

# HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

## *Minutes*

September 15, 2016

### Commission Members Absent:

Reverend Turner  
Ivette Lopez  
Ilene Kessler  
Shiraz Ahmed

### Commission Members Present:

Opel T. Jones, I  
Bianca Chang  
Peter Hwang  
Joan Hash  
Frank Eastham

### Staff:

Dr. Barbara J. Sands, HRC Executive Secretary  
Stephanie Chapple, HRC Recording Secretary

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. PUBLIC FORUM – Guests – Sara Cochran and Deatra Atkins from HoCoAgast (Howard County Advocacy Group Against Slavery and Trafficking) shared detailed information and a PowerPoint slide presentation on this advocacy group’s mission, recommendations on protecting youth, teens & young women/men, recognizing the signs, myths and misconceptions, Safety Tips, Victims’ Services, hotline numbers, and becoming involved in combating this tragic county and nation-wide problem.

#### 3. HRC CASES UPDATE – LEGAL COUNSEL – N/A

#### 4. APPROVE MINUTES

July minutes were approved.

#### 5. COMMITTEES/ REPORTS

- Finance & Fair Lending with Housing – *Ilene & Ivette* - No report
- Legislation – *Ivette* – No report
- Education, Public Safety and Student Life Committee – *Frank, Reverend Turner, Opel, Ivette* - Per Frank, HCPSS commissioned a committee of stakeholders to form the Committee for Diversity and Inclusion, which consisted of: parents, students, community organizations, staff, and members of the Central Office. 4 Topics were determined to set the ground work for this commission. These 4 topics were: 1) Workforce Diversity, 2) Curriculum, 3) Staff & Professional Development, and 4) Student Voice. Opel and Eli served on this commission to represent the HRC. From this 6-session workgroup, 30 recommendations were presented at the Board of Education meeting on 8/18. A copy of the video is posted on the HCPSS website.
- HRC Awards Committee – *Bianca & Opel* – Bianca confirmed target date for the 2017 HRC Awards program for 4/20/17. Since this is the same date HRC is to meet in April, Bianca suggested having HRC members **meet briefly prior** to the awards program. This will allow for all members to attend the program, without having a conflict in scheduling if the awards program was held on another night during the month. Stephanie will work with Bianca on confirming contract for Historic Oakland Ballroom, catering, etc. This location also has small meeting rooms where members can meet prior to the beginning of the awards program.
- Human Trafficking Committee – (*Vacant*) Dr. Sands will continue to give updates. There is a donation box located in the lobby of the Gateway Building for those who are able to contribute needed items for H. T. victims. A list of personal items and toiletries were emailed to everyone. Printed hard copies were also given during the July meeting.
- LGBTQ Committee - *Vacant* – Opel agreed to Chair this committee. On 10/13/16, IAOHRA members, Dr. Sands, and others will travel to Annapolis to work with legislators to include Transgender as a protected class. Transgender citizens are a protective class in Howard County, however, there are counties within the state of Maryland where this is not the case.
- Aging, Disability and Health Care Committee – *Bianca* – Bianca submitted her hard copy report to everyone via email. A listing of upcoming programs and events were also included in her report. No discussion followed.

6. STUDENT REPORT – Dr. Sands has forwarded Eli’s student project brochure to the county’s Public Information Office. Once PIO approves, the document will then be forwarded to the Office of Law. Once OOL approves, OHR will have the document printed (1 copy), and then forwarded to Frank for HCPSS’s approval through their Public Information Office. Once ALL approve, the document will be mass-printed for distribution through HCPSS.

## 7. STAFF REPORT/UPDATES –

Dr. Sands submitted monthly filing reports/overview of OHR cases. Dr. Sands asked all members “what can we do to assist those victims in Ellicott City who have been affected by the flood?” W.I.C. needs toiletries for babies, children, and pregnant women. All personal hygienic items are also needed for families i.e. clothes, socks, linen, etc. OHR will gladly receive your donations and ensure that your items are hand-delivered to the agencies who are receiving them.

A Community Advisory Committee is being formed to meet quarterly to share information on community initiatives, issues that may arise, any concerns that citizens want to discuss, etc. The idea came out of several church gatherings in Western Howard County. Members from six churches came together to meet with the Superintendent of HCPSS at Daisy Church. Members will select a different location for each meeting; possibly invite other community leaders, if there are concerns or needs to be addressed. More information will follow. Group’s kick-off will be held in November.

Interviews being conducted for 2 OHR open staff positions (Part-time Community Outreach Coordinator and Intake Investigator). Dr. Sands would like to have positions filled by November.

IAOHRA (International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies) met in Philadelphia in August. Howard County volunteered to host annual conference in 2018.

MAHRA’s annual training will be held on 10/24, Columbia Gateway Building – Rm 6 from 9a – 3p. All Human Rights Commissioners in Maryland are encouraged to attend. More information will follow to register.

## 8. CHAIR’S REPORT –

Opel provided Chair’s report on behalf of Reverend Turner. (1) HRC Goals Planning Committee met. Those members include: Rev. Turner, Peter, Bianca, Shiraz. Three goals/initiatives for 2016/17 are: Community Outreach, Education, and Engagement. Rev. Turner will begin exploring ways to utilize technology. Peter will begin exploring ways to educate the community with utilization of interactive websites and podcasts, webinars, posting of blogs, etc. It is a goal of this committee to encourage each member to attend at least 2 trainings, workshops, or seminars per year, whether free or fee-based. Peter will also explore Best Practices from other HRC agencies nationally. Bianca will oversee the creation and dissemination of information regarding training, events through the use of an HRC events calendar. This calendar will be circulated to all members to inform everyone of upcoming programs, trainings, etc.

## 9. NEW BUSINESS – N/A

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES – Frank was invited to speak to 500 Youth Pastors at a conference in Nairobi, Kenya during the last week in September. Frank will speak on, and give expert advice on **Reconciliation**.

Peter expressed his concerns regarding correspondence dated July 18, 2016 from Opel to the County Executive. A letter was sent, in addition to a series of emails. Peter’s concerns were not with the content of the letter; his concern was that the letter, in his opinion, was sent out of concern which represented the thoughts of the entire HRC body. Peter and Joan both indicated this was not the case. Peter requested that Opel, in the future, please clearly indicate by stating “I am speaking in my individual capacity.” Joan asked that all correspondence written on behalf of the HRC, be discussed during the monthly meeting first, prior to any formal communication being written or sent. Opel indicated that his letter to the County Executive, in which he signed as HRC Vice Chair, was due to the email correspondence that preceded the letter. He will take into consideration everyone’s suggestions for future correspondence as it relates to HRC.

II. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.