTOWN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

March 27, 2022

1. Overview:

Either you have just been appointed to be a Commissioner Member of the City Human Rights Commission (HRC or “Commission”) or you are a City official seeking review of information about the Commission, or a volunteer or advocate wanting to know more about the details on how the Commission functions or what it does. Whatever your interest, WELCOME!

2. Introductions:

The names of current members, officers, ex-officio members, and volunteers and their contact information are provided in this first [attachment](#).

3. Historical Orientation on Human Rights

Before digging into the details about the City HRC, it seems important to establish a common understanding of “human rights”. There are two important 9:30 minute films which were generated by United International explaining the evolution of the understanding of human rights which brought about the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. These films are similar to each other, and one is more oriented to youth. Both are available on YouTube. Both also have a bonus of 30 award-winning public service announcements that illustrate each of the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Story of Human Rights – HumanRights.com - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh3BbLk5UIQ>

The Story of Human Rights – YouthforHumanRights.org

<https://www.youthforhumanrights.org/course/lesson/background-of-human-rights/the-story-of-human-rights.html>

It is important to note that “human rights” and “civil rights” are not the same. Human rights are the rights that a person has just as a human being. Civil rights are those rights which are actually protected by civil law. Accepted human rights are constantly evolving. Enabling human rights to become civil rights is usually an extended, contentious, learning process, but vitally essential for individuals, families, and communities nonetheless.

4. Re-establishment of the City of Morgantown Human Rights Commission

The Morgantown HRC was first constituted by the Morgantown City Council in the year 2000. It was established specifically to be an organization which processed human rights complaints in a manner similar to the State Human Rights Commission. The first Commission had a strong local personnel base, but there were no complaints received. After three meetings, the Commission did not meet again, and in 2007, the HRC was dissolved by action of the City Council.

In 2006, the City of Morgantown became one of the cities recognized by the National League of Cities to have identified itself to be “Building an Inclusive City”. Entry signs were authorized by the League. Thereafter, a joint Inclusive City Committee was established by the collective efforts of the City with those of the WVU Social Justice Program and the Monongalia County Board of Education. The deliberations of this committee evolved into a decision to propose within the City organizations an entity which would be known as an

“Inclusive City Commission”. In 2012 when the proposal was brought to the City Council, the Council requested that the proposal be reworked to become a revitalized “Human Rights Commission”.

Instead of just being a complaint processing board as had first been adopted to be in the year 2000, the renewed Commission was authorized (City Code Article 153) to work toward building an inclusive city as well as to process human rights complaints. On October 17, 2017, the renewal ordinance was further expanded by City Council to become a non-discrimination ordinance ([City Code Article 546](#)) for the City.

A one-page [summary of the historical work](#) of the Commission is also attached.

5. State Human Rights Commission

“The West Virginia Human Rights Act was enacted in 1961. This was in the very midst of the (racial) Civil Rights Movement, only a few years after the 1954 [Brown v. Board of Education](#) decision which had mandated school desegregation, and several years before the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed (racial) discrimination nationwide.”

The State Human Rights Commission is the primary resource for West Virginians contending with discrimination relating to employment and housing. The Commission employs staff attorneys to process *accepted complaints* and are accessible to Morgantown residents by telephone and internet. The telephone number for the Commission is 304-558-2616.

Its contact email is available through its website [WV Human Rights Commission Contact Us Form](#)

The Morgantown Human Rights Commission has enjoyed a special relationship with the State HRC in that the Vice President of the State HRC Board, Tim Hairston, regularly attends City HRC Commission meetings, reports regularly on events and services of the State HRC, and contributes generously of his time to the work of the Commission. He is a designated ex-officio member of the Commission.

6. Bylaws and Annual Calendar

The two documents by which the HRC functions are its Bylaws which delineate its operations procedures and its Annual Calendar which sets forth its relevant events and responsibilities month by month.

The [Bylaws](#) for the Commission were most recently revised in June 2019.

As much as the HRC meets monthly, the [Annual Operations Calendar](#) enables the Commissioners to anticipate its monthly responsibilities and commitments in addition to addressing emerging needs, issues and concerns.

7. Budget and Staffing

The Morgantown HRC no longer has an assigned City staff person attending its meetings but does have access to City Clerk Christine Wade and Assistant City Clerk Heather Carl (304-284-7434); Communications Director Andrew Stacy (304-284-7426) and Communications Specialist Michaela Martin (304-225-3584).

The 2020 Commission [Budget](#) Request totaled \$2,050.00. It is the Commission’s understanding that the amount was approved. The city fiscal year begins July 1 and ends June 30.

