

Human Relations Commission
Meeting #2021-08
September 27, 2021 - 5 p.m.

A meeting of the Human Relations Commission (HRC) was held via Zoom and in-person on Monday, September 27, 2021, at 5 p.m.

Chair Hightower called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. In attendance were Chair Faith Hightower, Vice-Chair Shannon Cunningham, Secretary Alissa Carpenter, Member Scott Badami 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. There were no members of the public in attendance.

A motion was made by Mr. Badami, duly seconded by Ms. Cunningham to approve the minutes of August 23, 2021. There were no comments or questions. Chair Hightower called for a roll-call vote: Chair Hightower, aye; Secretary Carpenter, aye; Member Badami, aye, and Vice-Chair Cunningham, aye. The motion carried.

Chair Hightower moved on to old business and subcommittee reports, beginning with the document committee. Secretary Carpenter began with the form that is a combination of those in use by Abington and Lower Merion to create something for our website. It will be sent to the members of the HRC after the meeting for review and input. She will also send out the PowerPoint she prepared for comment by the members. Chair Hightower said the brochures are good and they were distributed at the community festival.

Chair Hightower then asked Vice-Chair Cunningham to update the group on the website committee actions. Vice-Chair Cunningham said they are about half-way through the updates discussed, making sure they are reaching out to possible volunteers. Our brochure is published, as well as links to the Wissahickon Valley Library and the PA HRC, along with our ongoing meeting information. Mr. Badami is working with Mrs. Leininger on a template for dropdowns per examples from his office.

Chair Hightower asked if there is an update regarding the ordinance edits that were submitted for review. Mr. Pronczak responded that the Solicitors continue to review the suggestions and hope to have the proposed updates to the ordinance ready in October.

Chair Hightower sent a budget to the members for their review and follow-up. Each member should take a look to determine possible needs for the coming year. It was briefly reviewed and discussed during this meeting. Chair Hightower also asked about the procedure for donating to the HRC, should someone want to do that. Mr. Pronczak responded that it still has to be finalized with the Finance Director, though it's best that the checks get made out to Whitpain Township and designated for the HRC. A separate budget committee is not presently necessary. A discussion followed regarding reimbursement of supplies. Mr. Pronczak asked that members of the HRC send their requests for supplies to the Township as we have a specific purchasing procedure. He added that reimbursement for travel for training will be made. A motion was made by Mr. Badami, seconded by Ms. Cunningham to send the proposed budget to the Board.

Chair Hightower followed with the outreach committee. Saturday's community festival was a great event. Mr. Maltin followed with an update, noting it was a great day with great traffic. There were productive conversations throughout the day. Vice-Chair Cunningham concurred. Ms. Carpenter and Mr. Badami added their thoughts in thanking Chair Hightower for working so hard with Mr. Maltin to get things done. Supervisor Campolongo thanked all of the members for their great efforts. Chair Hightower noted that good connections were made and this HRC will be doing some things with the Rotary Club, which has just formed a Diversity Inclusion Committee. We are pleased with the library and their donation. They have just hired an Outreach Coordinator, and we will be doing things in coordination with that person.

Chair Hightower then brought up new business and a review of the proposal for mediation training. Mr. Maltin summarized the proposal in that it is five workshops over 13 hours for a total of \$2,650 for up to six participants. Mr. Mrochko confirmed that and said the current training is being done via Zoom. Good Shepherd is booked through the end of the year, and in looking forward, they prefer to do the training during the week. Mr. Mrochko suggested that a subcommittee be formed to reach out to Good Shepherd to begin working on a plan for training. Chair Hightower asked if we could reach out to other HRCs to join this group in training to help offset some of the costs. Supervisor Campolongo agreed that it should be done and added that many in the legal community say Good Shepherd is one of the leading mediation agencies in the area. They are a good prospect for the training, but we should still look at training through the EEOC, possibly at no cost. Further discussion included the number of sessions truly needed, along with associated costs.

Mr. Pronczak said it would be good if the dollar amount for training in the earlier reviewed budget discussion be increased to reflect this discussion. A motion was made by Mr. Badami, seconded by Ms. Carpenter to amend the previously proposed budget as suggested by the Township Manager, and with this Commission's approval, send it to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. Chair Hightower called a roll-call vote: Mr. Badami, aye; Chair Hightower, aye; Ms. Cunningham, aye and Ms. Carpenter, aye. The motion carried.

Chair Hightower asked if anyone had any further comments. There were none. She asked if there is any public comment. There was none. She asked for any additional comments. Supervisor Campolongo noted that with Vice-Chair Cunningham moving, we need to discuss succession planning. Previously Mr. Badami suggested moving Mr. Maltin from alternate to member status. He added that the HRC should consider that possibly two positions will have to be filled. The first to fill Ms. Cunningham's position, and the second to possibly fill Mr. Badami's position, should he be elected to the Board of Supervisors in November. Supervisor Campolongo added that the position(s) should be advertised, though not before the beginning of next year. A recommendation to elevate Mr. Maltin to member status until December 31st must be made to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. In the beginning of next year, the Township will advertise for two potential vacancies. The current members of the HRC were chosen because of their backgrounds, and they may have recommendations prior to going further. He asked that the HRC give it some thought. Mr. Pronczak confirmed that the Board of Supervisors makes appointments or changes. They will certainly look to the HRC for recommendations. There is a subcommittee of two supervisors who typically interview prospective candidates, and occasionally invite the chair of the board or commission that has a vacancy. A recommendation is then made to the entire Board. He recommends advertising without the number of positions open. Ms. Carpenter added that previous discussions included adding another full member and additional alternate member. Mr. Campolongo said this could be brought up to the full Board of Supervisors as a recommendation to increase the number of full members. Mr. Maltin questioned the reason for having alternate members. Mr. Pronczak responded that many of the boards and commissions have more than one alternate member in order to assure a quorum for a meeting. This has not been a problem with this Commission, with Mr. Maltin being elevated one time as a voting member. Mr. Mrochko added that there could be potential conflicts with a family member, neighbor or business associate where a case comes to the HRC, and a member might have to step aside. Mr. Maltin thanked everyone for the clarification.

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alissa Carpenter", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Alissa Carpenter
Secretary

/v