



City of Salisbury

TRUTH Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: September 17, 2025

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: GOB Council Chambers

Members Present:

Amber Green, Kenisha LeCole, Joe Venosa, Carileigh Jones, Kat Savoy

Others Present:

Emily Goebel, City Staff Liaison

Rachel Fogarty and Sophia Peters of HRAC

1.Call To Order

Amber Green called the meeting to order at 6:09 PM.

2.Welcome and Introductions

- Committee members did an introduction of names and backgrounds for the HRAC members attending and the new city staff liaison.
- Amber announced that TRUTH is openly recruiting for members and encouraged prospective members to submit a letter of intent if interested in joining.
- Amber announced there is no agenda for the meeting.
- Amber invited the public to the TRUTH tour for the 3rd session and commended the 1st session's discussion at the VFM. The conversation surrounding building the gap between generations.

3.Committee Discussion

- Amber opens discussion to members of the public, specifically inviting HRAC members in attendance to discuss about a combination of committees.
- Joe announced his mixed feelings about the combination of TRUTH and HRAC committees.
- Emily clarified that City administration has made no formal moves to combine the committees, just wanted to explore the possibility as HRAC is having difficulty meeting quorum.
- Rachel and Sophia discuss HRAC's struggle to meet quorum and the possible benefit in combining committees.
- Amber announced she has spoken with half of HRAC's leadership about the difficulty of the lack of quorum. She thinks it would be best to have that conversation in a public setting. Committee leadership hasn't had a conversation on what the combination would look like. She provided context that she appreciates the thought of bringing committees together but wouldn't make sense for what the TRUTH committee stands for. Speaks about the importance of the Lynching Memorial task force and building the dialogue for a relationship with the African American community in the City. TRUTH committee is to follow through with the work on what came through with the Lynching Memorial Task Force. Discussed how the legislation to create TRUTH was in Dec 2023, didn't have first meeting until almost a year later. Amber felt like the

City government passed the buck, waited for individuals to come together and set meetings instead of the City doing the work to set everything up and a corralling of the people wasn't organized. Expressed how there is a responsibility of the City to provide guidelines on how to administer committees. Committees suffer because of the City government and lack of leadership. Amber is not sold on the idea of combining the committees. She is open to discussion of strategy between two committees.

- Joe concurred with Amber and provided the sentiment that just because other committees are struggling doesn't mean TRUTH should have to combine their mission. He proposed keeping the committees separate but working together on needs and challenges, and making this position known to the City.
- Kenisha announced she would not like to combine committees but would like to help recruit HRAC members so that both committees can continue fulfilling their missions successfully.
- Rachel asked about TRUTH's recruitment process so that HRAC can explore a strategy. Joe stated they don't have a formal recruitment plan, but he'd be open to spreading the word on his PAC14 show, Open Access, or holding a campus event at Salisbury University.
- Amber noted she'd like clear identification on what committees can and should be doing from City leadership. Would also like input from the communications department on a committee social media policy.
- Amber talked about recruitment and membership. Talks about folks that are actively looking to get involved. Doesn't see a huge strategy being helpful other than word of mouth.
- Sophia spoke about issues HRAC has - more so attendance than recruitment. HRAC is in stages of disorganization. She mentioned that members are quitting because of the lack of communication and lack of progress.
- Amber pointed out that HRAC should become familiar with their enabling legislation and see if there isn't a way to uphold accountability by removing members who are not meeting the attendance requirements.
- Joe offers to see if they can have combined meetings for a short term.
- Amber expressed there is very little guidance or training for City committees and their leadership. She proposed a formal onboarding process would be helpful.
- Community member offered that challenges with attendance and quorum resonate with the empowerment of individual empowerment, which needs to come from administration and self-reflection from individuals. All committees should have an onboarding process, recommending the chairperson take people out for coffee for an interview to see where folks fit in this committee. Talked about his recruitment success during his time on City committees. Spoke on the necessity of City buy-in to committees from the current administration.
- Kenisha offered that it could be helpful if City passed applications onto the committees for review as they come in.
- Amber discussed the necessity of a formal onboarding program for all committees, standardized from Administration. Encouraged HRAC and TRUTH members to strategically ask the City for an onboarding structure and leadership development. Expressed frustration on the lack of City support. Can see their committees collaborating but not combining. Spoke more on the history of TRUTH and how, if anything, TRUTH should be reporting to HRAC.
- Sophia talked about how HRAC doesn't want to step on the toes of TRUTH with the possibility of combining, is just frustrated about not being able to get anything completed in HRAC.
- Amber talked about what collaboration might look like with the possibility of having a TRUTH representative on HRAC and vice versa. Also spoke on initiative of members and empowering individual members instead of solely relying on committee leadership.
- A community member mentioned he was the person of HRAC and every person in that room was a leader.
- Amber talked about what the committee can or cannot do on HRAC. Talks about the history of TRUTH and why the committee was born from HRAC. The founding issue for HRAC was LGBTQ community, led by folks at the Health Department. The strategy of requesting more

guidance and structure from the City is the next step for both committees. Emphasizes the importance of a letter of intent for committee members.

- Kenisha expressed she is a firm believer that all people on the committee need to step up so the chairperson doesn't need to complete all task items.
- Community member speaks on the County's Human Rights Advisory committee forming and how that could be a helpful resource.
- Joe talked about directly asking what the administration intends to do with these committees. Joe wants committees to write a formal letter to the mayor to clarify what support the administration is willing to give for the boards and commissions. Joe makes a motion to draft a letter from all committees to clarify intent and support from administration.
- Amber expressed that a letter could be overkill and logistically strenuous to get all committees to complete. She asked Emily to let the mayor know that HRAC, TRUTH, and the mayor should have a formal meeting to discuss. Amber makes a motion to make a formal request to the mayor for a dual committee meeting with the mayor regarding advisory committee guidelines. Kat seconds motion. All vote in favor.
- Discussion held on upcoming community events:
 - Kenisha's coat drive in partnership with Fruitland Police Department - invites the community to drop off new and gently used winter gear. Drive ends on the 24th of October, distribution on 25th at domestic violence walk. What isn't distributed there will be given to the unsheltered population and then school system. Would love to beat 150 coats.
 - Hate Bias reporting forum on October 11 from 9 AM - 3 PM, Amber would like someone to attend and come report back to the committees.
 - Habitat for Humanity is releasing applications for community schools' rental assistance program through DHCD. Must be/have a WCPS student to qualify. Also announced, the Maryland commission on civil rights is a large resource on training and pamphlets that can be used by both committees to help address what the committees aim to do.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.