8. Meetings, Agendas and Minutes

Regular Commission meetings are held on the third Thursdays of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Public Safety Building on Spruce Street in the first floor Conference Room or, if necessary, at the Public Library Board Room.

Agendas are developed based on a call for items to the full Commission membership by the Chairperson a week in advance of the meetings. The Chairperson posts the agenda with the City Clerk four days before the meeting. A copy of the agenda is posted on the City website via the City Clerk. At the same time, the Chairperson distributes the agenda with pertinent information to the members. Full agenda packets are distributed on the day of the meeting.

Minutes are generated for all work sessions and meetings by the Secretary who either emails them to the Chairperson or to the membership directly. The minutes are voted upon at the next meeting. If approved, a copy is sent by the Secretary to the City Clerk who in turn distributes a copy to the Communications Office for posting on the City Website.

9. Contacts and Social Media Access

The Morgantown Human Rights Commission has no office, but its mailing address is: City Hall, 389 Spruce Street, Morgantown, WV 26505. The City Hall phone line is 304-284-7405. The Commission has no direct phone line, but it has a 24/7-hour message or “contact line: 304-225-3582.

The social media access information is: email – HRC@morgantown.gov

Website – morgantownwv.gov/272/Human-Rights-Commission

Facebook – Facebook.com/Morgantown Human Rights Commission Twitter - @Morgantown HRC
Managers for the social media are as follows: email - Jan Derry; Facebook & Twitter – Ash Orr; City Website - Don Spencer with City Communications personnel.

10. Human Rights Commission Information on the City Website

Human Rights Commission Content: Names of Current HRC Commissioners; Annual Reports: 2012-2019; Recent Agenda and Minutes; City Charter linkage; HRC Establishing Ordinance; Bylaws; Human Rights Needs Survey Report Summary; Calendar of Annual Human Rights Observances; Human Rights Classes at WVU; Linkage with the State Human Rights Commission.

Human Rights Resolutions Adopted by City Council: [Employment and Housing Non-Discrimination](#); [Marriage Equality](#) (2014); Supporting Just Transition for [Coal Workers](#); Requiring [Compliance with Accessibility Design Standards](#) (2015); Adopting a City [Welcome Statement](#); Supporting the Rights of [Immigrants, Refugees and Asylees](#); Non-Discrimination Ord. (2017), Establishment of [Minority Liaisons](#) Coordinating Council (2019); Authorizing Human Rights Commission to Conduct an “Open to All” [Campaign](#) (2019); Adopting a City of Morgantown [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan](#) (2020); Strengthening and Affirming [Community Policing](#) (2020).

Human Rights Ordinances Adopted by City Council: [Ordinance Amending Article 153](#) of the City Code Providing for a Human Rights Commission (October 17, 2017); Ordinance on [Anti-Bullying](#) (July 2, 2019); Ordinance on [CROWN Non-Discrimination](#) (March 2, 2021); [Ordinance on Conversion Therapy Ban](#) (October 19, 2021).

11. Complaints

Human rights complaints received by the City (using [complaint form](#)) relating to matters pertaining to the State Human Rights Code (employment, housing) shall be referred to the State Human Rights Commission (See Section 5 of this document.) Complaints relating matters addressed in Article 153 of the City Code and not

addressed in the State Code are to be addressed by the City Human Rights Commission utilizing complaint review procedures approved by the City Council and City Administration.

12. Annual Human Rights Observances Calendar

The Commission has developed and maintains an Annual Human Rights [Observances Calendar](#) which is accessible on the City of Morgantown website. From feedback received it is utilized by other organizations, teachers in school classrooms, persons at West Virginia University, and interested individuals. Notification of up-coming observances is frequently announced at Commission meetings.

13. Human Rights Needs Survey

In the year 2014, the HRC conducted a Human Rights Need Survey involving nearly 600 participants. A copy of the [Summary](#) of the final report is attached. The Commission also conducted a Town Hall Meeting in March of 2015 on the survey results which included over 60 agency representatives and concerned citizens. Top needs identified in order were housing, livable wage employment, transportation, mental health services, addiction services.

14. International Human Rights Day Observance and Award Presentations

Each year the Human Rights Commission in cooperation with the Morgantown City Council sponsors an International Human Rights Day Observance and Awards Ceremony. Copies of the description of the awards, the [program](#) and pledge, and the [preparation checklist](#) are attached. The event includes an [annual exhibit](#) of flags, posters, and other pertinent displays.

15. Annual Reports

During the months of December and January, the Commission prepares for the City Council and the general public a combined 1) annual report on activity during the calendar year and 2) a list of objectives for the new year. This document is also displayed with past reports on the City website. The most [recent year's report](#) is attached.

