



City of Salisbury
HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
February 21, 2019

Committee Members Present

John Wright, *Chair*
Billy Earl Amos
Mark Decker
Chalarra Sessoms
Amber Green

Committee Members Absent

Nance Held

In Attendance

Laura Baasland, *Mayor's Office Administrative Assistant*
Daniyal Aziz
Farah Yahya

The Human Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC) met at 6:00p.m. in Conference Room #306 of the GOB

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03p.m. by Mr. Wright and began with introductions of Committee members as well as the two members of the public in attendance.

Last Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the last meeting minutes as written was brought forth by Mr. Decker and seconded by Mr. Amos. The motion carried by a unanimous vote in favor.

Open Public Forum

Mr. Wright offered the open forum to the members of the public and no one wished to speak.

Maryland Lynching Memorial Initiative

Ms. Green led the discussion of the Maryland Lynching Memorial Initiative by showing the brief video "Why Build a Memorial" by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI). Ms. Green explained that the overall goal of EJI has typically been criminal justice reform and that the lynching memorial project is one of their newer initiatives. At the January 10 HRAC meeting there were some members of the public in attendance who requested that the City help to get support from the community to build a lynching memorial within the City of Salisbury. Mr. Yamakawa requested support in facilitating community discussion and getting buy-in for the project. The question then arose of how HRAC can support this project, and what recommendations might the Committee be able to make to the Mayor.

Mr. Decker expressed that the location of the marker needs to be identified and the Committee needs to determine if County support is necessary to go any further. Ms. Green explained that as long as the marker is on City property, we don't need any County permission to proceed with the marker, but that only the County would be able to claim their pillar from

the EJI memorial. The historical guidelines for the markers have already been established, and several other small cities have erected markers, so there are models for this. Local coalitions work closely the Maryland Lynching Memorial Initiative (MLMI). The local coalition that is working on this project has the ability to move forward with it, but they are going to need community buy-in to make it happen, and that is where HRAC has the potential to support this project. The Committee decided to put it to a vote. Mrs. Amos made a motion for the Committee to support the Maryland Lynching Memorial Initiative, Ms. Green seconded the motion, and the motion carried by unanimous vote in favor.

Ms. Yahya asked for clarification about the Winder sign in front of the courthouse and Mr. Decker gave a brief overview. Ms. Yahya further asked how the MLMI project is funded and Ms. Green explained that EJI takes care of the costs and funding and the Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Initiative has formed a local coalition and already completed the marker proposal.

The Committee discussed what sort of options exist to move forward with support for this initiative. Mr. Wright proposed asking the Mayor to bring a resolution to Council establishing the City's support for this initiative. Further, it was agreed that perhaps a top-down decision about where to locate the marker is not the best approach, and the Committee was in consensus that the Community should be involved in the decision. The group discussed the new City plaza that Mayor Day mentioned at one of the January meetings.

Ms. Green suggested that rather than one blanket recommendation from the Committee to the Mayor, perhaps the group could make suggestions in phases. A possible phase one would be to tell the community that the City is going to support the Maryland Lynching Memorial Initiative and survey the community members about how they think we should go about it. Phase two may include working the community to determine a location through town halls and open forums. The same format that was used to get community input about the City's new Route 13 and Church Street mural could be used a model for this endeavor. Mr. Decker asked what content would be included on the marker, and Ms. Green established that the markers typically give the history of lynching before going into the local history. EJI and local historians work together to craft the language for the marker.

Mr. Amos asked the Committee how the Mayor would show his support for this initiative, and Ms. Sessoms suggested a town hall and reiterated that we need some community education. Ms. Green and Ms. Yahya suggested that the Committee involve local schools in the project as a way to bring this history to their education. Ms. Yahya told of her German friend who has remarked that she find its unusual that in Germany students are taught about the Holocaust and are taught to be regretful and there are many memorials, but the United States does little to discuss or commemorate their history of slavery. Ms. Green's response was that "by not teaching our kids about our past, we are failing them." She followed this up by showing another brief video about the marker project in Lowndes County and the unveiling of the marker. Ms. Green discussed the high school essay contest: all memorial marker initiative thus far have had a component where they involved the youth. EJI is very flexible about working with the community—they were very supportive and dedicated when it came to helping the Salisbury community with soil collection project. According to Ms. Green, this initiative would be a good spotlight for Salisbury about racial inclusion efforts.

Mr. Amos suggested that another reason for the City of Salisbury to take on this memorial project is that the City Council of Taneytown, Maryland has recently voted to erect a confederate memorial, so the sooner we as a community take a stance on this issue, the better.

Ms. Yahya noted that marker itself isn't very noticeable, and challenged the group to consider what else the City could do to commemorate this painful history adequately. The possibility of the City taking on another project, in addition to the marker project, was discussed.

It was determined that Ms. Green will draft a proposal by the next meeting to potentially include some of the following elements:

1. The HRAC has decided to support the Maryland Lynching Memorial Initiative project in full.
2. Recommend to James Yamakawa that he and his coalition ask City Council for their support on this project.
3. Ask the Mayor to take this suggestion to City Council Work Session to get Council support.
4. The Committee wants the Mayor to announce his support for the project through a press conference to announce that the City is in full support of this project.
5. Recommendations for phases for the project to be as follows:
 - a. Phase One: a press conference to announce full support of project and that the marker will be placed on City property
 - b. Phase Two: a community call to action for participation with identifying the location and marker language through town halls
6. Ms. Green's proposal will also outline key partners, including: James Yamakawa of the Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Initiative and Kevin Lindsay, the City's Neighborhood Relations Manager.

The Committee decided to invite James Yamakawa and Kevin Lindsay to the next HRAC meeting. Mr. Wright planned to reach out to Mr. Yamakawa and ask him to bring up this project at a City Council meeting.

Old Business: LGBTQIA Survey

The LGBTQIA survey was done last year and the results were compiled and the Mayor was given a full report with recommendations. The recommendation included suggesting that the City take action to address shortcomings and issues pertaining to the LGBTQIA community as outlined in the report. The Committee determined that they need to follow up with the Mayor and find out what happened with the survey and hold him accountable for a response. Ms. Green suggested that the report needs to go public and be released because the topic is important the community should know that the City took this effort to have this survey done. The HRAC plans to recommend to Mayor Day that he act on some of the suggestions outlined in the report. It was decided the Mr. Decker would work on a draft of a recommendation to the Mayor in regards to the survey by the next HRAC meeting. Ms. Green reiterated that the proposal needs to have very concrete language.

Minimum Wage

Due to time constraints, the discussion of the fifteen dollar per hour minimum wage was postponed until the next HRAC meeting.

Report on Youth Recruitment

Ms. Green reached out to some past participants of the City's Youth Summer Work program and discovered that there isn't much interest among them in serving on the HRAC. She suggested that the HRAC should do some youth outreach, and mentioned the possibility of an annual HRAC essay contest from which contestants could then be recruited from into potential Committee members.

Next Meeting

The next HRAC meeting was set for Thursday, March 7, at 6p.m. in conference room 306 of the Government office Building.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Decker, seconded by Ms. Green, and carried unanimously, the HRAC meeting was adjourned at 7:30p.m.

Minutes Taken By: 
Laura Baasland, Mayor's Office Administrative Assistant