



Human Rights Commission Meeting October 15, 2020 Minutes

Present: Sid Ferreira, Erika Loper, Ben Herrington, Liz Haygood, Petua Mukimba, Deb Neubauer, **Staff Liaison** Jennifer Moyston

Absent: Chair Matthew Charity, Gazit Chaya Nkosi, Cedric Gonnet

Community Participant: Lauren Mills

Meeting called to order by Vice Chair Sid Ferreira at 6:32 pm

1. Call to Order

- A. Vice Chair Sid Ferreira introduced that Chair Charity will not be present, so Sid will Chair until 6:55pm when he must leave for another meeting. Commissioner Ben Herrington will Chair at 6:55pm.
- B. No new announcements from Commissioners
- C. No additions to the agenda
- D. Motion to approve September Minutes:**
 - a. Commissioner Herrington motioned to approve the minutes
 - b. Commissioner Haygood seconded the motion
 - c. Unanimous approval of September Minutes

2. Public Comment Period:

- a. Lauren Mills offered Public Comment, Asked that the HRC make sure that BIPOC concerns and input re: perceived abuses, racial inequality, are addressed in a complete way. As a resident, it has been unclear how those issues are addressed, Mills requested more clarity.

3. HRC reports:

- a. Vice Chair Ferreira announced a second round of rental assistance offered by the Housing Trust. Applications exist, encourage anyone who is behind on rent to apply.
- b. Vice Chair Ferreira is also part of the group choosing members for the Public Safety Working Group. Had first meeting with the Town Manager, established how interviews will be conducted, etc., 6 of 9 members will be BIPOC, or from underserved communities. Group will be representative of the town, to be focused on policing. Encourage people to apply. Already 12 candidates, hoping to have interviews done within the next few weeks, and have a group that Town Council can approve soon.

- i. Staff Liaison Jennifer Moyston further updated HRC on the process. Those in attendance did not want Town Manager to appoint committee. Residents will go through an interview process. Jennifer will be Staff Liaison.
 - ii. This committee will help find alternatives to policing
 - iii. They had 2 police positions available that haven't been filled. May hire a mental health worker to address some issues instead of or alongside police.
 - c. Commissioner Haygood reported school has joined effort to assist with housing assistance, info is now on the school website.
 - d. Staff Liaison Moyston announced Community Participation Officers and Town Managers have been visiting the mobile market and the Amherst Survival Center, received great feedback on first round of funding. Town is now collaborating with Family Outreach of Amherst, they've hired community members to assist with federal applications.
 - e. Commissioner Herrington announced School Equity Task Force making progress, meeting regularly
- 4. Commission voted to postpone discussion on role of commissioners, selection of Chair until more members could be present**
- 5. Vice Chair Sid Ferreira left meeting at 6:53pm, Commissioner Herrington took over as Chair 6:54pm**
 - a. Discussion regarding different proclamations for Town Council to approve, along with the flag raising ceremonies for different heritages.
 - b. Human Rights Proclamation: Typically done on Town Common, discussion as to whether to do ceremony in person or via Zoom, and post on Amherst Media? Staff Liaison Jennifer Moyston needs to submit ASAP to Council, some communities are still holding in person events with distancing and masks.
 - c. **Motion to Vote on Human Rights Proclamation:**
Erika Loper Made a motion to approve proclamation
Deb Neubauer seconded motion
Unanimous approval of Human Rights proclamation, will be submitted to Town Council
- 6. Discussion on HRC involvement in quality of Black Lives in the Covid pandemic.**
 - a. The BIPOC community is being impacted by Covid in more serious ways than European American community, is there a way to assist?
 - b. Make sure people know how to connect with resources
 - c. Trying to engage with the community is really difficult right now, because of social distancing, contagiousness, town has been able to piggy back on other events
 - d. Jennifer recently made a connection with the Chinese community, Jennifer made flyer of available resources, ambassador translated into Mandarin
 - e. Could we do a mailing, outreach within the apartment complexes, going out to the mobile market, find ways to build trust.
 - f. Survey: How to get it to all communities? Accessibility & trust issues
 - g. The HRC decided to create Ambassadors to each of the areas/Communities in Amherst.

- i. Each Commissioner to contact ambassadors in their designated communities, get survey to ambassadors within the next week

7. Upcoming Events:

- a. Flag Raising and proclamations
- b. Possible collaboration with POCU at ARHS for Kwanzaa Celebration
- c. Opportunity to run a training/workshop: Intro. to Amherst Town Government, how to get involved
- d. Interrupting Racism learning events
- e. Some final discussion on discrepancy between police not interrupting parties which led to outbreaks of Covid-19, vs. policing in the apartment complexes.
 - i. Covid Ambassadors, to remind people to wear masks, they also have the Covid hotline, if they get a call, they send ambassadors.
 - ii. The police have been responding to noise complaints, because then they can charge everyone on the lease and dismantle the party. Can only file a noise complaint if you're a neighbor, or if after hours.
 - iii. If anyone is driving by and sees a large gathering, call the town Covid Hotline 413-259-2425.

8. Motion to Adjourn:

- a. Commissioner Haygood made a motion to adjourn meeting at 7:42pm
- b. Commissioner Petua Mukimba Seconded the motion
- c. Unanimous approval to adjourn meeting at 7:42pm