HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING
APPROVED Minutes
September 14, 2021

Meeting occurred via WebEx Teleconferencing

Chair Scott Markow called meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Scott Markow, (Chair), Bianca Chang (Vice Chair), Mabrooka Chaudhry, Bob Ford, Kui Zhao, Gabriel Terrasa, Sahara Ukaegbu (Student Commissioner), Jonah Hornum, Lynda Earle, Peter Hwang

Absent: Joan Hash

Staff Present: Yolanda Sonnier and Fatina Jackson

Legal Counsel: Melissa Goldmeier

I. PUBLIC FORUM
Bill Withers: He is here representing a small group of the Native American Community, to support them. They are concerned about a survey regarding the courthouse that was sent out that omitted Native American/Alaskan Native as one of the demographic categories.

Keith Merkey: From MD Commission of Human Rights stated he was sitting in the meeting as usual.

Ani Begay Auld: Stated that Kerry Lessard is on the meeting and will let her speak regarding the issue with the survey.

Kerry Hawk Lessard: Executive Director of Native American Lifelines in Baltimore City. Commissioner on Indian Affairs of Maryland Commission by Gov. Hogan. Resident of Ellicott City. Wanted to address commission of issues of data collection practices. Use of historic courthouse. Every ethnicity was listed except for Native American/Alaskan Native – statistically “Othered.” Cannot assist population if data is not showing Native/Alaskan community. When not counted it is very “dehumanizing”. Howard County can lead and make sure all ethnicities are equitably accounted for.

Christine Galarza: Native American resident of Howard County, stated Ms. Lessard spoke of most of the issues and support what she had discussed.

II. APPROVAL OF JULY MINUTES
Scott asked if everyone had the opportunity to review the July minutes or any further edits or comments. Yolanda had some suggestions for revisions. Scott agreed to those changes. Bianca suggested some changes. Scott stated that since there were multiple changes, for Yolanda to revise the minutes and redistribute them so that HRC can review them in their
next meeting, right before their Closed Session on September 23rd. Kui stated she already gave changes to Fatina and she already made the changes.

III. COMMUNITY MEMBER OF LA ALIANZA LATINA and THE LUMINUS NETWORK
Danielle Duran Baron, guest speaker. Offered her perspective and what they have been doing in Howard County. Danielle shared a presentation with the group, called “Latino/Latina/LatinX/Hispanic Heritage.” Danielle shared her background and have been in Howard County since 2008. Talked about the terminology with Latino, Hispanic, and LatinX. It appeared most individuals wanted to be called by their county + American, such as Mexican American. Statistics were shared that 4 in 5 Latinos are U.S. Citizens. She shared some facts that the U.S. Hispanic population reached 62.1 million in 2020, number of Latinos who are multiracial has increased and Hispanics have become largest racial/ethnic group in California. Latinos are diverse by design. Latinos are 6% in county, but 12.5% in schools. Danielle went over what the mission of La Alianza Latina workgroup is and the pillars: Health, Education and Economic Equity & Empowerment.

Kui asked what type of activities are there. Danielle stated that its mostly activities for children, but every age is welcome.

Mabrooka stated she would like to have this information for the kids and to share with other associates.

IV. CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT
Scott welcomed Jonah Hornum, one of the new commissioners. Jonah officially introduced himself to the commissioners and spoke of his background and interest in the HRC. Scott spoke about the updates for the HRC webpage. Yolanda stated that Marla was overseeing that but has been out of office. Marla is back in office and in the meantime, send an email to HRC email address, and Fatina will pass to Marla. On August 3rd, Lynda and Scott, attended National Night Out, and there was great attendance. Scott reminded every that they are having a Special Meeting next Thursday, September 23rd. They will approving the July minutes and having a closed session for a few cases. Melissa will be conducting a training for the hearing cases. Awards ceremony is on Tuesday, October 19th, at the Howard Conservatory, and regular monthly meeting will be Thursday, October 21st via WebEx. Scott has assigned the new commissioners to committees.

V. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY REPORT
Yolanda shared the 3 new staff members that joined the OHRE since July. OHRE is now fully staffed. OHRE opened a Virtual Listening session to the public on how office can create an equitable and inclusive community. Bianca came to the August 31st sessions. There is another session on September 23rd. There are line up of events for OHRE in October. The Outreach team is doing Humanity Matters. Equity Unit finished their community equity audit and materials were translated in several languages. Dr. Boston is providing testimony next week for Council Resolution 146, that endorses County Executives to joining government alliance on race and equity. The equity team did several community focus groups where they were able to asks targeted questions and listen to those
focus groups. There were 4 HBIs. Information was also laid out for the MLK pop-up pantry on September 27. MLK is planned to be in person in January but will continue to look at COVID news. Scott asked if commissioners need to attend any events. Yolanda stated that they should attend a Listening Session. October is Global Diversity Month. There will be a book and film discussion. In October, there will be a Youth Speaker Series. Bob asked if the issue that has been brought up with Native American, has that been brought up to our office. Yolanda stated that she sent a message to staff, as well as constituent services the deputy CAO and will share with Mr. Withers as well as the commission when she receives the response. Scott asked if the audit was over, and Yolanda stated that they received over 500 responses and it has been closed. Yolanda also mentioned OHRE has been intentional in making sure everyone is included. She went over the 3 stages of the Equity Strategic Plan. Kui stated the issue earlier with the Native American was with the Planning and Zoning Department.

