



# CITY OF WHEELING HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

1500 Chapline Street, Room 305  
Wheeling, WV 26003

## COMMISSIONERS

Diana Bell, LSW

Joseph R. Blalock

Frank Calabrese

Rev. Ralph W. Dunkin

Rita Gupta

Karen Kangisser

Rosemary Ketchum

Loma Nevels

Anthony Sunseri

## Wheeling Human Rights Commission

Regular meeting of the Wheeling Human Rights Commission: January 15, 2019.

Commissioners present: Bell, Blalock, Calabrese, Dunkin, Gupta, Kangisser, Nevels and Sunseri.

Commissioners absent: none.

City of Wheeling Staff present: Prager and Thompson.

With a quorum present, the business meeting was called to order at 12:01 p.m. by Vice Chairperson Nevels.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Regular meeting: December 18, 2018. The minutes had been previously emailed. Commissioner Dunkin motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Bell. The motion passed.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

**SWPALS 2018 Education and Outreach Project** Ms. Thompson stated that the HRC has achieved **50.5** hours of education and outreach, exceeding the committed of **33.75** hours for the 2018 Agreement, which runs until March 18, 2019.

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration, January 2019** Ms. Thompson provided a flyer which outlined the 2019 Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration events, as well as a news article announcing the 2019 award recipients. Tim Cogan was nominated by Commissioner Bell and will receive the Martin Luther King Award.

**Black History Month, February 2019** Ms. Thompson announced that the HRC will run an ad inviting the Community to celebrate Black History Month, in the newspaper on February 1, 2, 7, 13, and 19, as well as in the newspaper's Showtime for the week of February 3. Ms. Thompson will share information as she becomes aware of additional events.

### NEW BUSINESS:

**Fair Housing Month, April 2019** Ms. Thompson stated that the HRC normally secures billboards in the City's low-moderate income neighborhoods for Fair Housing Month, and that if the HRC wishes to do so in 2019, Lamar is offering the same price as last year, which is \$3,000 for 6 billboards, or \$2,200 for 4 billboards. Commissioner Dunkin made a motion to contract with Lamar to purchase 6 billboards for \$3,000, seconded by Commissioner Sunseri. Motion carried.

### **Discussion Regarding Proper Procedure for Placing an Item on the Human Rights Commission Meeting Agenda**

Commissioner Blalock stated that it was he who requested this agenda item, and motioned to table it until the City Solicitor's office can be represented. Commissioner Gupta said that she had requested items be distributed for this discussion, to which Ms. Thompson replied that she had been informed by the City Solicitor that this matter had already been addressed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kangisser. A vote was held and the motion passed.

### **Discussion Regarding Chairman's Remarks as Presented During the December, 2018 Commission Meeting During Those Wishing to be Heard/Public Comment**

Commissioner Blalock motioned to table this discussion indefinitely, since Chairman Steve Novotney has resigned from the HRC and there is no reason to discuss the remarks that the former Chairman made on his personal Facebook page, in order to protect the integrity of the HRC. Commissioner Calabrese amended the motion to remove the discussion from the Agenda. Commissioner Sunseri seconded the motion. Commissioner Gupta said that she had requested that the Facebook comment threads be copied for all of the

Commissioners for this meeting, to which Ms. Prager responded that the comment threads had been scanned and emailed to all of the Commissioners, so copying them was not necessary. A vote was held and the motion passed.

Commissioner Calabrese made a motion to send a letter of gratitude for all of Steve Novotney's years of work on the HRC. Commissioner Bell seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Citizen Inquiry/Complaint Activity Log through January 11, 2019** Ms. Thompson reported that two housing complaints had been sent out since the last meeting, with additional referrals made to community services as needed. Vice Chair Nevels questioned that the two housing complaint forms listed as outstanding, were still outstanding, which was confirmed.

**THOSE WISHING TO BE HEARD:**

Dr. Vincent DeGeorge thanked the HRC for their work, and questioned where the Commission now stands in terms of a Chair, to which Vice Chair Nevels stated that she hoped that the HRC would vote for a new Chair during this meeting, and that it will be up to the Mayor to appoint a new Commissioner. Commissioner Bell questioned whether the Vice Chair would take the Chair role. Vice Chair Nevels indicated that she did not wish to be the Chair, but wished to continue to be the Vice Chair for the remainder of the one-year term. Commissioner Dunkin clarified that the new Chair will also be for the remainder of the one-year term. Commissioner Bell motioned to add the agenda item **Officer Elections** following **Those Wishing to be Heard**. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kangisser. The motion passed.

**OFFICER ELECTIONS:**

Vice Chair Nevels stated that she wished to nominate Frank Calabrese as Chairman, to which Commissioner Calabrese accepted. Vice Chair Nevels asked three times for any other nominations. With no other nominations, Commissioner Bell motioned to close the nominations and vote to elect Commissioner Calabrese as Chairman for the remainder of this term. Commissioner Sunseri seconded. A vote was held and Commissioner Calabrese was unanimously elected Chairman. Chairman Calabrese thanked the Commissioners and stated that he wants to be a team player.

**REMARKS FROM MEMBERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION:**

Vice Chair Nevels stated that what the HRC has gone through in the last 30 days, the HRC has gone through professionally, and it did not reflect what the HRC is about. She added that all Commissioners have been given the same Oath of Office, which she recited aloud. She expressed her belief that the HRC's image and work has not been tarnished.

Commissioner Dunkin added that the HRC has worked hard to assure that the HRC is well-known, but that the notoriety of the last 30 days was not a good way to be well-known.

Commissioner Calabrese expressed his opinion that the HRC is the most important branch of the City government, and issued a challenge to the other members of the HRC to come up with ideas for ways to reach out to the community and create further awareness of the existence of the HRC.

Vice Chair Nevels stated that she hands out copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Commissioner Calabrese stated that he has ordered the printing of additional copies.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business Commissioner Dunkin made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Sunseri at 12:23pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank Calabrese  
Chairperson

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