



CITY OF WHEELING HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

1500 Chapline Street, Room 305
Wheeling, WV 26003

Wheeling Human Rights Commission

Regular meeting of the Wheeling Human Rights Commission, May 19, 2020.

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

Commissioners absent: None.

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 12:03 p.m. by Chairman Calabrese.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Regular meeting: February 18, 2020. The minutes had been previously emailed. Commissioner Dunkin motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Ward. The motion passed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

SWPALS 2019 Education and Outreach Project Ms. Thompson reported that the HRC committed to **31** hours of education and outreach under the 2019 Agreement, and as of March 12, the HRC had met 31.38 hours. Therefore, the commitment has been achieved.

Ideas for Promoting the HRC Chairman Calabrese stated that he has not gone to the media to solicit ideas from the community due to the pandemic. Commissioner Dunkin informed that remote interviews are possible with both the local TV stations and the newspaper at this time. No new ideas for promoting the HRC were shared.

Continued Discussion Regarding Offering an Annual Community Award to someone Who Supports the Work of the HRC Commissioner Ketchum reported that she met with Commissioner Kangisser prior to COVID-19, and discussions have been postponed temporarily. Chairman Calabrese reminded that the intent is that the award would be presented by the Mayor at the next State of the City Address.

Fair Housing Month, April 2020 Ms. Thompson reported that Fair Housing Month is on the agenda for a follow up, and reminded that the HRC sponsored six billboards around Wheeling to promote Fair Housing during April 2020. The billboard locations are in areas that are low-moderate income neighborhoods and in areas near public housing routes. The billboard image also appeared on the City's social media on April 9. Additionally, the Fair Housing Proclamation was signed by Mayor Elliott on April 7, 2020, and while there was no public presentation of the Proclamation to the members of the HRC, the Mayor did mention it in his report during the April 7 virtual City Council meeting on Facebook Live. Finally, the Fair Housing Landlord Training which the HRC intended to co-host with SWPALS during April, was not possible due to the pandemic and will be considered again later this year.

WVNCC Health & Wellness Fair, March 24, 2020 Ms. Thompson reported that this item remained on the agenda as a formality, but that the event was canceled by WVNCC due to COVID-19.

NEW BUSINESS:

SWPALS 2020 Education and Outreach Project Ms. Thompson indicated that the City Manager signed a 2020 Agreement with SWPALS, which runs from March 15, 2020 to March 14, 2021. Under this new Agreement, the HRC has committed to **34** hours of Education and Outreach, and as of this date, **2.5** hours have been met. The HRC will continue to meet hours in the same ways as previously done, mainly by attending community events and hopefully offering the Fair Housing training for landlords once restrictions from COVID-19 will allow.

COMMISSIONERS

Joseph R. Blalock

Frank Calabrese

Rev. Ralph W. Dunkin

Karen Kangisser

Rosemary Ketchum

Loma Nevels

Anthony Sunseri

Emily L. Ward

YSS Celebrate Youth Event, August 6, 2020, 10am-4pm Ms. Thompson stated that a Save the Date had been received for the event, and requested to discuss the purchase of items to distribute at the event, as the HRC has done in the past. After discussion, Commissioner Dunkin made a motion to allow for a budget up to \$1,200 for the purchase of items to be selected by staff. Commissioner Nevels seconded. The motion was approved.

Citizen Inquiry/Complaint Activity Log through May 15, 2020 Ms. Thompson explained the confidential report, which was previously emailed, and ran from February 15, 2020 to May 15, 2020. One housing complaint form was sent out, and several referrals were made to community agencies to assist with various needs. Four referrals were made to the WV HRC due to being outside the Wheeling HRC's jurisdiction, and two referrals were made to the Fair Housing Law Center at SWPALS as they were potential evictions during COVID-19. In the active Housing Complaint, the Investigating Commissioners made a Determination of No Probable Cause, which was sent to the Complainant on March 18, 2020.

THOSE WISHING TO BE HEARD:

There was no one wishing to be heard.

REMARKS FROM MEMBERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION:

Commissioner Dunkin remarked that COVID-19 is affecting poor and people of color, which is not under the HRC's purview, but important to acknowledge. Commissioner Ward added to Commissioner Dunkin's remark that communities of color are being hit harder by the virus and that racism and implicit bias are a piece of it, as well as lack of resources/PPE for the vulnerable populations. In addition, a wave of pediatric illness has begun, in which the first cases affected children of color. Chairman Calabrese thanked both Commissioners for their observations.

Commissioner Nevels disagreed with the prior remarks, stating that she did not believe that this is a race or hatred issue, and that it is not the time to accuse anyone. The emphasis should be on a vaccine for all people. Commissioner Ward acknowledged that there are no physiologic differences between races. She added that she is optimistic for a vaccine and that it must be available to all people.

Commissioner Calabrese stated that the HRC should be mindful of discrimination in evictions and such, and how the Commission itself should respond to such. Commissioner Ward added that due to public health, evictions are not in anyone's best interest during COVID-19.

Commissioner Ketchum spoke about mental health implications with COVID-19, and added that many people do not have the privilege to work from home and virtually.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business Commissioner Dunkin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:40 p.m. seconded by Commissioner Ward.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank Calabrese
Chairperson

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