VI. STUDENT COMMISSIONER REPORT
Sahara wanted to make a report on the organization she is in, the Howard County Student Committee for Equity. It pertains to issues that are in the public-school systems and the jurisdiction with SROs, and the Code of Conduct. There is a chart of misbehavior with levels 1 to 5, how offensive the misbehavior a student has and how it should be dealt with accordingly. The question that has not been answered is where SROs are supposed to step in? In a lot of these offenses that students make, there are a lot of subjectivity to it, such as category of disrespect. There’s a disconnect regarding to Cultures. The situation could be something small, a SRO is introduced, then it would escalate the situation leaving the student very confused. Sahara wants to educate the students on the rights they have, how to protect themselves and those around them if they see it happening to another student. She wants to go through the school system and have a campaign, take to social media to get out the word, educate the student where they are gathering. Sahara also mentioned having some type of pamphlet or packet to of the do’s and don’ts when they encounter certain situations.

Scott stated that they talked about it over the weekend and believes it’s a very interesting idea and can be impactful to the students. He stated that Mabrooka would help since she is the one that knows about the school systems. Mabrooka stated she is happy to work with Sahara. Kui suggested to educate the students about Grace Law.

VII. WORKGROUPS

a. LA ALIANZA LATINA:
Gab stated they met on August 10th and working on putting together a report for County Executive on what next step should be. They have been working with Hispanic Heritage activities.

b. AAPI
Mabrooka mentioned the next meeting will be October 14th and the committees have been meeting on the side. They are done with the survey and the question asking about if the
users knew there were resources, most people stated they were NOT aware. 52% do not seek out mental health support because of the stigmas in their own community. The community appears to like one place where they can go to get all the information they need. The residents appear to not know how to navigate the online website for all the resources and to connect with the resources. Bianca adds that even residents and local people have challenges finding resources too. She also states there use to be a language line where people can call. This can be brought up at the AAPI workgroup. Mabrooka stated to Bianca that was a great idea. Kui talked about the events and foundations regarding suicide attempts in teens.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Outreach:
Mabrooka stated if you are attending an event please let us know via email because there is an annual report where they publish. Scott asked about interns. Fatina stated OHRE no longer have the interns as of August. Kui asked how the brochure design is going? Mabrooka stated there are 2 designs in the works, which was why she was asking about the interns. They now have the official names of the commissioners. Mabrooka stated they can introduce the designs in the next meeting. Scott mentioned Jonah is now on the team, Jonah shared his previous experience and stated he can help as well.

b. Nominations Committee:
Peter stated the appointment of Tiffany was announced last meeting. Yolanda stated Tiffany’s public testimony is on Monday and her confirmation hearing will be a week later.

c. Legislative Committee:
Scott mentioned he sent out a written report. The County Executive proposed some legislation that boards, and commissions can hold their meetings via video conferencing. Sahara added a few pieces of new legislation she found related to Afghan refugees.

d. Awards Committee:
Lynda stated she sent out a committee report, copy of catering brochure and the bios of the awardees. Asks OHRE to send out a photo from everyone that will be used for the program or slideshow. She stated on August 27th they did a walkthrough and they can do theatre style and limit our attendees to 100 people. Lynda stated they selected the Absolutely Perfect Catering. Conservancy follows state guidelines. The awards ceremony will be on October 19th, at 6:30 pm. Rehearsal will be on Wednesday, October 13th at 11 am. Unfortunately, we lost another namesake, Dr. Maury Simon award. Also lost Jean W. Toomer. Surviving namesake is Colette Roberts. Individual award will be Tonya Aikens, the CEO of the Howard County Library System. Mary Simon student award is Yara Ayache. The Colette Organization award is for The Luminus Network for New Americans and the Wilde Lake High School Students for Social Justice.
Lynda motions to give the following to:
-Individual award: James E. Henson, Sr., and Jean W. Toomer award to Tonya Aikens. Bob 2nds. Scott goes to each panelist and they all vote in favor. Motion passes.
-Dr. Maury Simon Student Award: Yara Ayache. Bob and Kui 2nds. Scott goes to each panelist and all vote in favor. Motion passes.

Gab have nothing to add. Bianca asked if Everbrite Link is being put into the letter. Yolanda stated yes. Yolanda will send to Awards Committee for any changes. Scott asked if there’s a waitlist, Yolanda will look into it. 120 is the cap allowing for enough space for social distance. Lynda asked for commissioner’s headshots via email. Scott and Lynda discuss including cap of seats in announcements and letters. Scott counts who will be attending and discusses last year’s letters. Discussed setting up, clean up and virtual attendance (YouTube or Facebook live).

IX. ADHOC COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Social and Economic Justice:
Kui had 2 points. Presentation today by Danielle Baron and the Luminous Network, Michael Mitchell. Both will have a presentation this Friday at 8 pm. Was invited to host an event organized by League of Korean American and Chinese American Association with the county. Scott suggested this committee to look further into the issue regarding identifying every ethnic group when county is conducting studies, surveys, etc. Kui added part of October presentation has a speaker from Native American community.

b. Hate Crimes:
Mabrooka stated they did meet last night. They are continuing to do some research into how local school districts are, identifying HBIs in schools if they have separate language outside of bullying. Gave credit to Lynda with information from county public schools, Orlando County and PG County public schools. Want to expand to Baltimore County.

c. Immigration:
Joan is not here tonight. Bob and Peter have nothing to report. Cover letter needs to go to Joan, Peter and Bob.

X. NEW BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
Scott stated that the Social and Economic Justice Committee will take on the Native American issue that was brought up earlier. Bob announced that October 9th will be the county Pride Event at Merriweather Pavilion. Bianca stated the MD State Board of Education appeal the Emergency Regulation to the State General Assembly Administrative Executive Legislative Committee, effective today.

XI. ADJOURNMENT
Lynda made motion to adjourn meeting at 9:17 pm. Bob 2nd motion. All in favor.
Next Meeting will be on Thursday, October 21, 2021 at 7 pm