



# CITY OF WHEELING HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

1500 Chapline Street, Room 305  
Wheeling, WV 26003

## COMMISSIONERS

Joseph R. Blalock

Frank Calabrese

Rev. Ralph W. Dunkin

Karen Kangisser

Loma Nevels

Anthony Sunseri

Emily L. Ward

## Wheeling Human Rights Commission

Regular meeting of the Wheeling Human Rights Commission, June 16, 2020.

Commissioners present: Calabrese, Dunkin, Kangisser, Ketchum, Nevels and Ward.

Commissioners absent: Blalock and Sunseri.

City of Wheeling Staff present: Delbert and Thompson.

### CALL TO ORDER

A roll call was held. With a quorum present, the business meeting was called to order at 12:01 p.m. by Chairman Calabrese.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Regular meeting: May 19, 2020. The minutes had been previously emailed. Commissioner Dunkin motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Ward. The motion passed.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

**SWPALS 2020 Education and Outreach Project** Ms. Thompson reported that the 2020 Agreement runs from March 15, 2020 to March 14, 2021, and that the HRC is committed to **34** hours of education and outreach. The HRC had met 2.5 hours as of the meeting date, with additional hours planned by attending community events and offering Fair Housing Training later this year.

**YSS Celebrate Youth Event, August 6, 2020, 10am-4pm** Ms. Thompson reported that the event has been officially canceled by YSS. However, YSS still plans to make 5000 individual backpacks for children in Ohio and Marshall County Schools, along with 3000 informational family packs. The HRC had previously approved the expense of up to \$1,200 for promotional items for the event. With no event, but still a need for items, Ms. Thompson requested to use the funding toward printing a brochure or magnets for the 3000 family packs. There was discussion, and the consensus was to allocate the previously approved \$1,200 towards items for the family packs in lieu of the event.

**Ideas for Promoting the HRC** Chairman Calabrese stated that he has spoken to Michele Rejonis, the City's Marketing and Community Relations Specialist, and is planning to work with her to promote the HRC. Commissioner Dunkin referenced an email invitation received from attorney Jason Wade, asking members of the HRC to join in a community group that is promoting inclusiveness and eliminating discrimination and racism, and stated that this could be a good means to make the HRC more known. Chairman Calabrese responded by stating that he had attended a meeting to address racial disparities, and will provide more information to the group once received.

**Continued Discussion Regarding Offering an Annual Community Award to someone Who Supports the Work of the HRC** Chairman Calabrese clarified that the award should go to someone supporting and working for Human Rights as a whole. There was no report or additional comments.

### NEW BUSINESS:

**Citizen Inquiry/Complaint Activity Log through June 12, 2020** Ms. Thompson explained the confidential report, which was previously emailed. One public accommodations complaint had been sent out; and the referral of a potential employment complaint was made to the WV HRC and the EEOC, as the individual's employer was outside the City limits in Triadelphia.

**THOSE WISHING TO BE HEARD:**

Ms. Katherine Ball, a practicing attorney in New York, spoke via telephone. She thanked the HRC for its work and spoke about being a Guardian Ad Litem that recently made a Reasonable Accommodations request for an individual to a housing provider in Wheeling. In doing so, she cited the Fair Housing Act, but said that she reviewed Wheeling codes and believed that Reasonable Accommodations are not addressed. She requested that the City look at incorporating such. Chairman Calabrese suggested that Ms. Ball provide this summary and request in writing to the HRC, so that it may be forwarded to the Legal Department for review.

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

Commissioner Dunkin referenced an email received by the members of the HRC from Vincent DeGeorge which requested that the HRC sign on to his letter “Community Letter Responding to White Nationalist Vandalism in Wheeling”. Commissioner Dunkin made a motion that the HRC sign on to the letter, and Chairman Calabrese seconded. Discussion was held with Commissioner Kangisser stating her wish not to be affiliated with the letter and objecting to adding the HRC’s name to the letter. Commissioner Kangisser suggested that the HRC discuss the matter directly with the Police Department. Commissioner Ketchum suggested that a potential compromise of the HRC drafting its own letter to affirm its position regarding the matter. Commissioner Ward stated that the message and intention of the letter are good, but that she understood the expressed concerns. Commissioner Calabrese called for a vote, in which all voted in favor of signing on the letter, excepting Commissioner Kangisser whom voted against. Directly following this meeting, HRC staff was contacted by Commissioner Nevels, who stated that her vote was also against signing the letter without the City Solicitor’s and City Manager’s reviewing it first, however it is believed that she was not heard during the meeting due to her device being muted.

Commissioner Dunkin recognized that this was Commissioner Ketchum’s last meeting due to becoming elected to City Council, and thanked her for her service. Chairman Calabrese echoed this sentiment. Commissioner Ketchum thanked both.

Chairman Calabrese reminded all that Election of Officers will occur during the July 21, 2020 meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business Commissioner Ward made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:33 p.m. seconded by Commissioner Dunkin.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank Calabrese  
Chairperson

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