

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

Minutes

March 17, 2016

Commission Members Absent:

Reverend Turner
Shiraz Ahmed

Commission Members Present:

Opel T. Jones, I
Ivette Lopez
Frank V. Eastham
Ivan Betancourt
Bianca Chang
Catherine Hyde
Ilene Kessler
Eli Sauerwalt

Staff:

Stephanie Chapple, Community Outreach
Coordinator
Barry Sanders, HRC Legal Counsel
Dr. Barbara J. Sands, OHR Compliance Officer

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. PUBLIC FORUM –

- **Dr. Calvin Ball**, Council Chair, briefly addressed and thanked HRC members for their service to the county. Dr. Ball attended quarterly meeting with Board of Education. Specific agenda item and topic of discussion was the racial climate within Howard County schools, issues of race relations amongst Howard County students, and the recent events surrounding the video that went viral. A committee for Diversity and Inclusion has been formed; Opel and Eli will serve on this committee as representatives for HRC.
- **Becky Bowman**, Administrator for Consumer Affairs gave an overview of what services are offered to citizens, shared how disputes are resolved, addressed specific details on consumers' rights & responsibilities, and gave examples of how OHR and Consumer Affairs interacts. Brochures were distributed.
- **David Lee** from the County Executive's Office answered questions about the appointment process as it relates to boards and commissions. Candidates can come from many sources i.e. citizens can express interest, commissioners can forward names, the County Executive can make a recommendation, or through news releases. Each board and commission may have a totally different practice; there is no standard practice "across the board" for all boards and commissions. Please note-Prefile is the Thursday before the 1st Monday of the month. The key is being proactive once a position is soon vacant. Best time to forward names of candidates would be 3-4 months prior to the term expiration. Reappointments are not automatic & is solely up to the discretion of the County Executive.

3. HRC CASES UPDATE – LEGAL COUNSEL –

HRC Case No. 16-02-001 will be discussed at the April meeting.

Amending a Rule in the Rules of Procedure cannot be changed because it's listed in the Charter. A change in the Rules of Procedure can only be done by County Resolution or Referendum. Barry will explain to all Commissioners in more detail at the April meeting.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

February meeting minutes were approved with two amendments. Amended meeting minutes will be corrected and re-sent to everyone.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT –

- Formal farewell and presentation of appreciation plaques will be given to Taylor, Tim, and Gen on April 8th, 7p.m. at gathering/dinner at Reverend Turner's home. More information will follow.
- Police Chief Gardner will speak to Commissioners during the April meeting. Topics will include: Policing and Community Relations, Howard County Police Department's response to President Obama's Policy issued to all Law Enforcement Agencies throughout the United States, and information on Diversity in Upper Management positions within the department, etc.

6. COMMITTEES/ REPORTS

Discussion – Per Opel's suggestion, due to the large number of committees, Commissioners should consider merging some of the committees into 1. Frank agreed. Some suggestions were merging Finance & Fair lending w/Housing; Education and Community Outreach w/Public Safety, Student Life w/Student Report, etc.

- *Finance and Fair Lending – Vacant* - No report.
- *Legislation – Ivette*- Legislative session has adjourned, no activity currently. Information will be shared during April meeting.
- *Education & Community Outreach – Frank, Rev. Turner* – Frank spoke to congregation at Dar Al Taqwa Mosque on Bullying. It was sadly revealing how children and adults of the Muslim faith, face such discrimination as it relates to religion. Ivan also shared his comments, adding that discrimination also exists for those who share differences in political opinion.
- *Public Safety – Opel* – No report
- *HRC Awards Program – Ivette and Bianca* – Committee received nomination for HCC's Mediation and Conflict Resolution Center. Committee agreed to honor MCRC for its work in the community. Bianca will work with organization to confirm date to present award.
- *Human Trafficking Task Force* – Ivan will speak to Dr. Sands about upcoming meeting dates and training. LGBTQ Committee – Catherine – No report.
- *Housing – Ivette and Ilene*- Ilene asked for clarification regarding Catherine's question about the way vouchers are calculated as it relates to housing in Howard County. Ilene will share more details at the April meeting. Per Ilene, HUD has many guidelines for applicants. Howard County is under the umbrella of HUD. Different counties have different laws as it relates to vouchers.
- *Aging & Disability Matters – Bianca* – Flier of upcoming events will be circulated via email through Stephanie.
- *Health Care Access – Bianca* – Bianca will forward a copy of upcoming programs and events related to healthy lifestyle, Women's Fest, and Get Healthy Howard County.
- *Student Life - Ivette* – Ivette attended the 2nd Multi-meeting Conversation with Students on March 8th at the Gateway Building. Although attendance was minimal, students who attended/participated shared great information on personal experiences, suggestions for inclusion, and rebuilding race relations amongst students and the school community.

7. STUDENT REPORT – Eli is working on a resource guide for transgender students which he'd like to have available in all high school guidance offices. Currently, each school offers different information for transgender students, however, Eli is working to have a brochure consistent and available at all schools. He has reached out to Freestate Legal as he researches what is/is not required in Maryland, etc. Opel hopes this project will continue on to the next Student Commissioner.

8. STAFF REPORT/UPDATES – Dr. Sands and Stephanie will attend Human Rights Day in Annapolis. Date has been rescheduled for 3/22 at the Miller Senate Office Building. Please contact Stephanie if you are interested in attending. Human Trafficking 101 is being planned in April. More details will be available during the April meeting. See Executive Secretary's report for more information on trainings, upcoming programs and events.

9. NEW BUSINESS –

- Ivette asked Commissioners to consider forwarding suggestions to the Goal Setting Committee regarding community issues that HRC wants to address, support, or initiate. One suggestion is to reach out to community and civic organizations to get input from their experiences on Community and Police, etc. Before we open up a large event to the community, discuss what expectations and goals HRC wants to accomplish. Ivette will come up with some recommendation to present to the committee and to the Chair to initiate this process.
- Panels should be updated to replace outgoing Commissioners. New panels are as follows:
Panel 1 – Turner (Chair), Betancourt, Chang **Panel 2** – Lopez (Chair), Jones, Hyde **Panel 3** – Eastham (Chair), Kessler, Ahmed (New Commissioners can be floaters)
- Commissioners requested training for new members, as well as refresher training for current members as it relates to HRC Rules of Procedures, HRC Case Information, and overall review of the Howard County Code (as it relates to HRC). Frank, Ivette, Opel, Reverend Turner and Dr. Sands will work together to determine date of training, set agenda, etc.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES – N/A

II. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.