

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

Minutes

November 21, 2019

Mr. Ford called meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Bob Ford, Chair, Joan Hash, Peter Hwang, Leslie Salgado-Tamayo, Mabrooka Chudhry, Lynda Earle, and Scott Markow

Staff Present: Ms. Melissa Goldmeier, HRC Legal Counsel, Yolanda F. Sonnier, Esquire, Executive Secretary, and Chaunta Taylor, Recording Secretary

Mr. Ford thanked Yolanda and Chaunta for the lovely fellowship, and Yolanda thanked the Commission for their service.

Public Forum: The public forum consisted of 5 Howard County concern citizen that came before the Commission on October 16, 2019. The citizens wanted to thank the Commission for responding to their letter. However, they returned before the Commission to further discuss the issues and status on terminating the contract at the Jessup Detention Center with ICE or having the immigration status incorporated into the code.

Commissioner asked: If the County was to terminate the contract with ICE at Jessup Jail where would detainees go?

Citizen responded: Attorney from CASA accompanied an immigrant to her teen visit during a check and they took her at that visit.

Commissioner asked: They being who?

Citizen responded: ICE they decided to incarcerate her, when she showed up for her check in.

Commissioner asked: Was she awaiting a hearing?

Citizen responded: Yes, she was awaiting a hearing, but when the attorney from CASA asked why because CASA has space available for them.

Bob asked: This contract with ICE is through the County have you spoke with the County Executive (CEX) about ending the contact with ICE and if so what is his position?

Citizen answered: Due to the money coming into the County the CEX had no interest in terminating the contract.

Bob thanked the citizen for coming and informed them they HRC had a long meeting and needed to move, but he mentioned when the CB9 vote took place that HRC did take a stand on it in favor of that Bill.

Commissioner brought up, another issue we county code with the immigration status.

Commissioner asked: If anyone was aware of any other jurisdiction that has immigration status as protective class, and just asking in my option why is it necessary to have the immigration verses relying on another basis in the code such as race, religion and national origin.

Joan asked: Since she isn't a lawyer, she would need a clear understanding on Howard County law.

Leslie bought up as member of the Coalition we meet with the CEX and she addressed the race, religion and national origin that's covered by the code people think cover the immigration status and it doesn't and he said he would consider it.

Citizen stated therefore it's important, she received an email about a young man who worked for a month and the employer refuse to pay him and said he was undocumented, there is enormous amount of exploration as well as harassment. What people don't know is there are a lot of undocumented immigrants pay taxes and into social security and they can't get anything out as well as supporting our community and they are terrified.

Leslie stated not only is the undocumented are affected but the entire family is affected, people who lived here for many years. If I had a friend that who was being harassed I would suffer from that. It's the whole entire community that suffers. There have been stories where children are being harassed because they find out their parents are undocumented. We need to be aware of this because the national environment that we are living in ok the white supremacy where a lot of those folks think they have the power now to do what they are doing. I've been living in Howard County for 50 years and Howard County use to welcome people from different race, communities, and mixed marriages where we can bring up our family feeling safe and comfortable and now we are not there, we are not there in Howard County and we should be aware and see what can be done about it.

Linda asked: for clarification on hearing one of the citizens mention that Anne Arundel County ended the contract with ICE and if she remembers correctly the money would be used to gain representation?

Citizen responded: There were two steps, the 1st was to end was a contract called 287G with contract the police actively work with ICE when they picked someone up they would they in a database and immediately contact ICE. They also had an IGSA with the dentition center, they ended the contract with 287G and then Stewart Pippin announced they will use the money from the detention center for a legal/defense fund for the detainees at which point ICE canceled the contract. So ICE actually were the one that canceled that contact.

Linda asked: what is your position on monies being used for the inmates?

Citizen responded: Believes we should end the contract but with that said I also believe like many areas in the County and around us we should have legal fund to help salmon seekers and immigrants that have civil issues, and they are not felonies they have no right and its very clear if you have a lawyer your most likely win your case.

Joan asked: What about if they must fill out a form even with protective status, County procedure require you to fill out a form do you think this will change fear, and they would go and fill out the form? There is thing you won't be able to get unless you file out a form. What if I am in a business and I have protective status and I am working for a company but the people in the company are private citizens. I may say I believe you are offending me, and I have protective status and I am going to file a complaint. Then they citizen may just call ICE. Just trying to figure out how this work on paper.

Citizen responded: Were not going to solve this problem with 1 thing solution it needs multiple things to happen, having HRC change the code would be great, but we need Legislation covering as well.

Bob asked: Are any there any prospect of Council people supporting, you know who is sponsoring, because you only need three.

Citizen responded: There is a lot of interest in it and we were told if 3 people sponsor and pass the Bill Calvin Ball would sign it.

Bob thanked the citizens again and stated due to time we must move on we have a long meeting and this is just the beginning of our meeting, you're are welcome to stay for the meeting.

Approval of October minutes were deferred to next month.

Reports

CHAIR:

Bob moved on with the Chair report and stated there are four issues he's bring up to the Commissioners and made the comment we may not get to our goals this meeting. Were going to skip the committee reports and hopefully we can get some of the goals done. The 1st issue was addressing personal emails, there were concerns about personal emails being shared and asked Melissa if she didn't mind discussing.

Melissa stated it is up to the Commissioner if you are using your personal emails under the personal information act your emails are not considered confidential.

Bob suggested if the Commission wanted to change their emails to a Gmail account and asked the Commissioners if they wanted to consider keeping HRC business separate.

Commissioner stated (Scott), I don't think we need to do that because we already have the HRC account that Chaunta and think that all HRC communication should go through that email.

Melissa stated unfortunately your email address aren't considered confidential and you don't have to use your personal email address.

