

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

APPROVED Minutes

June 18, 2020

Meeting occurred via WebEx Teleconferencing

Chair Ford called meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Bob Ford (Chair), Scott Markow (Vice Chair), Bianca Chang, Mabrooka Chaudhry, Joan Hash, Peter Hwang, Musa Jafri, Joshua Kaufmann, Leslie Salgado-Tamayo, and Kui Zhao.

Staff Present: Yolanda F. Sonnier (Executive Secretary)

Legal Counsel: Melissa Goldmeier

Meeting Attendees: Johnathan DiPietro and Iris Nagiecka

I. PUBLIC FORUM

Iris Nagiecka attended the meeting in order to relay that she is doing a research project on diversity and inclusion in High Schools, with a focus on Howard County. Also, Iris wanted to inform the commission that she is starting a committee within the school that focuses on diversity and inclusion. Iris was also generally interested in how the HRC works and what occurs during these meetings.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Kui made a motion to approve the May 21, 2020 minutes. Joan 2nd the motion. All Commissioners in attendance voted in favor of accepting the minutes as distributed. **May 21, 2020 minutes were approved.**

III. CHAIR'S REPORT – BOB

Bob mentioned that it is LGBTQ Pride month, however, there is no celebration this year due to COVID-19. Bob noted there were two favorable Supreme Court rulings this month. Bob also mentioned that the two letters to the editor were approved. The committee also discussed how to go about drafting and sending out letters in the future. Peter suggested perhaps there should be a committee when letters are being drafted. It was ultimately decided that suggestions for letters should be sent to Bob and Bob will solicit volunteers to help draft and finalize letters. Bob questioned whether HRC should have a separate Zoom account for the HRC meeting or whether they should be done via WebEx. Joan says she is fine with using WebEx or Teleconference number. Bianca does not think Zoom will allow recording and it may need to be recorded. Yolanda mentioned that for closed sessions, minutes have to be taken and it is not necessary to record. Bob brought up an offensive sign that had been brought to Yolanda's attention via Constituent Services which had offensive Native American symbols which was noticed on Route 108 by the caller. Constituent Services had forwarded this information regarding the sign complaint to OHR to see if we could investigate, which we cannot. Yolanda wanted to bring this up to HRC, so perhaps HRC may decide to investigate the sign further and possibly reach out to the person who complained about the sign. The commission contemplated whether to reach out to the business owner regarding their sign and ultimately Josh suggested that it would be useful to have another meeting to revisit the offensive signage issue.

IV. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY REPORT

Executive Secretary Report was circulated. Yolanda gave mention of LGBTQ month and Caribbean Heritage Month. Additionally, Yolanda noted that Juneteenth celebrations will occur on June 19, 2020. Yolanda mentioned OHR is facilitating a virtual Juneteenth celebration with the 50+ Center. The Human Trafficking Coordinating Council meeting will take place on June 22, 2020. Yolanda stated she will provide the commissioners with an update after the meeting occurs. Yolanda relayed that the LatinX Leaders conference call with the County Executive will take place on June 23, 2020. Yolanda mentioned that the AAPI Leaders call with County Executive will take place on June 24, 2020. Yolanda also mentioned that the IOHRA virtual town hall is scheduled for June 26th. Yolanda also mentioned that the Office of Human Rights is planning an LGBTQ virtual celebration/town hall set for June 30, 2020. Yolanda gave mention that on July 1, 2020 the MLK commission holiday meeting will occur. Lastly, Yolanda mentioned that two new commissioners are due to be confirmed by council on July 5, 2020; one student, one other commissioner and they will start in July. Yolanda mentioned that this is Musa's last meeting as a student representative and Musa was thanked for his service.

V. STUDENT REPORT

Musa stated that hopefully after COVID-19 is done he will be able to go to the library and send the HRC the final packets he has been preparing.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. **Nominating:** No report.
- b. **Awards:** Bianca mentioned that the deadline for award nominations will be closing this summer. There will be no meeting in August. The actual awards ceremony will tentatively be held in October. Holding an in-person versus virtual ceremony was discussed and a final decision will be made in July regarding this issue.
- c. **Outreach:** No report, besides letters which were already discussed.
- a. **Civic Participation (Census/Voting):** Kui reported Complete Counting Committee had meeting on May 29th. Starting on August 11, 2020 the U.S. Census Bureau will conduct field canvassing for enumeration. Kui stated that census local offices will be reopening on June 1, 2020. Kui stated that responses to the census from Asian population in Howard County has been historically low. During May and June Chinese community events (Leaning into Our Humanity seminar and Hope with Feathers virtual cultural gala), she respectfully requested the Chinese organizations to remind people to complete the census. The organizations did as she requested.
- d. **Hate Crimes:** Josh reports that he has not had time to be very active with this committee as work obligations have taken precedence. Josh is still working on standard interview questions.
- e. **Legislation:** Written report was provided. Scott noted that the County Council passed the bill to freeze and prevent landlords from raising rents during a public emergency such as COVID-19 pandemic.

- f. **Immigration:** Written report was provided. Joan noted that meeting with Prince George’s Human Rights representative did occur. All interviews have been concluded, expect for one. Joan expects to provide the report sometime soon, she is not certain about whether the report will be completed by July.

VII. NEW BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kui mentioned that FIRN needs volunteers to help with food distribution on June 20, 2020 between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Kui also mentioned Reverend Turner and family are moving to Chicago soon.

Scott mentioned that he reached out to BLM rally organizers that was held in HoCo and they will try and send representative to July meeting to the public forum to advise of other activities they have been working on.

Mabrooka mentioned Petition Musa had drafted.

VIII. CLOSED SESSION

Motion made to go into Closed session. All Commissioners voted in favor of the closed session

IX. ADJOURNMENT

- Motion to adjourn the meeting.
- Meeting Adjourned at 8:18 pm