



City of Salisbury
HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
November 12, 2020

Committee Members Present

Reverend John Wright, *Chair*
Billy Earl Amos
Mark Decker
Ben Pheasant
Stephen Feliciano
Ron Pagano
Amber Green
Nance Held

Committee Members Absent

Chalarra Sessoms
D'Shawn Doughty
Marcel Jagne-Shaw
Tyler Anderson

In Attendance

Laura Baasland

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm by Rev Wright, introductions were skipped because everyone in attendance already knew one another.

Current Events and Open Public Forum

Ms. Green discussed that Fenix Youth Project. could use volunteers or ingredients for their effort to provide meals to those in need. She also let the group know that this year there has been a lot of discussion about whether or not there would be a cold weather shelter in Salisbury. There has been difficulty in securing a place to host it, however, it has been said that it will be held regardless and a solution *will* be found. Ms. Green reminded the group that Wicomico County Local Management Board and the City of Salisbury are both offering rental assistance for persons that have been financially affected by COVID-19, and landlords in our area are unfortunately proceeding with evictions during this time. Ms. Green suggested it would be helpful for the Committee to advertise the City's rental assistance on the webpage by posting the link to the application, as well as to neighboring programs. Information to educate tenants on their rights would be helpful, as well, such as the CDC's Prevention and Temporary Halt of Evictions letter. Mr. Feliciano reiterated Ms. Green's point that there is an awareness gap between the resources and the public who needs them, so it would be helpful if HRAC could spread the resources. Language has proven itself to be a barrier in this issue, since many tenants facing eviction do not speak the same language as their landlord. There is a need to have the local applications through the County and City translated into more languages. Mr. Pagano offered to start a Facebook page to compile and share resources.

Review of Minutes

A motion to accept the minutes as written from the October meeting was put forth by Mr. Decker and seconded by Ms. Green; the motion carried by unanimous vote in favor.

Amend Committee Bylaws

Mrs. Baasland updated the group on the status of the committee's proposed bylaw amendments. The changes were brought before the City Council at their work session on November 2, and the amendments were accepted as written.

Update from the Lunching Memorial Task Force

Ms. Green updated the group on the work that the Maryland Lynching Task Force has been doing. The group's work has been moving right along, and they recently received official approval from the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) to move forward with the marker, and the language is being drafted now. Work is being done to arrange for another soil collection process, as well. The task force feels that it may be possible to have the marker up by February 2021, which is just in time for Black History Month. The group also got the approval from the EJI to sponsor a local school essay contest, for which the EJI will provide the scholarship funding. EJI is also partnering with Fenix Youth Project to sponsor a book anthology and creative writing competition. The task force and Fenix Youth Project are working together with Wicomico County Public Libraries on a Lift Every Voice project, after which they will all be partnered together to work on the essay contest. The task force's Chair gave a presentation at the last City Council meeting, and Councilwoman Blake was so impressed that she will be sharing it with Choices Academy to educate school students and our community's youth.

Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Month Memo

The group discussed the memo that Ms. Held drafted, which provides background information to the City of Salisbury about Human Trafficking, and recommends that the City proclaim January 2021 and every January thereafter as Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention month. HRAC would like to create dialogue around this issue to educate the public in their own community. Information about how to recognize and report trafficking would be beneficial to the community as well.

Position Descriptions & Officer Election

The committee elected new officers after individuals self-nominated for the positions they were interested in. On a motion put forth by Rev Wright and seconded by Ms. Held, and carried by unanimous vote in favor, Mr. Feliciano was elected the committee's new Chair. A Motion put forth by Mr. Amos and seconded by Rev Wright to elect Ms. Green Vice Chair was carried by unanimous vote in favor. Mr. Amos then put forth a motion to elect Mr. Pheasant as Secretary, and the motion was seconded by Ms. Held and carried by unanimous vote in favor. The terms for the new Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary will begin as of the adjournment of this meeting, and they will preside over the committee's next meeting.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next HRAC meeting will be held on Thursday the 14th of January, 2021 at 6pm on the virtual platform Google Meets, and will be run by the committee's newly elected officers. A move to adjourn the meeting was put forth by Mr. Amos, seconded by Mr. Decker, and carried by unanimous vote in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:20pm.

Minutes Taken By: Laura R. Baasland, *Department of Water Works Program Specialist*