Yolanda bought up the situation that prompted this discussion and stated Chaunta asked Melissa if emails were confidential unfortunately the question was asked after an email had already went out. Going forward emails from the public will be sent to HRC and Chaunta will forward them to the Commissioners.

Leslie asked if it was Laurie who had asked for individual emails, Yolanda responded no it was a Ms. Prasad (complaint), she was advise her to send it to the HRC email to be forwarded to the commissioners.

Bob moved on secondly to discuss the retreat and training, with training on housing should we do it at a meeting or at a separate date?

Yolanda stated that one of the commissioners had a question about Fair housing and an OHR investigator is willing to come in and conduct training that would take about 15-30 minutes.

Bob stated if it's only going to be 15-30 minutes we could do it a t a meeting and asked the commissioner how they felt.

Commissioners unanimously agreed to have the training conducted at the January meeting.

Bob moved on to the Retreat are we still thinking January 2020, the retreat is to discuss our goals and committees. Bob throughout January or February?

Yolanda bought up that it was discussed to have it on a Saturday and changing the dates.

Scott stated we should do a Saturday due to time restrictions.

Bob asked can the retreat be held at 9820 Patuxent Wood location or does the commissioner want to do it somewhere else and if we had any retreats in the past?

Yolanda stated while you are still considering dates, she would not recommend 1/18/2020 because that the weekend MLK festivities, and 1/25/2020 is the Lunar New Year either. They put you at 1/11/2020 or the beginning of February.

Bob asked anyone opposed to 1/11/2020 and asked where and how long we should have the retreat.

Bob asked if someone could do a Duddle?

Yolanda agreed to setup a doodle but asked what dates 1/11/2020, 2/1/2020, 2/8//2020 and time 10am-2pm.

Bob brought up the next item on the agenda was Ms. Prasad email and asked the commissioners are the interested in pursuing any further?

Peter stated I had reread what she sent and reviewing the code and Melisa advise that there wasn't a basis as far as discrimination. He was curious on why, and if it should be discussed in close session because we are asking for legal advice.

Melissa stated there was no need to go into close session because it's up to the commissioner if they wanted to further investigate the issue.

Yolanda asked if the commissioner were going to go into close session, because it seems you may have more question for counsel.

Bob asked did she file a complainant and if it went anywhere.

Joan stated that if there was an OHR case she never saw any documentation from it.

Yolanda stated if its systemic discrimination HRC can decide to take it, and ask Bob isn't it different because you stated it's like waterfront property because everyone is interested in waterfront property, but she is stating its targeted to a specific group.

Joan stated that if there was an OHR case she never saw any documentation from it.

Peter stated if the market is at a higher demand due to a certain characteristic, does that mean its discriminatory?

Scott stated but if you're doing it to discriminate against someone.

Peter stated yes if you said if the person is X but if you stated your charging more due to a higher demand and even if that higher demand is a result of X your intent isn't to discriminate, your charging a higher price due to the demand.

Bob agreed because they aren't just charging Indian but if I went there and they charged less that discriminatory, but they are charging everyone the same amount.

Scott stated that she's not saying they are charging based on race, she is saying due to a certain characteristic it makes this property more desirable and they are charging more.

Peter stated which isn't discrimination, it may not be nice but not discrimination.

Bob stated maybe she could address the issues to the big Indian groups in Howard County to change the Law.

Scott suggested that the commissioner respond to Ms. Prasad and say under the Laws that exist now this doesn't constitute as discrimination.

Bob stated unless someone disagree we done with this issue?

Scott agreed to write another letter to Ms. Prasad and explain HRC decision not to move forward and why.

Bob stated the last items on the Chair's report is discuss the protest paper work or should we give it another month.

Bob asked if someone can make a motion on how we should handle the two issues?

The Commission unanimously agreed to form a subcommittee called Immigration Subcommittee to further review the changing the code and two issues. The committee consist of Joan, Peter, Scott, Linda and Leslie.

Bob stated we are skipping the committee reports everyone should've receive copies of all the reports.

Yolanda, discuss the County Executive Report and in the interest of time she just wanted to highlight a few things.

- Training MAHRA on 11/26th and 12/3 was canceled and will look at dates in January
- Human Rights Day on 2/21/2020 @ 8am -1pm
- CEX started LGBT workgroup meeting will start in January 2020
- We had the 1st Native American Heritage Celebration
- Kwanzaa is 12/26 @ GHB 5:30pm-8pm
- Bianca provided Chinese for the OHR brochure

Then Yolanda thanked the Commissioners for volunteering and since this in the month of Thanks we appreciate everyone coming out a breaking bread with us, thank you and we appreciate all you do.

Bob reminded the Commissioners that next month will be Elections for Chair and Vice Chair.

New Business:

Leslie asked who is responsible for the agenda items?

Yolanda responded it's the Chair responsibility, if you have items for the agenda send them to the Chair. However, our office has a deadline to post the agenda. Just to reflect on the minutes and we are clear. The Commissioners will send the agenda items to the Chair and then the Chair will send them to our staff support person.

Bob stated items that will take time to discuss should be emailed to him to be added to the agenda. We will adjust according depending on if we have cases. Last month we discuss spending 30 minutes on discussing goals for 2020 do we want to still do that tonight or wait until the retreat? The Commissioner decided to wait until the retreat to discuss 2020 goals.

Melissa asked if there aren't any legal items to discuss she will excuse herself.

Yolanda thanked the commissioners that attended the Human trafficking seminar and asked if they could speak a little about it.

Commissioners that participated at the Human Trafficking Seminar discuss briefly their take away.

Announcements:

CLOSED SESSION: No cases to discussed

Meeting Adjourned: Mr. Ford adjourned at 8:35pm