16. Project Status

The Commission maintains a two-page summary of its regular commitments and [status on projects](#) to help manage its diverse undertakings. Lead persons for each project are identified. Completed projects are listed.

17. Legislative Docket – Ordinances, Resolutions, and Other Legislative Actions

The HRC's most recent [Legislative Docket](#) for City Legislation is focused on the development of an ordinance adopting provisions of the City's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and the establishment of a Civilian Police Review and Advisory Board. The Commission's broader view of its local legislative work is represented in the HRC Legislative Docket. A resolution which the HRC plans to introduce in 2022 relates to establishment of a [Land Acknowledgement Statement](#) and an [Indigenous People's Day](#) observance in Morgantown. Several other resolutions have been drafted for presentation as listed on the Legislative Docket.

18. Proclamations

Proclamations are a third form of government action (in addition to resolutions and ordinances) which can be used to call attention to a specific observance, recognition or value. Draft proclamations need to be submitted to the City Clerk a week in advance of the meeting intended for use for approval by the Mayor. A

representative of the Commission needs to be present at the meeting when the proclamation is read by the Mayor to publicly receive the signed and sealed proclamation from the Mayor at the beginning of the meeting. Recent Commission proclamations adopted for announcement have related to [International Human Rights Day](#) and to [Pride Month](#) for LGBTQ.

19. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan

The development of the [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) (DEI) Plan for the City of Morgantown was a five-year Commission project which actually began in 2014. The Plan was first reviewed by the City Council at its Committee of the Whole meeting in September 2019 and from that review, the Council adopted the recommended establishment of a City Mission Statement. Several changes were requested by City Councilors and additional work was completed on the plan by members of the HRC. The DEI Plan was adopted by resolution on March 17, 2020 with a resolve to have the City Attorney draft an ordinance proposing an adoption of plan provisions beginning in the fall of 2021. The core of the DEI Plan is a 20-page text plus attachments. The plan works toward an annual process of collecting, counting and comparing to assess progress. The Human Rights Commission reviews annual personnel and volunteer reports in August before they are presented to the City Council and the public media. All proposed actions in the Plan are [summarized](#) in Section Five.

20. Municipal Equality Index Program

The Municipal Equality Index Program is a program of the prominent national Human Rights Campaign organization located in Washington, D.C. Over 500 cities representing all 50 states participate in the program which sets [standards](#) for structural equality for participating municipalities. Cities receive a rating for compliance based on a maximum score of 100. Morgantown has been participating in the indexing since 2014. It began with a score of 44 and has increased its score with its submission in 2021 to a maximum [rating of 100](#). The rating of 100 allows Morgantown to join the top ranked cities in the country. Huntington has achieved a 100 rating for two years, and Morgantown is pleased to join them. Charleston currently ranks third. The [2021 Morgantown submission](#) was prepared by Kristen Cooper with assistance from Ash Orr, Jan Derry, Diana McIntosh, Jacob Powers, and Jena Martin.

21. Housing Advocacy

In as much as having affordable/accessible housing has been identified as a top human rights need priority in the City, the Commission has co-sponsored annual fair housing fair events, advocated for increased outreach by the Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority, prepared housing resolutions for City Council, promoted universal design standards at the legislature, advocated for non-discrimination in housing, and supported work by Community Housing Initiatives Corporation, the Northern West Virginia Center for Independent Living and other housing advocacy organizations. In 2021, Commission representatives met with the Morgantown Mayor to determine optimum strategies for progress. It is hoped that Presidential and Congressional action will enable increased resources being available for affordable/accessible housing.

22. Advocacy Questions

Each year the public makes decisions on personnel selection for public office both elective and appointed. The Human Rights Commission supports such public processes by working to compose a few pertinent [questions](#) which reflect the human rights priorities of the area. The Commission then passes the questions along to organizations sponsoring candidate forums for use in planning public interviews of the candidates. Such

organizations have included the League of Women Voters, Mountaineers for Progress and the City of Morgantown.

23. All ARE WELCOME

In June of 2019 the Morgantown City Council passed a [resolution authorizing](#) the HRC to implement an Open to All program with Morgantown merchants and religious organizations. The HRC received assistance for the City of Huntington in planning its program and art work from Eve Faulks of the WVU Graphic Design Program. Question over possible copyright infringement emerges when a national marketing corporation established a copyright for the Open to All name and program. After extended review by the City, the HRC changed the name for its planned program to ALL ARE WELCOME – with an internet assurance “short phrases are not subject to copyright”. The HRC hopes to have its materials ready for a campaign by the spring of 2021.

The Human Rights Commission developed an eight page [publication](#) “All Does Mean All” when addressing some resistance on City Council to adopting an inclusive welcome statement in 2017.

