

**Virtual Meeting**

**MINUTES<sup>1</sup>**

**Thursday, 18 March 2021**

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Members Present:** Yolanda Sonnier, Jon Steuernagle, Jackie Scott, Cheryl Mattis, Andrea Nunez, Rich Gibson, Jennifer W. Ritter, Jessica Epps, Stephen Liggett Creel, Jay Prager, Chief Lisa Davis, Dave Francis, Lt. Eric Kruhm, Mariam Imohi, Sara Smoley, Leslie Lampieri, Sara Cochran, Donna Bauer, Monica Krebs, Andrew Heiliger, Alicia Altamirano, and Chuck Chandler.

**Members Absent:** Maura Rossman, Lisa Myers and Dina Ward.

**Special Guest(s):** Jennifer Grimes, Howard County Police Department

**Others in Attendance:** Kathy Jordan, Leslie Petak, Susan Allen, Nick Weikel, Valerie Harvey, and Briana Davis.

**MEETING SUMMARY:**

**1. MEETING OPEN**

- a. 1:30 pm; Yolanda Sonnier, Chair, Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council (HTPCC), opened the meeting by welcoming committee members.

**2. Establishment of Quorum and Recognition of Special Guests**

- a. The Roll was taken<sup>2</sup>: Twenty-Two Committee members were in attendance. Yolanda Sonnier declared the Committee was in quorum and brought the meeting to order.
- b. Yolanda Sonnier recognized the attendance of special guest, Detective Jennifer Grimes, Howard County Police Department Vice and Narcotics Unit, Human Trafficking Section.

**3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes**

- a. Ms. Sonnier entered the 21 January 2021 Committee minutes and opened for discussion. Lisa Davis motioned to accept the minutes as written and Jon Steuernagle seconded the motion. A voice vote of official members was taken and approved without opposition or abstentions.

**4. Presentation by Invited Guests**

- a. Case Study: State of Maryland vs. Ronald Cheek: Jennifer Grimes, Howard County Police Department, with Jennifer W. Ritter, State Attorney's Office, presented a case study detailing the investigation (2019) and trial (2020) of Ronald Cheek.

Rich Gibson, Howard County State's Attorney, commented on the investigation noting the importance of the interagency collaboration that was crucial in building a successful case.

## 5. January- February Events and Old Business

a. Policy and Legislation Committee Updates: Monica Krebs, Committee Chair, reported no updates as the committee has been unable to meet. The next committee meeting date is to be determined.

b. Training, Outreach and Partnerships Committee Updates: Andrea Nunez, OHTP Manager, provided the report on behalf of the committee. She shared that Rev. Del Scruggs resigned from his position as Committee Chair and introduced Nicholas Weikel as the newly elected Chair.

Andrea Nunez shared the Red Sand Awareness video was overall a great success. She noted the video should be included in the Ball Bulletin for the next year's initiative.

Andrea Nunez stated the committee is in the early stages of developing hotel training in partnership with Hopeworks and Visit Howard.

c. Real Estate Committee Updates: Andrea Nunez, OHTP Manager, provided the report on behalf of Committee Chair, Cassie Dorsey. The Committee is continuing to finalize a formal state-wide training for all Real Estate Professionals.

Ms. Nunez noted the committee has made two drafts of a resource card containing contact information for reporting suspected cases of Human Trafficking. Within the next couple months, the Office of Human Trafficking Prevention will be placing the initial order for print. The cards will then be dispersed among the committee to share within their professional networks.

d. Medical Committee Updates: Andrea Nunez reported that she had met with Committee Chair, Leslie Lampieri, individually to discuss gaps in services. There is an identified need for residential drug treatment, which the committee will begin to address once trainings have been completed for all hospital staff.

e. Office of Human Trafficking Prevention (OHTP) Update: Andrea Nunez, OHTP Manager, shared that the OVC Grant budget was approved and that the office is moving forward with the hiring process for the Program Assistant Position.

## 6. New Business

a. Commission Appointments/Resignations: Andrea Nunez stated that Rev. Del Scruggs has resigned his appointments as Vice Chair of the Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council.

Jon Steuernagle expressed interest in filling the role as Vice Chair of the Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council. He was confirmed with no opposition from official members.

b. April Sexual Assault Awareness Month: Yolanda Sonnier recognized April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month and noted the council should make plans to participate. She proposed a panel discussion as well as running a social media campaign for the full month of April, posting once per week to raise public awareness about sexual assault and educate the community on how to prevent sexual violence.

Monica Krebs noted the opportunity to draw the connection between sexual assault and human trafficking, highlighting the work of the Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council.

Cheryl Mattis suggested partnering with HopeWorks and other agencies to share about the measures they are taking to prevent sexual violence throughout the county.

- c. Social Media Ambassador Program: Andrea Nunez expressed she had spoken with DCRS Communications team about assisting with a Social Media Ambassador Program to share and disperse content utilizing social media. She purposed, that the Office of Human Trafficking Prevention, would create brief sample posts containing basic information that would be available for council members to share on their personal social media accounts. She noted council members would need to sign a contract agreeing not to alter the content of the original post.

#### **7. Announcements and Events of Importance**

- a. April 30: Training Outreach and Partnerships Committee Meeting, 10:00am-11:00am.
- b. May 20: Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council Full Meeting, 1:00pm – 2:30pm.

#### **8. Additional Items for Discussion**

- a. Monica Krebs shared information about the Office on Trafficking in Persons, *Voices of Freedom initiative*<sup>3</sup> a collaboration with StoryCorps to share stories of the Anti-Trafficking community.
- b. Nick Weikel inquired about John Schools and whether that had been a topic of discussion.

#### **9. Next Coordination Council Meeting Date(s)**

- a. The next meeting of the Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council will be held May 20, 2021. The meeting will be virtual.

#### **10. ADJOURNMENT:**

- a. 2:45pm; Yolanda Sonnier closed the meeting and directed the Council to stand in adjournment until 20 May 2021.

Minutes were drafted by: Briana Davis

Yolanda Sonnier  
Chair



**Notes:**

- 1) The meeting was conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2) One Council member vacated their appointments.
- 3) More information about the *Voices of Freedom Initiative* can be found at, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/outreach-material/voices-freedom-collaboration-storycorps>.