

Human Relations Commission  
Meeting #2021-01  
February 22, 2021 - 5 p.m.

The first meeting of the Human Relations Commission (HRC) was held via Zoom on Monday, February 22, 2021 at 5 p.m.

IT Director Nicole Leininger gave an overview of the virtual proceedings and then turned the meeting over to Township Manager Roman Pronczak who introduced Supervisors Koch and Campolongo, and the members of the HRC including Faith Hightower, Shannon Cunningham, Alissa Carpenter, Scott Badami and Larry Maltin and Assistant Township Manager Dave Mrochko. In addition, there were two remote attendees.

The first order of business is the election of officers. Mr. Pronczak called for nominations for Chairperson of the Commission. A motion was made by Mr. Badami, duly seconded by Ms. Cunningham to nominate Faith Hightower as the Chair. Mr. Pronczak called a roll-call vote: Shannon Cunningham, aye; Alissa Carpenter, aye; Scott Badami, aye and Faith Hightower, aye. The motion carried and the meeting was turned over to Chair Hightower who confirmed there are four voting members on the Committee. Mr. Maltin asked for clarification for his position as an alternate member. Mr. Pronczak explained that there are alternate members on various boards and commissions which is helpful when there might be a scheduling conflict or a conflict of interest, such as the Planning Commission and a review of a plan in someone's neighborhood. On these occasions, the chair would appoint an alternate in place of the regular member to serve as a voting member on a particular case. Alternate members are able to participate in the meetings and provide input, although they are not permitted to vote unless they are appointed as a voting member by the chair.

Chair Hightower called for a nomination for Vice-Chair. A motion was made by Mr. Badami to nominate Shannon Cunningham as Vice-Chair, duly seconded by Ms. Carpenter. With no additional discussion, Chair Hightower called a roll-call vote: Scott Badami, aye; Alissa Carpenter, aye; Shannon Cunningham, aye and Chair Hightower also voted in favor. The motion carried.

Chair Hightower called for a nomination for Secretary. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Cunningham to nominate Alissa Carpenter as Secretary, duly seconded by Mr. Badami. Chair Hightower called for any discussion. There was none. She called a roll-call vote: Shannon Carpenter, aye; Alissa Carpenter, aye; Scott Badami, aye and Chair Hightower also voted in favor. The motion carried.

The next order of business is the discussion of Ordinance No. 383. Chair Hightower asked how this is/has been communicated to the public. Mr. Pronczak responded that the ordinance is on our website and was also publicized in the Wire. Chair Hightower asked if there are any questions regarding the ordinance. Mr. Maltin asked what the creation of the HRC and its role is in the Township. The educational component needs to be communicated. Mr. Pronczak explained that this organization meeting is the first step in the process, and as we work on establishing a mission statement, it will be communicated on our website, in the Wire and possibly on the Government Access Channel. Vice-Chair Cunningham added that she had heard about the establishment of the HRC when it was being proposed and through the enactment of the ordinance. She agrees that the educational component needs to be addressed. Chair Hightower said as goals are set moving forward, the ordinance will be reviewed and potentially modified. Chair Hightower asked if there are detailed demographics in the Township. Mr. Pronczak said any information we have from the current Census will be shared with the HRC. Chair Hightower said it will be helpful with community outreach and steps moving forward. We will make this part of the next agenda and explore what neighboring communities are doing. Mr. Pronczak noted that he did reach out to the solicitor as far as having meetings with other HRCs, and if there are requirements for advertising and keeping minutes, and because you are not specifically conducting Whitpain business there is no requirement for advertising or minutes. He added that a member of an HRC of a neighboring municipality reached out to this group already, and we were holding off scheduling anything until this first organizational meeting was held. Training will be scheduled through the PA HRC, possibly with the neighboring municipalities. We will work on setting it up. Supervisor Campolongo thought it might be helpful to receive an introduction of the Sunshine Act, possibly by the solicitor. Mr. Pronczak said there is a good publication from DCED that he will send out to the members and will also ask the solicitor to participate in the next meeting to give everyone a brief overview of the Act. Chair Hightower asked if there are any additional questions or comments regarding Ordinance No. 383. Mr. Badami asked if our website has a link to the HRC, and Mr. Pronczak responded that there is a link for all boards and commissions, with updates to be made to the HRC link moving forward. An article about the HRC will be in the next printed publication that goes out twice a year. Mr. Mrochko said in working with the HRC, we will be glad to put helpful public information on the website. Any ideas are welcome. There will be an article in the Wire this week. Mr. Maltin asked if there is any data to access the newsletter or the Wire in order to create an outreach to those who might not know about the HRC or any other board or commission. Mr. Mrochko said in a typical year, we have the community festival at the Montgomery County Community College, and it might be worth having a table there with

information from the HRC. Supervisor Campolongo offered several suggestions, including a town hall, flyers, postings, or any other type of marketing campaign. The PA HRC will have information for the Whitpain HRC to use, formatting it to our specific practices.