24. Minority Liaisons Coordinating Council

Also, in June of 2019, the City Council adopted a [resolution](#) authorizing the establishment of a Minority Liaisons Coordinating Council. Based on the organizational model and experience of the City’s Neighborhood Coordinating Council, liaisons from minority constituencies in the City will meet regularly with the City Manager or their representative on a regular basis both to have access to City government for expressing concerns and discussing issues as well as receiving information pertinent to all sectors of the municipal population. With recent transitions in city management, there has been difficulty in appointing liaisons and establishing a first meeting. Proposed [guidelines](#) for the Minority Liaisons Coordinating Council have been drafted by the HRC.

25. City Welcome Statements

On May 5, 2017, the City Council adopted a [City Welcome Statement](#) for use on the website and for presentation on floor banners at four locations throughout the City including the City Hall, the Municipal Airport, the WVU Erickson Alumni Center, and the Waterfront Hotel. Table-top banners will be distributed to the WVU Welcome Center and to smaller hotels throughout the community.

When the City adopted the Welcome Statement, it also adopted a Resolution Supporting the [Rights of Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylees](#). The Commission has envisioned the incorporation of a “[New to Morgantown](#)” section in the City Website and joining other cities in the establishment of a [city photo ID program](#) in collaboration with the city administration and the Morgantown Police Department. To date the latter two items have remained on the drawing board. [Non-profit models](#) of photo ID programs have also been utilized.

26. WVU Community Human Rights Film Program

In 2014 in collaboration with the WVU Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, the Morgantown Human Rights Commission established a [Human Rights Film Festival](#) for the WVU community. The first two years went very well, but thereafter Division personnel and priorities changed. During the first year, however, an endowment for a human rights film program was established by a member of the Commission with the WVU Foundation. With the pandemic, arrangements for future WVU community sponsorship have been

incomplete. At present it is likely that the WVU Humanities Center will become the university sponsor for an annual WVU Community Human Rights Film Program.

27. Planning Response to Hate Demonstrations

Since the Charlottesville hate demonstrations of August 11-13, 2017, it has become evident that no community is immune from the potential of having demonstrations develop fueled by hate and bigotry. Of course it is hoped that Morgantown will be an exception, but with the anti-democracy demonstration at the nation's capital on January 6, 2021, it must be accepted that no place is completely secure. Managing such demonstrations call for pre-planning by entities in addition to the Police Department. [Protocols](#) for the participation of other agencies and organizations followed the Charlottesville event. Outlines of documents were distributed by the Morgantown Human Rights Commission with a [cover letter](#) to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor quickly after the event. An [article](#) in American City and County by Derek Prall, "Coming to Your Town?" followed in 2018. In Morgantown personnel have changed. No action has been taken to date.

28. Environmental Justice Initiative

Every time that an environmental disturbance occurs in the forms of damaging amounts of wind, rainfall, flooding, droughts, tornadoes or contaminants, people's abilities to thrive or even survive as residents or commercial stakeholder under such violent changes is compromised. It is important for the City organizations such as the Human Rights Commission to [collaborate](#) with the Municipal Green Team, Public Health Department, Transit Authority, Code Enforcement Department, Morgantown Utility Board, Tree Board and other groups to assemble ideas and plans - to identify needs and collectively support essential changes to be adopted and important strategies to be followed.

29. Statewide Organization of Municipal Human Rights Commissions

In order to share information more effectively from Commission to Commission and City to City around the State, a [proposal](#) has been generated for the establishment of a West Virginia Association of Human Rights Commissions. Such an entity can help address connective needs for problem solving as well as assist in relating local areas more effectively with the State Human Rights Commission. Such an entity can also better represent the strength needed to protect community ordinances and the rights of vulnerable persons throughout the state.

30. Banners, Table Display Materials, Human Rights Posters, and Commission Records

The Human Rights Commission will have its outreach, education materials and records in storage at the City Clerk's Office at the City Hall. The 2020 Commission brochure (pages [one](#) and [two](#)), cards and other interpretive materials are used at tabling events within the City, at the Legislature, Municipal League meetings where they occur, Mountainlair, Coliseum Concourse, The Crossing, film events, annual meetings of social justice organizations and on other special occasions. The Morgantown Human Rights logo was designed by Eve Faulkes of the WVU Graphic Arts Department in 2013.

2022 COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

January 20, 2022 - February 17, 2022 - March 17, 2022 - April 14, 2022 - May 19, 2022 - June 16, 2022 - July 21, 2022 - August 18, 2022 - September 15, 2022 - October 20, 2022 - November 17, 2022 - December 6, 15, 2022

NOTES