



City of Salisbury
HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
May 9, 2019

Committee Members Present

John Wright, *Chair*
Mark Decker
Chalarra Sessoms
Amber Green
Nance Held

Committee Members Absent

Billy Earl Amos

In Attendance

Laura Baasland, *Mayor's Office Administrative Assistant*

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 6:07p.m. by Mr. Wright and began with introductions of Committee members as well as the member of the public in attendance, Therese Vorel.

Last Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from March were acknowledged. A motion to approve the last meeting minutes as written was brought forth by Mr. Decker and seconded by Ms. Held. 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 the one member of the public in attendance did not wish to speak.

Ms. Green suggested we use this space on the agenda also as a current events update segment. She mentioned issues in particular with the Wicomico County Public Schools that should be discussed and addressed. Ms. Green has consistently been meeting with parents and the majors issues that have been identified always surround discipline—either unfair discipline or not enough discipline. She mentioned a bullied student who made a bomb threat and chose not to go back to school due to the school's inaction and instead chose to go to alternative school. Further, a student that was caught with one ounce of marijuana and happened to live within one thousand feet of the school and is now expelled and facing probation. This is a huge disciplinary disparity. According to Ms. Green the student is being penalized to an extreme extent by county Sheriff. Ms. Green relayed that many parents and students feel that their voice is not being heard, and perhaps the HRAC can be a forum for these parents to speak. Ms. Green also expressed a significant amount of tension related to race and income, and as the HRAC, she feels this group is responsible for addressing this issue in some capacity. She proposed a partnership between HRAC and the Youth Development Advisory Committee (YDAC) to address this issue from the human rights perspective.

Ms. Held suggested that this may be a discipline problem that begins at home, and expressed that teachers and schools have a fear of lawsuits. Ms. Vorel added that teachers do not feel that they have the support that is necessary to handle these issues.

Ms. Green has been doing dialogues with parents and students and she has learned that when the Department of Justice (DOJ) settlement came to this County, there was an attitude that schools need to change. According to Ms. Green, the DOJ settlement outlined a perfect roadmap of how to change the attitude of schools, but it was not perceived that way and instead scared people into thinking they cannot discipline. Ms. Green has identified a disparity between educators and administrators.

Mr. Wright expressed that he would like to see the YDAC and the HRAC join together as a task force to handle this issue. Ms. Held is on board with this idea as long as down the road, parents and teachers are involved in the conversation. Ms. Green recommended creating a task force specifically to address this. Mr. Wright proposed that that he would reach out to the chair of YDAC and find some time to discuss this issue. Ms. Green expressed concern about the timeline since the school year is almost over. Mr. Wright has said he will attend the next YDAC meeting to bring this up then.

Old Business

Mr. Wright asked where we are at with appointing members. Mrs. Baasland gave an update. Ms. Green discussed how the HRAC can put themselves out there and make themselves more know. Ms. Green mentioned the possibility of the Committee drafting blurbs and having the City post on our behalf with a link directly to our Committee. The group discussed how to reach the public through social media, particularly the youth. A motion to support recruitment efforts through the City of Salisbury's social media postings pertaining to human rights issues per week was put forth Ms. Held and seconded by Mr. Amos and passed by unanimous vote in favor.

Review of Draft LGBTQIA Survey Proposal

Mr. Decker produced the draft proposal that had been marked up by Julia Glanz, City Administrator. He explained that there must have been some lack of communication between the initial group that did the study and the City, because some of the recommendations that were presented to the City are already in place. The first part of recommendation 1, regarding the EOO statement in the employee handbook, has been rendered obsolete. Additionally it was recommended to make handbook public, and Mrs. Glanz pointed out that it already is, and the group suggested that City could emphasize and advertise that with a press release that directs the public to where these materials can be found on the City's website Mr. Wright motion, Ms. Green seconded, unanimously approved.

Recommendation 2 was to provide specially trained police officers to handle members of the LGBTQIA community, and the group decided that is not a poignant idea. Mrs. Glanz responded that all City employees receive on-boarding diversity, equity, and inclusion training, and the group has asked to see exactly what the training is and see what it includes and what is taught. The Committee would like to see the training materials for City employees and the Salisbury Police Department (SPD). Ms. Green discussed that the Academy at WorWic is the agency that trains SPD officers and they are currently under scrutiny for assault, harassment, and inadequate training, and the fact that this is the primary police academy is worrying and something that should be watched and perhaps addressed with our police department. Mr. Decker suggested that the Committee act proactively and follow up with Mrs. Glanz to request that she provide more information about SPD officer training. (Committee would like to have a presentation about the City diversity, inclusivity and equity training given to City of Salisbury employees. First they want the materials to review before a presentation is given. Nance made motion, Chalarra seconded, unanimously approved). The Committee also discussed the possibility of having SPD Chief Duncan come back and speak to the Committee.

