

**ROCKVILLE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Cisco WebEx Conference
Wednesday, October 27, 2021
7:30 p.m.

Member Attendance: Andrew Lin (Interim Chair), Kaoru Sakabe, Oyebisi Olatoye, Gabrielle Zwi, Amina Shafi Rogers, Bethany Pereira, Kindra Jones

Staff Liaisons: Ali Hoy, Grants and Program Analyst

Guests: Connor Lee (Cultural Arts Commission), James Pearce (Rockville Resident)

- I. Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 7:37 pm.
- II. Welcoming of Guests** – The Commission welcomed community member, James Pearce, and Cultural Arts Commission (CAC) member, Connor Lee.
- III. Adoption of Meeting Agenda and Minutes** – Upon motion, seconded, and approved, the meeting agenda and September meeting minutes were adopted.
- IV. Staff Report**
 - A. Update on Commission Vacancies**
 - i. Liaison Hoy reported that there are four Commission vacancies.
 - ii. Katrina Carter resigned in October, citing that she was moving out of the City of Rockville. The website has been updated and the City Clerk office has been notified.
 - iii. Two new members are scheduled to be appointed by the Mayor and Council on November 1, 2021. James Pearce is an attorney for the Department of Justice with a Master’s degree in human rights law and Jeannie Shen has experience working with youth and leadership programs. Once they are appointed, the Commission will have two vacancies.
 - iv. The membership committee asked about the application review process, to which Liaison Hoy responded that the City Clerk’s office and Mayor and Council review all applications and determine who will be nominated. It was suggested that the membership committee play a role in onboarding new members.
 - B. Updates on Program of Events**
 - i. Student Ambassador Program**
 1. Liaison Hoy shared that three applications were submitted.
 2. The Student Ambassador Program Committee will be reviewing applications and finalizing the onboarding process before the next HRC meeting.
 3. A second application period in the Spring was discussed and tabled for future discussion.

4. December 10th is international Human Rights Day. The Commission members discussed this being a good project for the student ambassadors to work on, with a goal of putting something together by November 26th to put on social media.

ii. **MLK Jr. Day 2022**

1. Liaison Hoy discussed the draft plan, developed by the Department of Housing and Community Development. The plan consists of four parts: a video compilation of past MLK Jr. Day celebration events narrated by the Mayor, an interactive event focused on Dr. King's message and barbershop culture, the F. Michael Taff and MLK Youth award ceremony and a week of volunteer events. Volunteer events may include stream cleanups, restoration of African American cemeteries, and self-guided volunteer activities. The MLK Jr. Day subcommittee will continue to be notified of changes.
2. For the F. Michael Taff and MLK Youth awards, outreach will be conducted by City staff to schools, youth organizations and organizations that support people with disabilities. The original deadline of November 15 is being extended to the end of November, due to additional time needed for youth outreach.
3. Ads were posted in November Rockville Reports and social media about the award nomination process. An ad is planning for December Rockville Reports about volunteer opportunities.
4. Interim Chair Lin suggested a meeting with Asmara Habte, Director of Housing and Community Development and Councilmember Dr. Myles to discuss MLK planning.

iii. **Pride**

1. Liaison Hoy briefly discussed the Pride event, for which planning should begin soon.

C. **Chair Nominations**

- i. Interim Chair Lin reminded everyone that those who are interested in the Chair position should submit a statement of interest. The position has a one-year term. Interim Chair Lin indicated an interest in the chair role and Commissioner Zwi indicated an interest in the Vice-Chair position.

V. **Chair Report** – No additional discussion.

VI. **Other Committee Reports**

A. Pride Committee – There were no reported updates.

B. Current Affairs Committee –

- i. Commissioner Pereira notified the Commission about a Montgomery County initiative for approximately 300 families to receive \$800 per month payments to a select group of residents, some of whom have experienced homelessness. The initiative is meant to stabilize the income of these residents. A public hearing is scheduled for November 2nd.

- ii. Commissioner Pereira also shared that police are no longer present at Montgomery County Public Schools and that there is a need for student trainings on hate and bias, with increasing hate speech and graffiti at schools. A discussion of opening up the HRC's Diversity, Inclusion and Equity training to Rockville students.
- iii. The Commission discussed an update to the Gaithersburg incident in which an individual was killed by the police. The grand jury declined to charge the officer involved.
- iv. Commissioner Rogers provided updates about Afghan refugees. She discussed a need for modifying the language included in the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees website to better reflect the standards of law regarding credible fear vs well-founded fear when seeking asylum. She shared that while Afghan refugees are settling in Baltimore and Montgomery County, refugees are not being directed to settle in Rockville because of a lack of affordable housing options. The Commission discussed reaching out to Rockville Housing Enterprises to discuss requirements for housing that can include barriers for newly settled residents, like credit history checks.

VII. Old Business

A. HRC and HSAC Survey

- i. Interim Chair Lin provided an update on the joint community survey and encouraged another outreach push for participation in the survey. Liaison Hoy reported that a member of the Human Services Advisory Commission was volunteering to take surveys, in multiple languages, to senior locations.

B. Montgomery County Remembrance and Reconciliation Commission

- i. Commissioner Olatoye reported back to the Commission about the MCRRC march and ceremony she attended on September 26, 2021 as part of Remembrance Weekend, recognizing victims of racial lynching in the County.

VIII. New Business and Announcements

- A. The Commission discussed the Open Meetings Act. Commissioner Rogers offered to put together a checklist for new members, that includes any onboarding steps required.
- B. The Commission discussed moving the November and December 2021 meetings to the third Wednesday of the month, due to the holidays.
- C. Presentation to Mayor and Council – Interim Chair Lin suggested that the Commission present updates about the HRC to Mayor and Council in February and suggested forming a subcommittee at the November meeting.

IX. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 pm.