

Human Relations Commission
Meeting #2021-05
June 28, 2021 - 5 p.m.

A meeting of the Human Relations Commission (HRC) was held via Zoom on Monday, June 28, 2021, at 5 p.m.

Chair Hightower called the meeting to order at 5 p.m. In attendance were Chair Hightower, Vice-Chair Cunningham, Secretary Carpenter, Mr. Badami and Mr. Maltin. Also in attendance were Supervisor Jeffrey Campolongo, Township Manager Roman M. Pronczak and Assistant Township Manager David J. Mrochko, IT Director Nicole Leininger and IT Assistant Robert Marcy.

A motion was made by Mr. Badami, duly seconded by Ms. Cunningham to approve the minutes of May 24, 2021. There were no comments or questions. Chair Hightower called a roll-call vote starting with herself, aye; Vice-Chair Cunningham, aye; Secretary Carpenter, aye and Mr. Badami also voted in favor. The motion carried.

Chair Hightower moved on to subcommittee reports, beginning with the ordinance committee. Ms. Cunningham began with a review of amendments the PA HRC suggested being made to the Township HRC ordinance. The list of suggested amendments include additional protected classes, including age and familial status. She asked Mr. Campolongo to expand on the age protections. He responded that the age component applies in the employment and housing settings, though not in the public accommodations setting in both federal and state guidelines. Mr. Badami added that for age (in housing), you have to determine if it is any age, or age 40 and over, or whatever choice the Township would want to make in housing. Other protected classes include genetic information, marital status, source of income and returning citizens. Chair Hightower asked if there are any specific rules around marital status, which she classifies with the age class. Mr. Campolongo said there is a bias that exists for unmarried vs. married individuals, which could lead someone to assume the person could be part of the LGBTQ community. There are different levels of implicit bias that exist. This will be a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Maltin requested a clarification on source of income, to which Mr. Badami responded that some landlords will not accept housing vouchers for payment of rent. Mr. Maltin requested a further definition for returning citizens. Mr. Campolongo said this refers to people who have a criminal background with either arrest or conviction and have served time and are classified as returning citizens. Secretary Carpenter added that when the ordinance is amended and also with outreach, there should be definitions of these classes as most people do not know what they mean.

Vice-Chair Cunningham continued to discuss additional suggested amendments to the ordinance, including presenting/addressing complaints that will also be included in the forms that will be made available to the public, as well as time limits during which a complaint could be registered. She and Mr. Badami will work together to compile information for further discussion during the next HRC meeting, when a vote could be taken to send definitions and clarifying amendments to the ordinance to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

Vice-Chair Cunningham reminded everyone that Carl Summerson of the PA HRC asked to meet again for a training on the PA Human Relations Act. She will reach out to him to schedule it, adding that other local HRCs can be invited. Chair Hightower added that mediation training should be considered as well and asked Mr. Pronczak for guidance. Mr. Pronczak said the Township is looking into the Pearl S. Buck Foundation for training on equity and inclusion, and it is possible to schedule a joint training and include other municipalities. It will be a good sharing experience, as noted by Chair Hightower.

Chair Hightower asked Mr. Badami to update the group on the website review. Mr. Badami has reviewed local municipal sites, in addition to sites around the state and country to see what some best practices are. What he sent out was a first draft in anticipation of receiving comments that would make our page more helpful to the community. He then briefly described each aspect of the draft. Chair Hightower commented that once we get the content together, the pages will be developed. She asked Mr. Mrochko who manages the Township webpage, and he responded that the Township's website is provided by Civics Plus, the largest provider of municipal websites in North America, though Nicole and Robert are the brains behind our content. Mr. Mrochko added that he would be happy to work with the committee moving forward. Secretary Carpenter asked about social media and requirements/regulations for posting. Mr. Mrochko responded that at present there is no policy, though we should be working on one collectively, especially as we move forward. Secretary Carpenter also asked if there are budget funds that will help with prizes, should a contest of some type be held. Mr. Mrochko highlighted the Earth Day celebration the Township holds each year, where children submit essays/art/poetry related to the environment. An awards ceremony is held at the Manor House at Prophecy Creek. A public recognition at a Board of Supervisors' meeting might be possible if a similar type of event is held by the HRC. Mr. Badami added that it would make a great Mission Moment. Vice-Chair Cunningham asked if information could be shared through the Wire. Mr. Mrochko agreed that this approach could work well, and

that once the information is posted, it would be easier to share a link for different initiatives.