The third recommendation was that the City designate an official liaison to the LGBTQIA community. Mrs. Glanz said that she could be that person, and the Committee would like to counter that and suggest that it should be someone that is not the City Administrator, due to conflicts. The Committee discussed that perhaps its not even in the best interest of the LGBTQIA community to appoint a liaison.

Recommendation 4 was that the City issue a proclamation in support of the LGBTQIA community during Pride month, June, and some specific dates were discussed. Mrs. Glanz expressed support for this idea and asked the Committee to send some sample language. Mr. Wright brought up the Rainbow Fun Run on June 1, sponsored by PFLAG and the Lower Shore LGBTQ Coalition, at which Mayor Day will be speaking. The Committee felt that this would be the perfect opportunity for Mayor Day to present a proclamation in support of the LGBTQIA and proclaim June as Pride month in the City of Salisbury. Mr. Decker acknowledged that there are other dates to consider, such as some dates in October and November. Additionally, Mr. Decker suggesting exploring the idea of a community conversation around this topic on one of those days. Mr. Wright said he will speak with his contact at the library about the possibility of having community conversations there. Another component of recommendation 4 is that the City make a symbolic gesture of support such as flying the rainbow flag throughout the month of June. Mrs. Glanz expressed that this is certainly possible to make happen. (Mark will draft proclamation for to Mayor, seconded by Nance, passed unanimously). (Fly rainbow flag—motioned by Nance, seconded by Mark, approved in favor).

Recommendation 5 was a no from the City but there is no ombudsman and perhaps that is something that can be addressed. Mrs. Baasland discussed the function of the personnel committees.

Recommendation 6 was that hate crimes get immediately reported to the City, and Mrs. Glanz confirmed that the City already does that.

The recommendation pertaining to the establishment of an LGBTQIA healthcare task force, recommendation 7, is quite difficult to achieve and therefore won't be pursued at this time. There is an officer of PFLAG who maintains a confidential list of LGBTQ friendly doctors, the Committee discussed the potential of the City being more openly supportive and friendly. Ms. Green also mentioned the possibility of HRAC serving as a resource center for those who call looking for friendly doctors, etc.

Recommendation 8 was to establish an LGBTQIA community center and Mrs. Glanz responded that the City cannot afford an entire community center, but the new Newton Community Center will have an inclusion room. (Formal recommendation that the center include an inclusivity room.) [Mr. Decker will draft all this language]

Recommendation 9 was to place more resources on the City website, and Mrs. Glanz responded enthusiastically that that resource could be housed on the HRAC's webpage. The Committee will send content to Mrs. Baasland who will ensure it gets put up on the website.

Review of Draft Maryland Lynching Memorial (MLMI) Proposal

Ms. Green presented the draft of the recommendation. The first part was for the City of Salisbury to recognize that it has a role in reconciling this truth, second that the City supports this initiative by working with Kevin Lindsay and HRAC to work with the Community to identify a location for that marker on City property. The Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Initiative wants community buy-in. Ms. Green: we will get asked how this is relevant to the City of Salisbury, and we need to be prepared to address that question and Ms. Green did research on how reconciliation is related to human rights and the fact that it is historically created conflict that is manifested today. We as a Committee need to establish that this project is in fact a human rights issue. We should get this press release out soon to stay relevant. Mrs. Baasland will invite Kevin to the next meeting, Ms. Green will invite James Yamakawa.

Discussion of Possible \$15/hr Minimum Wage in Maryland

Ms. Held announced that the bill was passed and will be introduced incrementally through 2025. Mr. Wright asked if there is anything we can do about this proposal now that the legislative session is now over. Ms., Held said this issue is done for now and if they wish to discuss it, it will have to wait for the next legislative session.

Next Meeting

The next HRAC meeting was set for Thursday, May 9, at 6p.m. in conference room 306 of the Government Office Building.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Decker, seconded by Mrs. Sessoms, and carried unanimously, the HRAC meeting was adjourned at 7:55p.m.

Minutes Taken By: _____

Laura Baasland, *Mayor's Office Administrative Assistant*