

# HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

**APPROVED** Minutes

April 16, 2020

## Meeting occurred via WebEx Teleconferencing

Chair Ford called meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.

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

**Staff Present:** Yolanda F. Sonnier (Executive Secretary)

**Legal Counsel:** Melissa Goldmeier

### **I. PUBLIC FORUM**

Jumel Howard attended the meeting. Mr. Howard is attending the meeting and not for the purpose to speak at the public forum.

### **II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Kui made a motion to approve the March 19, 2020 minutes. Joan 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. All Commissioners in attendance voted in favor of accepting the minutes as distributed except Joshua who abstained from vote because he had not attended last month's meeting. **March 19, 2020 minutes were approved.**

### **III. CHAIR'S REPORT – BOB**

- Appeals – one case appealed and pending OHR's response due May 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **IV. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY REPORT**

Executive Secretary Report was circulated prior to the meeting

- OHR
  - office teleworking
  - Intakes are being done via web and telephone
  - Investigators are continuing with investigations and interviews
- Outreach matters have been cancelled because of COVID-19
- Yolanda asked for any questions from the Commission. The questions follow:
- Leslie asked whether any of the OHR staff are part of the COVID-19 taskforce. Yolanda responded “no”.
- Joshua asked whether there have been any Hate-Bias incidents, or anything related to COVID-19, anti-Asian in particular. Yolanda responded none brought to her attention in the County. The County Executive had two teleconference calls in order to provide information and answer questions surrounding COVID-19: (1) with Asian-American community and (2) with Latino-American community. The County Executive's call with Asian-American revealed that some Asian-Americans are fearful of being targeted, however, no instances were provided. Yolanda reiterated on the call that our office is here to help, if they do experience any instances of discrimination during this epidemic, as we are still open and taking

complaints. The Chinese School did contact OHR to see what services we can provide due to the concern the Asian-American community being targeted during the COVID-19 epidemic. The OHR Outreach team, Bystander Intervention Training is being offered virtually to The Chinese School. HRC members expressed desire to participate in Bystander Intervention Training.

- Leslie expressed that she believes OHR and HRC should be concerned with impact of COVID-19 on minority communities in Howard County, specifically, Latino and African American communities. She does not know whether anyone is keeping records and providing information for Howard County. Yolanda agreed about the concern and advised that there are records that are being kept for Howard County regarding the COVID-19 cases diagnosed and deaths resulting from COVID-19. Yolanda noted that a disproportionate number of African-Americans have been affected by COVID-19 in general. Minority communities generally have expressed concerns regarding health services and having no income because of job loss during the COVID-19 epidemic.
- Yolanda discussed that LGBTQ workgroup meeting occurred April 15, 2020. HRC should think about how to provide support LGBTQ community members.
- Kui noted that a new part-time community outreach position was filled on March 30, 2020 and she asked how the new employee would work with the Human Rights Commissioners.
- Kui requested that Outreach Team include herself and Bianca in any communications with The Chinese School.
- Kui reported Chinese community has been very fearful because of incidents that happened in New York and Texas recently.
- Yolanda noted that part-time outreach employee is transitioning from being a contingent to permanent position employee. Yolanda noted additionally that the employee will primarily focus on social media, OHR multimedia as well as general outreach duties. She may be involved with the HRC Outreach committee and is currently working on a postcard handout.
- Bob asked about March 31, 2020 deadline to replace commissioner opening and student opening. There are a few student applications that have been submitted and a few resumes and letters of interest for the open positions. Mr. Howard has submitted a letter of interest and resume for the commissioner position. There are four individuals who submitted letters of interest for the commissioner position and three students interested, however, one is already and senior and will not qualify.
- Leslie received a call and provided our phone number to someone who has a concern about domestic violence. However, when that person called, the message was in English, so she hung up. Leslie requested the best way to get in contact with someone regarding domestic violence. Yolanda clarified that Office of Human Rights does not help with the actual domestic violence or protection against domestic violence. OHR would help if denial of services were alleged and discrimination occurred. Jumel Howard mentioned that Legal Aid can help domestic violence victims by helping with the protective order process. Jumel Howard's phone number is: 301-560-2132.
- Yolanda noted the conference call with The Chinese School is at 1:00 p.m. on April 17, 2020. Kui and Bianca confirmed they would like to be included in that conference call. This meeting is to continue planning the Bystander Intervention training.
- Bianca mentioned an incident where the mask was asked to be removed since the County had not implemented the mandatory face masks yet. Bianca wondered whether this is being investigated. Yolanda

indicated she has heard concerns especially of African-American men being asked to remove their masks when entering stores and they are being targeted, although OHR has not been made aware of any instances in Howard County. People can report and file complaints of such incidents as public accommodation discrimination. Bianca says that once face mask Order gets put in place his Saturday is there any other information being provided to stores, security staff, etc. regarding this Order? Yolanda is not aware of anything specific being provided to places of business and we will follow up with the Office of the County Executive to see if there is any information being distributed to places of business as guidelines regarding facemasks and protocol.

## V. STUDENT REPORT

Bob asked Musa whether he has a student report.

Musa stated yes and elaborated that he has been working on creating packets, but the document sources that he wanted to use are in the Howard County Historical Society at Miller Branch Library, which is not accessible at this time. He was going to look online to see if I could find other documents of similar quality.

## VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. **Awards:** Discussed the May 28<sup>th</sup> date and it should be cancelled. Discussed Bianca and the committees' suggestion to move to the fall. Joshua offered a suggestion of selecting the award recipients, put out a press release and promote on social media but present the award at the 2021 ceremony. Commissioners are asked to think of other suggestions. Also, there are 4 individual nominations and 3 business nominations.
- b. **Outreach:** No report this month.
- c. **Nominating:** Discussed that nominating committee does have work to do and should meet to interview candidates virtually for the vacant commissioner position and student commissioner position. Yolanda will ensure the information regarding candidates is sent to the nominating committee members. Yolanda has requested that nominating committee members send a recommendation and then the County Executive will make an appointment. County Counsel are doing limited resolutions currently and it may take longer for a resolution to be introduced and approved.
- d. **Legislation:** Scott provided the report. Report also attached to the minutes.
- e. **Immigration:** Joan provided the Immigration Committee Report. Lynda indicated the Immigration committee is still investigating detainees and doing thorough research. Report will be delayed accordingly. The monthly report is attached to the minutes.
- f. **Hate Crimes:** No report this month. Joshua will convene the committee.
- g. **Census/Voting:** Kui provided the report for the Census/Voting committee. The report is attached to the minutes.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Lynda – ICE has temporarily halted enforcement efforts, except for national and criminal matters.

- Lynda – NAACP will hold a Town Hall on April 21, 2020 which will discuss the census and voting. Lynda will provide information as it becomes available.
- Scott – April 20, 2020 - Howard County Jewish Federation is remembering individuals who passed away in Holocaust, it is the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.
- Bianca – need individuals who know how to sew to help make masks for hospitals. Collection box is outside hospital.
- Leslie – FIRN - food and clothing is needed for children.

**VIII. CLOSED SESSION**

No closed session this month.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

- Joan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Lynda 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion.
- Meeting Adjourned at 8:25 pm