



**City of Salisbury**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**October 10, 2019**

**Committee Members Present**

Reverend John Wright, *Chair*  
Mark Decker  
Amber Green  
Nance Held  
Chalarra Sessoms  
Marcel Jagne-Shaw

**Committee Members Absent**

Billy Earl Amos  
D'Shawn Doughty

**In Attendance**

Laura Baasland, *Department of Water Works Program Specialist*  
Kaisha Young

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

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:10p.m. by Rev Wright.

**Last Meeting Minutes**

The meeting minutes from September were acknowledged. Rev Wright pointed out a minor typo in the minutes—there was an erroneous “l” before the word “know.” Mrs. Baasland stated that she would make that correction. A motion to approve the last meeting minutes with the change Rev Wright identified was brought forth by Mr. Decker and seconded by Ms. Held. The motion carried by a unanimous vote in favor.

**Open Public Forum, Current Events & Local Issues**

Rev Wright opened the forum to the member of the public in attendance to speak and the invitation was declined. Mr. Decker mentioned that City Councilman Muir Boda has publicly announced that he will spearhead an initiative to bring a proposal before the Maryland General Assembly to allow the City of Salisbury to create their own liquor board.

**Questions for Chief Duncan**

Committee members shared questions they have prepared for Chief Duncan of the Salisbury police Department and discussed what topics to cover and how to phrase their inquiries. The questions for the Chief and the members that proposed them are as follows:



**Rev Wright:**

1. Are there procedures with assisting trans individuals experiencing homelessness? If so, what are the procedures?
2. If a trans person is arrested, is there special protocol? If so, what is that protocol?
3. Are there procedures for dealing with non-English speakers who don't speak the most common languages?

**Ms. Green:**

4. How accessible and visible are department policies? Can they be easily located on the City website, and are they accessible to all members of the public, specifically the language?
5. How are complaints against the department processed? What is the complaint process? How transparent is the department about complaints?

**Ms. Held:**

6. What are the department's policies and procedures in dealing with youth?
7. What number of youth have had civil or criminal interaction with the department?
8. Has the department considered or researched grants to fund training in youth policing?
9. What policies are in place to deal with persons experiencing homelessness?
10. Does the department have any policies or procedures in place to address human trafficking?

**General Committee Questions:**

11. What level of coordination is there between the four policing agencies in the City—Salisbury Police Department, Wicomico County Sheriff's Office, Maryland State Police, and Salisbury University Police?

The group decided to prepare a formal list of questions for Chief Duncan based on the above suggestions. The Committee also agreed to adhere to that list and stay on topic during the meeting with Chief Duncan. On a motion by Ms. Held and seconded by Ms. Green, and carried by unanimous vote in favor, the Committee decided to formalize the questions for Chief Duncan and asked that Mrs. Baasland share them with her and invite her to attend the November meeting to address the Committee.

**Maryland Lynching Memorial Project**

Mr. Decker provided the Committee with copies of a draft that he, Ms. Green, and Mr. Yamakawa prepared of a formal recommendation to Mayor Day regarding the Maryland Lynching Memorial Project. A copy of that draft is attached to these minutes. Discussion about the draft ensued. On a motion by Ms. Held, seconded by Ms. Green, and carried by unanimous vote in favor, the Committee approved the draft as written and will bring it before the Mayor.

**Concerns about Costs of Living and Housing Affordability**

Mr. Decker knows an individual who has done research on generational poverty and gentrification and will request permission from that individual to share those papers with the Committee. Ms. Green asked if the Committee could find out what percentage of rentals are available only to students and are therefore not accessible to the general population. Mr. Jagne-Shaw inquired as to whether or not any City ordinance exists to protect native residents, such as legislation specifying that a certain percentage of new developments must be reserved as affordable housing.