Chair Hightower has nothing to report at the moment on documents or strategic planning that she and Secretary Carpenter are working on. They will take into consideration the information from the documents committee to be sure all information is correct prior to posting on the website. She asked Mr. Maltin to update the members on the outreach plan.

Mr. Maltin and Chair Hightower put together notes for all to review related to community outreach, such as website content, a flyer to distribute to the community and a Power Point presentation. We need to create information for the Wire and the bi-annual newsletter. We received an implicit bias training module from the Tri-States HRC. In reading the ordinance as well as the materials from Tri-States, there is so much information available to share with the public as part of the outreach program. We need to develop a priority list of what gets done and by whom. He added that a recent meeting with members of the police department was effective, and discussions centered on how the HRC can help the police department with non-police matters in the community. Chair Hightower said it was a great meeting and she looks forward to working with the department. Vice-Chair Cunningham asked about the fall newsletter and when information is due to include community outreach. Mr. Mrochko will confirm a deadline this week and will assist with writing an article with information from the HRC.

Chair Hightower then discussed volunteers and interns. She was able to connect with Jill Kane who is interested in serving as a volunteer. Secretary Carpenter talked with Talaya Coffey, a senior at Wissahickon High School. She will bring a unique perspective to the group from the high school and will be a great asset. Chair Hightower asked if the volunteers have to go through a process, or can they begin work. Mr. Pronczak explained that it depends on what the work involves, such as clearances for someone who works in the Parks and Recreation Department. It will have to be determined, depending on what they will be doing.

Chair Hightower followed with new business, including virtual and in-person meetings. She asked Mr. Pronczak to update everyone on the process. He explained that all boards and commissions hold public meetings and with Covid, all meetings were held virtually while meeting requirements for public participation. Last week we were made aware of a new directive, where the Township buildings has to be made available to anyone who wishes to participate in person. It does not mean the entire board or commission has to be in person. The requirement is that everyone who participates in the meeting

has to be able to hear each other and see what everyone sees. We are able to achieve that through screen sharing. If it is convenient for the members of this commission to continue to participate virtually it is acceptable. We will always have staff at the meeting in the public meeting room to accommodate anyone who might show up. At the same time, if the commission members feel better meeting in person, we can do that. The Board of Supervisors will be using the hybrid approach, with some in-person participation, and others virtually. He asked if the HRC members have a preference. Chair Hightower believes there is more value to being in person, though also likes the hybrid approach. As the meeting dates draw near, we can decide. She asked how the other members feel. Vice-Chair Cunningham asked if there is a concern about the Sunshine Laws. Mr. Pronczak responded that as long as all can see and hear the same information, we fulfill our requirements. Vice-Chair Cunningham asked if the entire HRC chooses in-person meeting, does the Zoom component vanish. Mr. Pronczak said from the feedback regarding the Board of Supervisors' and Planning Commission meetings, there has been great virtual participation as people tune in from home to learn about what is going on. Other municipalities who have stopped virtual meetings and hold only in-person meetings have been criticized. He believes there will always be a virtual component, whether Zoom or otherwise.

Chair Hightower asked if anyone else was on to offer public comment, and Mr. Marcy responded there was no one logged on virtually with questions or comments, and also no one in the building physically. She asked for any additional comments. There were none.

Chair Hightower thanked everyone for their participation. Upon motion by Mr. Badami, duly seconded by Vice-Chair Cunningham, the meeting was adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alissa Carpenter", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Alissa Carpenter
Secretary

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