

City of Fairmont-Human Right Commission

**Minutes of:
Regular Meeting
March 23, 2022- 5:30 pm**

The duly called and noticed meeting of the City of Fairmont Human Right's commission was held on Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. via in person meeting at Life United Methodist Church and ZOOM.

Larry Buckland, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order.

Roll Call of Members

Members present:

Cyndi Straight
Miki DeMary-Andrew
Tiffany Samuels
Dusty Merrell
Larry Buckland
Robert Martin

Whereupon, a quorum of commissioners was determined to be present for the purposes of conducting the business of said commission as set forth on the Agenda.

Motion to excuse commissioner, Dan Swiger, council member.
Cyndi Straight moved to approve motion, Dusty Merrill second motion.

In RE: Approval of Meeting minutes from February 23, 2022: Minutes were sent out for review by the commissioners prior to the meeting. No discussion took place.

Cyndi Straight moved that the minutes be approved.
Dusty Merrill seconded the motion.

Minutes were approved.

In RE: Report from the Committee on Education and Community Forum:

- Cyndy Straight
 - No official report tonight. Jim Nolan is moderating a panel this evening and extends the invitation for members of the commission to attend after the meeting has adjourned.
 - Cyndy introduced Renee Verbanic, from Communities of Shalom:
- Renee Verbanic
 - Renee is a Certified Prevention Specialist
 - Communities of Shalom has 4 pertinent committees to the HRC:
 - Spirituality- under guidance of Jim Norton
 - "Inspirations through Tough Times" book, using art/crafts work as a collection. They need more entries from the public. Contact Jim Norton to make a submission.
 - Economics- Helping Hands for Hope, INC.
 - HOPE, INC. is overwhelmed and needs help with their pantry.
 - Communities of Shalom is collecting shelf stable products until April 1", 2022.

- Cathy Reed is chair of this committee and any questions can be directed towards Cathy.
 - Multicultural- Jim Norton is head of this committee.
 - The WVU Extension Office has diversity trainings that they are waiting to conduct in person, once pandemic is over.
 - 20 people from local entities will be trained per training.
 - Multiple trainings will be conducted as long as there is funding available.
 - Valerie Means, city manager, will assist in gathering Fairmont city workers trained.
 - The trainings will also then be opened to the general public
 - Each training will be 2 to 3 hours in length.
 - Health and Wellness- Renee Verbanic is chair.
 - Resource bags for teens/adolescents with hygiene and food products
 - They have many of these bags ready to distribute
 - They would like opportunities outside of school distribution.
- Renee Verbanic regarding Bullying Prevention
 - As a certified prevention specialist, Renee has multiple avenues for information on this topic. There is a language and science to bullying prevention with evidenced based practices.
- At the Juneteenth and Pride events on June 18th, 2022
 - Communities of Shalom will supply “freebies” to HRC if they want to have resource tables.
 - Larry Buckland asked if Renee would be willing to help with a subcommittee on bullying. Commissioner, Cyndy Straight, and Renee will work with Larry to find a time to meet and they will provide information to the listserv about this meeting.
- Andrew Snider
 - E. D. Fairness WV has established a program to address increased bullying in our school system. The 7th highest rate in the USA is in WV. 30% LGBTQ have attempted suicide. 13% have been threatened or injured on school property.
 - Comprehensive guide for health care providers from their program can help
 - Training geared towards educators and school professionals available.
 - Funding for these programs is via donors.
 - “Safe Schools initiative” is modeled after Florida program that has had success using a school equality index.
 - Schools can compete with each other as an incentive to increase scores.
 - This index provides policies and standards to be met by the school system.
 - Funding is \$2,000 short for this program. Can HRC Help? Link will be sent for the foundation.
 - Cyndy Straight met with Royce Lyden/Communities of Shalom will discuss it on April 5th, 2022.
 - Larry Buckland asked if we could send material to the listserv to try and get resources for funding as well.
 - Tiffany Samuels suggested that Andrew reach out to WVU for funding as well as Marion County Family Network.
 - Renee Verbanic mentioned that historically, there were issues of working with the state department of education and civil rights initiatives. She urged good prevention to keep situation from happening again. Fairness WV is not receiving state money so they are confident the same situation would not occur again.
 - Cyndy Straight asked if there is a curriculum with the program, and Andrew Snider stated that there is a component for curriculum.
- Juneteenth Celebration- Tiffany Samuels is working with Romelia Hodges with DSF Stop program.