Chair Hightower asked about the meeting schedule. Mr. Pronczak said once things are established, the HRC can meet quarterly. The meeting with the solicitor can happen quickly, as well as the joint meeting with other HRCs in the area. Mr. Badami thought early on, meetings should be more frequent than quarterly. Chair Hightower asked if the fourth Monday at 5 p.m. works for everyone, and as confirmed, the schedule will be set monthly until further notice.

Mr. Badami asked if anyone should reach out to neighboring municipalities to coordinate training. Supervisor Campolongo suggested that in time, that will be great. All agreed at the moment to look at websites of neighboring communities to get a sense of how they manage and make contacting them part of an upcoming agenda moving forward. There is much to learn. Mr. Maltin suggested that we first prioritize and then set goals. Mr. Pronczak commented that there are two categories of HRCs. One would be the recently established and we would partner with them on training opportunities. The other, commissions that have been in place for a while, and finding out what have they learned or could have done differently. It will be good to talk with both groups as part of the process.

Vice-Chair Cunningham asked if as part of training, we could reach out to the PA HRC to give the guidelines we would need to talk with other HRCs. Mr. Pronczak noted that the next step would be to reach out to newly established neighboring HRCs to see if they want to partner in training with us. If possible, it can be worked into the same meeting as when the Sunshine Act is discussed. Chair Hightower questioned if the members should review all of the noted HRCs and try to get a feel for how they operate. Ms. Carpenter said it will be beneficial to review what the other HRCs are doing so we can formulate questions and discuss our procedure. Mr. Maltin suggested each member visit each of the local websites and share their thoughts at a future meeting. Chair Hightower agreed that each should review other websites and come back to the next meeting with what others' best practices are. Mr. Pronczak will contact the PA HRC following this meeting and will set something up before the March 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Mr. Badami has information regarding fair housing and respect in the workplace that he offered to share if there is a delay in coordinating training. Ms. Carpenter asked what the training entails. Mr. Badami said his training relates to law compliance and a guide for businesses. Supervisor Campolongo said Lower Merion's HRC website is the gold standard for municipalities and their HRC websites, and it includes a wealth of

information. As Lower Merion receives many complaints, some of the surrounding communities receive very few, so there may not be a need to include as much information as Lower Merion does. It will be up to the HRC to decide. The training should entail what the law is, how it is to be applied and how to engage with constituents. Chair Hightower thanked Supervisor Campolongo, and confirmed that for the present, meetings will be held the fourth Monday of each month at 5 p.m. via Zoom.

Chair Hightower asked Messrs. Badami and Maltin to walk the members through the initial thoughts for the mission statement. Mr. Badami based his consideration on the ordinance and the goals to be accomplished for the Township. Mr. Maltin suggests a statement that would drive what the HRC would be doing on a regular basis in its role in the community. One of the aspects should be education, along with a higher purpose. Chair Hightower said it would be good to look through the statements of other HRCs and come back with what we would like to incorporate into ours. Supervisor Koch said the start from Messrs. Badami and Maltin is good. Ms. Carpenter said we should make it as concrete as possible, without leaving anyone out.

Chair Hightower called for any other discussion. Supervisor Koch noted that the Comprehensive Review Plan was initiated in June to achieve the goals of the mission related to social justice. The Comprehensive Review Committee is comprised of the heads of the boards and commissions, along with student representatives. The first meeting is Thursday evening at 5 p.m., and it would be good for a member of this HRC to participate. Chair Hightower will attend the meeting. Chair Hightower called for any public comment. There was none. Vice-Chair Cunningham asked who will create the next agenda. Mr. Pronczak said we will create a draft agenda and share it with the HRC for input. Supervisor Campolongo asked if the HRC has a budget, and Mr. Pronczak said not at this time, but expenses would be covered by the Township's General Fund Budget.

Chair Hightower called for any additional discussion. There was none. Upon motion by Mr. Badami, seconded by Vice-Chair Cunningham, the meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Alissa Carpenter  
Secretary