**Census 2020**

Ms. Sessoms proposed that the Committee address the local Census 2020 efforts and offer to lend any and all support. This topic will be included on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

**Committee Membership**

On a motion by Mr. Decker, seconded by Ms. Held, and carried by unanimous vote in favor, the Committee requested that Mrs. Baasland send out a formal reminder to the Committee about the attendance policy in the Committee's bylaws. The Committee discussed the need to recruit new members, particularly youth, and pondered how to reach the younger population. Ms. Green



suggested that the Committee reach about the young persons who have already been involved with the City and who can then discuss it with their peer networks. Ms. Green identified that the City's Youth Development Specialist, Jermichael Mitchell, would be the most appropriate person to discuss this with. Mr. Decker mentioned that the Committee has never had a member of the Latinx community, which would be an asset to the group. The Committee also agreed to discuss, and potentially elect, officers at the next meeting.

**Next Meeting & Adjournment**

The next HRAC meeting was set for Thursday, November 14, at 6p.m. in conference room 306 of the Government Office Building. The group asked that Mrs. Baasland invite Chief Duncan to the next meeting to discuss the questions they will prepare. On a motion by Mr. Decker, seconded by Mr. Jagne-Shaw, and carried by unanimous vote in favor, the HRAC meeting was adjourned at 7:22p.m.

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





## Salisbury Human Rights Advisory Committee

Recommendation to the Mayor to form a Task Force for the purposes of creating a Lynching Memorial honoring the local victims of historic Racial Terror Lynchings.

DRAFT

### BACKGROUND:

One of the most tragic eras of United States history—and a direct legacy of American slavery and institutionalized White Supremacy - the phenomena of Racial Terror Lynchings reached their peak in the late 19th and early 20th century. It is estimated that perhaps over 5,000 such murders "are known" to have occurred throughout the country. Rarely were the perpetrators themselves identified - even though most of these acts took the form of public spectacles - and even fewer were the times when someone was actually held accountable for their actions.

Of the estimated 40+ Racial Terror Lynchings known to have taken place in Maryland, 7 took place in the Lower Eastern Shore, with 3 of those in Salisbury.

On May 25th 1898, 18-year-old Garfield King was being held in jail for the shooting and killing of a white man, for which King claimed self defense. An enraged crowd that "consisted of numerous citizens of the town" demanded the sheriff hand over the accused man, and when the sheriff refused, they broke into the jail and dragged King out. He was beaten, kicked and clubbed, and finally hanged and his body shot over 50 times.

The most documented and notorious lynching in Salisbury was that of 23 year old Matthew Williams on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1931. Accused of killing his employer, the already-injured Williams was abducted from his bed at Peninsula General Hospital, dropped from a window into the arms of the waiting mob, stabbed with an ice pick, and then taken to the Courthouse lawn. There he was beaten, hanged, and then dragged behind a vehicle through Black neighborhoods of the city. The mob then burned his body while drinking and celebrating.

A few days after Williams' murder, police received an anonymous call telling them where to find another victim's body. That nameless Black man--still unidentified to this day--is believed to have been killed on the same night as Williams, most likely by the rampaging mob which had caught him outside and defenseless.

Despite the abundance of local witnesses to at least two of these acts of racial terrorism, the murders were determined to have been committed by "persons unknown".

## RECOMMENDATION:

In order to promote education and reconciliation over the traumatic events of our city's past, the Human Rights Advisory Committee recommends that the Mayor establish a Lynching Memorial Task Force in order to facilitate the creation of said Memorial. The Task Force will:

- Coordinate creation of a Press Release from the Mayor's office announcing formation of task force and a call for members;
- Create community buy-in for the Memorial, via outreach projects and meetings with key leaders in the Salisbury community;
- Ensure that discussions with such community members include issues both past and present. The key to buy-in is to link the Memorial to economics, criminal justice, health and education.
- Coordinate with the Equal Justice Initiative, which will fund the memorial once it is planned by the city and sufficient community buy-in is achieved;
- Coordinate with the Mayor and other city officials on the design, language and location of the Memorial;
- Plan and implement an unveiling ceremony for the memorial once previous steps have been completed.