- There will be amusement park rides, bands, and speakers
- Hoping for an entire weekend event.
- Brunch for Mental Health in African American community.
 - There are increased rates of suicides and it needs addressed.
- Renee Verbanic offered Communities of Shalom's suicide prevention resources.
 - Vickie Cooper is the expert and there is funding for this program available. Renee will give Tiffany the contact information. And information packets can be sent to DSF Stop program for distribution.

IN RE: Open Citizens Forum

- Joby Chadwell- President of Fairmont PFLAG
 - Fairmont is the last chapter in WV at \$10.00 dues a year.
 - There will be a Pride celebration on June 28th at East Marion Park from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm in Pavilion # 2.
 - PFLAG would love to collaborate with the HRC for this event.
 - Vendor forms are available, there is no charge for vendors but they must have some sort of activity available.
 - There will hopefully be food trucks and Mainstreet yoga will be there.
 - Volunteers are needed to organize and for the day of the event.
 - Rambling Root will host an after party.
 - Larger cities utilize pride committees and raise funding, but Joby funds this event on her own.
 - Joby will reach out to the health department to ensure that any vendors who wish to give out food, will be covered and up to code.
 - Bandstand set up is available if the band provides own AV equipment.
 - PFLAG meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month via zoom
 - Information is available on their Facebook page.
- Johnny Southern- WV Can't Wait
 - Decriminalization of Cannabis on the ballot this year. Needs 300 signatures for the topic to be introduced on the ballot in Fairmont.
 - Bullying is an issue for sure.
 - Since March 1st, 2022, Johnny has registered 95 citizens to vote.
 - This is a good opportunity to increase voter registration.
 - They need volunteers.
 - 7 pm at Wings ole, there will be a meeting on March 24, 2022.
 - There will be a campaign push in the fall to provide information of candidates for election.
 - BOE Primary is May 10, 2022.
 - His contact information is: 304-997-5555. Email is: johnnv@wvcantwait.com
- Cathy Reed
 - Anti-homeless bill did not make it through the house.
 - Special sessions could re-animate this bill and she will keep the HRC informed.
 - Most citizens are 2 paychecks away from experiencing homelessness.
 - Please support Friendship Fairmont. They are open Tuesday-Friday 9:00 am to 12:00 pm; and then from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm.
 - Re: Disability Rights of WV
 - Organization is looking for diverse individuals to be on the board. There are 4 meetings per year and the vote for new board members will be in July of 2022.
 - Their contact number is: 1-800-950-5250
 - Re: HB 4365- **Closure of Nursing Homes**
 - Bill could return for consideration in the future. John Manchin Senior Center provides 220 meals a day for citizens of Fairmont.

- Re: Council of Churches- they meet at 7pm via zoom on March 24, 2022. All are welcome to attend.

In Re: Commissioner Announcements

- Dusty Merrill- Social Media campaign for the HRC will include Facebook and Instagram.
 - The pages will educate the public and there will be zero debates on issues.
 - Distinction of Friends of the GRC group and HRC pages was made.
- Robert Martin- no announcements at this time.
- Miki DeMary-Andrew
 - There will be a summer camp through the WVU DAVIS COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND DESIGN
 - This came will be for 8th and 9th graders on July 17th to July 23rd, 2022. The camp will be free to attend with room and board, and interested students can go to: go.wvu.edu/e3camp for registration. Dr. Stefanie Hines, is especially interested in enrolling students from diverse backgrounds.
 - Marion County Family Resource Network has received a grant to work with minorities and covid disparities. More information will follow when the program is created.
 - Matilda is the first musical to be live since the pandemic with the Fairmont State Town and Gown program. Performances will be June 17th, 2022 to June 19th, 2022 and then from June 22nd, 2022 to June 26th, 2022.
- Cyndy Straight
 - She will invite the newspaper to the next meeting to build rapport.
 - David Kirk is a contact at the paper.
 - Andy Nice is with WV News.
- Larry Buckland
 - He is thankful for the in person meeting and the next meeting will be a hybrid meeting as well on April 20, 2022 at 5:30 pm. In person meeting will be at LIFE United Methodist Church at 3000 Technology Drive in Fairmont, WV.

Motion to Adjourn

- Miki DeMary-Andrew made the motion to adjourn the meeting.
- Robert Martin second the motion.
- All in favor. Meeting was adjourned.

Approved this the 25th day of May, 2022.



CHAIRPERSON

ATTEST:

Secretary