

Human Relations Commission
Meeting #2021-06
July 26, 2021 - 5 p.m.

A meeting of the Human Relations Commission (HRC) was held via Zoom and in-person on Monday, July 26, 2021, at 5 p.m.

Chair Hightower called the meeting to order at 5 p.m. In attendance were Chair Faith Hightower, Vice-Chair Shannon Cunningham, Secretary Alissa Carpenter, and alternate member Larry Maltin. Also in attendance were Supervisors Joyce Keller and Jeffrey Campolongo, Township Manager Roman M. Pronczak, P.E., Assistant Township Manager David J. Mrochko, and IT Director Nicole Leininger. Member Scott Badami joined the meeting during the discussion of the ordinance committee.

A motion was made by Ms. Cunningham, duly seconded by Ms. Carpenter to approve the minutes of June 28, 2021. There were no comments or questions and the motion carried. Chair Hightower appointed Mr. Maltin as a voting member for this evening's meeting in the absence of Mr. Badami.

Chair Hightower moved on to old business and subcommittee reports, beginning with the outreach committee. Mr. Maltin noted that the Tri-State HRC meetings are an excellent resource for HRCs, encompassing groups from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. He explained what a few of the groups are doing and added that we are planning to distribute our flyer at the community festival at Montgomery County Community College on September 25th. Ambler HRC will deliver its implicit bias training in the fall and Chair Hightower will contact the Ambler chair to see if our members can participate in that training. Implicit bias training should be a core part of our outreach to organizations within the Township. Mr. Maltin also discussed mental health awareness as presented by Miami-Dade County Criminal Health Program and added that Chief Lawson is aware of the program. Mr. Maltin additionally offered that outreach training and materials need to be developed for this HRC to be effective. Mr. Mrochko asked if help is needed to sign up for the community festival. Mr. Maltin responded that he prepared a checklist of what could be used for ease of participation during the festival, and those items were discussed by the HRC. Chair Hightower thanked Mr. Maltin for putting the checklist together, and then asked if any member had questions about the community festival. Vice-Chair Cunningham asked for a timeline to have costs to the Township for budget purposes, such as expenses for events. They will have them for the next

HRC meeting in August. Chair Hightower mentioned that the Lansdale HRC is looking into mediation training and asked Mr. Pronczak if the Township has looking further into it through the Pearl Buck Foundation. He confirmed checking with the Pearl Buck Foundation and the Good Shepherd Foundation. A price has been received from Good Shepherd, though not from Pearl Buck. Vice-Chair Cunningham asked how grants are obtained for events or items that have costs. It is possible to connect with the Rotary Club for information, as the Abington HRC has done. Mr. Mrochko said he discussed mediation training with a member of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) who could offer training as well. We will look into pricing from them. Chair Hightower will reach out to Lansdale to see who they are working with. Ms. Carpenter asked if there are any local HRCs who might be looking into the same training, so we could possibly share in the expense. Mr. Mrochko said he believes there is a suggested number of participants for a price-point in training from the ADL, and if we partner with another HRC it would make it more cost-effective. He will have the numbers for the next meeting. Supervisor Campolongo suggested that they reach out to the lead mediator, Cynthia Locke, of the EEOC in Philadelphia, who schedules, trains and conducts mediations. She could be a tremendous resource. Chair Hightower noted that the Wissahickon Valley Library is offering a four-part series titled, "Building Racial Understanding" which we could potentially put on the website with approval from the library. She added that the HRC will begin to build a relationship with the library. Mr. Mrochko said once approved, it should be no problem to add a link in the community section of the Wire. Further discussion addressed the HRCs involvement with outreach efforts of other organizations, such as the library to make people aware of its mission.

Chair Hightower followed with an update from the ordinance committee. Vice-Chair Cunningham, along with Mr. Badami, pulled together suggestions to be submitted to the Board of Supervisors for consideration to amend the current HRC ordinance to clarify definitions. Vice-Chair Cunningham explained the suggested changes, with Mr. Badami joining the discussion. Vice-Chair Cunningham made a motion to send the suggested changes to the Board of Supervisors for consideration to amend the current HRC ordinance. The motion was seconded by Mr. Badami. Chair Hightower took a roll-call vote and the motion passed with no further discussion.

Chair Hightower noted that documents will be pulled together for review by the document committee. She added that strategic planning will move forward with discussions of what is to happen in the coming year. There were no other committee reports.

Chair Hightower asked Ms. Carpenter to update the members on student volunteer Talaya Coffey. Ms. Carpenter said Talaya is a senior at Wissahickon High School who is interested in communications. She is interested in writing articles for the HRC and being part of the HRC outreach. Chair Hightower added that she has been in touch with Jill Kane, a volunteer who recently moved back into the area and who would like to assist with anything the HRC requests related to outreach.

Chair Hightower then brought up new business and discussed the meeting calendar for 2022. The HRC will meet the fourth Monday of each month, with two exceptions. September 26th is during the Rosh Hashanah Holiday, and that meeting will be moved to September 19th. December 26th is the Christmas holiday for the Township and there will be no rescheduled meeting. Vice-Chair Cunningham suggested that by September of next year, the HRC will most likely start having quarterly meetings. These changes will be confirmed during the reorganization meeting in January. Vice-Chair Cunningham followed with an update on the second training with the PA Human Relations Commission and Carl Summerson. She asked if a Township representative could handle the next training session with a recorded Zoom meeting to help with any future members. With that confirmed, she will coordinate Whitpain HRC training with Lansdale and the PA HRC.

Chair Hightower asked if anyone else was on to offer public comment, and Mrs. Leininger responded there was no one logged on virtually. She asked for any additional comments. There were none.

Chair Hightower thanked everyone for their participation. Upon motion by Vice-Chair Cunningham, duly seconded by Mr. Badami the meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Alissa Carpenter
Secretary