

HTPCC Training Outreach and Partnerships Committee

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES¹

Friday, 26 February 2021

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present: Andrea Nunez, Cheryl Mattis, Jackie Scott, Mariam Imohini and Sara Cochran.

Members Absent: Chuck Chandler, Suellen Siegel and Kathy Jordan.

Others in Attendance: Margo Duesterhaus, Leslie Petak, Susan Allen, Nick Wykle, Valerie Harvey and Briana Davis.

MEETING SUMMARY:

1. MEETING OPEN

a. 10:00 am; Andrea Nunez, OHTP Manager, called the meeting to order and welcomed committee members. Andrea Nunez shared that the previous Committee Chair, Rev. Del Scruggs, decided to resign from his role on the Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council.

Andrea Nunez opened discussion for members to ask questions and/ or express interest in the role of Committee Chair. Nick Weikel expressed interest and requested to discuss the role in greater detail outside of the meeting.

2. Old Business

a. January Red Sand Initiative: Andrea Nunez reviewed the Red Sand Initiative that was completed for January National Human Trafficking Awareness Month and asked members for their feedback.

Sara Cochran expressed that she had shared the final video in the AGAST Newsletter. She shared that she had received positive feedback from those in the community and it was noticed that there was a variety of community advocates included in the video. She inquired about where the video had been posted for the public, noting the opportunity to include the video on the OHTP website.

Andrea Nunez confirmed that the video had been shared on the Department of Community Resources and Services Facebook and YouTube accounts.

Cheryl Mattis agreed that it would be beneficial to post the Red Sand Initiative video on the OHTP website.

3. New Business

a. Utilizing Social Media: Andrea Nunez expressed an idea for a social media Ambassador Program to share and disperse content through personal social media accounts spanning various platforms. 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.

Nick Weikel suggested drafting content to focus on the local level, highlighting the issue of Human Trafficking as it relates to Howard County. Furthermore, content could be generic as well as tailored to specific populations such as hotels, parents, churches, etc. Public Service Announcements and fliers would also be an opportunity to equip a larger network within the community with additional resources.

Valerie Harvey and Margo Duesterhaus agreed that focusing efforts locally would have a greater impact by helping the public to understand the issue of Human Trafficking and how it is occurring within the county. Valerie Harvey suggested drafting content in the form of a questions, 'Did you know...?'

Margo Duesterhaus suggested utilizing the 'Next Door' platform to spread content throughout various neighborhoods in the county. She noted that the HCPD had access to sharing information on the platform.

Leslie Petak shared a previous PSA Flier created by AGAST. She expressed that the flier was dispersed at various locations in the community and was well received by the public.

- b. Planning for Spring Virtual Awareness Events:** Andrea Nunez led discussion to determine potential awareness events or initiatives the committee would like to focus on for spring 2021. Members expressed interest in offering a second virtual meet and greet event for civic and faith-based organizations in Howard County.

Valerie Harvey noted the opportunity to offer future meet and greet events in partnership with the Local Children's Board, during scheduled student support meetings.

Andrea Nunez and Mariam Imohini described ongoing efforts to provide training to hotels throughout the county. There is currently a total of forty hotels in Howard County; twenty of which are part of the Maryland State Lodging Association which have a mandated training in place for employees. The goal is to target training outreach to the remaining hotels that do not currently mandate training and offer to host trainings to educate employees on the issues surrounding human trafficking. Andrea Nunez noted the need to incentivize trainings to encourage hotels to voluntarily participate. She proposed the idea to recognize individual hotels that successfully complete the trainings by providing a certificate of recognition and sharing the accomplishment with the community.

Margo Duesterhaus added the possibility to recognize individual employees who accurately recognize and report suspicions of trafficking. Andrea Nunez shared this may be difficult, since active cases must be finished prior to disclosing any information to the public.

Cheryl Mattis noted that the attention may be a disincentive for hotels as they do not want to be perceived as an establishment where trafficking is associated, but more so as preventative.

Nick Weikel and Sara Cochran spoke to experience organizing outreach initiatives to independent hotels. They stressed the importance of following up with each establishment after initial contact.

- c. Office of Human Trafficking Prevention (OHTP) Updates:** OHTP Manager, Andrea Nunez provided general office updates. The County Government has been working to provide county-wide updates to the website. The new website is tentatively expected to launch by the end of March.

Andrea Nunez briefly shared that the OVC Grant is currently in the budget review process. She noted that the budget submitted by the Howard County Police Department was recently approved.

4. Announcements and Events of Importance

- a. March 17: Real Estate Committee Meeting, 10:00am-11:30am.
- b. March 18: Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council Full Meeting, 1:00pm – 2:30pm.

5. Additional Items for Discussion

- a. Nick Weikel inquired if there was an existing partnership with County Department of Corrections, noting the relationship between trafficking and the correctional system. Andrea Nunez expressed that this was an area she was interested in and shared there currently is not an existing partnership between the two agencies.

5. Next Committee Meeting Date(s)

- a. The next meeting of the HTPCC Training Outreach and Partnerships Committee is scheduled for April 30, 2021 from 10am – 11am. The meeting will be virtual.

6. ADJOURNMENT

- a. 11:20 am; Andrea Nunez concluded the meeting.

Minutes were drafted by: Briana Davis

Notes:

- 1) The meeting was conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.