Berea Human Rights Commission

Regular Meeting

August 5, 2019, 6:30 PM

CITY HALL, COMMUNITY ROOM  
212 CHESTNUT ST, BEREA, KY 40403.

Present: Mim Pride (Chair), Eef Fontanez (Treasurer), Peter Hille (Secretary), Randy Dinsmore, Gene Stinchcomb (Vice Chair), Rachel Burnside, and Virgina Bland

Absent:

Eric Hogsten (Administrative Assistant)

Guests:

Public: Jacquelin Bowling, Rev. Carla Gilbert, Mary Ann Miranda, Anthony Carpenter, Gregory Bordelon, Ethan Connelly, Ali Blair

Summary of Actions Taken:

* Meeting was called to order at
* The agenda approved as circulated. MOTION Hille; SECOND: Dinsmore
* Announcements.
* Council Member, Emily Ladouceur has advised that she will introduce a motion to reverse the Council action to reduce the BHRC budget. She has asked for a budget and justification. You will be advised when she plans to move this forward.
* Minutes from the July Meeting
  + Approved with changes: Steve Caudill was not present. Stinchcomb asked that the titles of guest who speak to the Commission or who are referenced by the Commission be included in the minutes. MOTION Stinchcomb SECOND Dinsmore
* Treasure’s report for June
  + No changes in June from July Meeting. The year end reconciliations have not been completed we should have final numbers within four weeks. MOTION Hille SECOND Stinchcomb Approved

**New Business**

* Progress on developing systems for accounting.
  + Eric has met with Finance Director, Meeks. She has sent a letter outlining some processes. Key areas of concern include: bills directed to the wrong departments and accurate assignment of charges from those with whom the City has contracts (Walmart and the office supply provider).
* Budget for 2019-2020
  + A line-item budget is being prepared (Hogsten and Stinchcomb). Budget will include YTD totals along with comparison data for previous year and line item totals and percentage of total. Budgets will be circulated to Council members, Mayor and Meeks.

Estimates for costs of programs we are interested in supporting

Brainstorming exercise with all costs estimated:

* Regional HRC meeting 50-75 people. Food will be major cost and may be donated $2000-2,500
* Printing (new brochures) $200-300
* Training for commissioners $200-400
* Contract services, research or other (e.g., further work with Turley, Burnside, Mitchell)
* Engraving Fee Awards or alternate memento
* Computer equipment or contracts for cloud storage
* Program Outreach

Stinchcomb proposes a budget based on available funds and a budget for what we would like to do if funds were available.

* Fundraising Policy

Hille had previously proposed that we develop a policy for seeking and receiving outside funding for BHRC and presented the following draft principles for the Commission to consider:

The BHRC is authorized by the establishing ordinance to raise funds from other sources outside of Berea City Government. The BHRC notes that any funds raised from outside should meet the following criteria:

1. Funds raised should be used to advance the goals and objectives of the BHRC;
2. No funds should be accepted from groups or individuals that do not support the purpose and share the goals of the BHRC.
3. If any funds are accepted that are restricted to specific uses those uses should be consistent with the goals and objectives of the BHRC.

Pride raised question of how any funds raised would be accounted for. Stinchcomb shared previous practice in City affairs that money raised could be accounted for through the City Finance Director’s Office, and would be earmarked for the HRC. He will verify with Director Meeks how that would work. Hille noted the Mayor had stated at a previous BHRC meeting that the Commission can spend those funds as they determine and would not be subject to the grant process for City funds.

* Fee Award
* Burnside and Fontanez met to select winners for Commission consideration. Dr. Kennaria Brown and Chief David Gregory selected as joint recipients for their ground breaking diversity training over the past six years for the Berea Police Department in the areas of and over the past year, autism awareness. No Youth Award or Postumous Award was recommended. Committee suggested the creation of a Dr. Janice Blythe Award to be created and presented jointly by BHRC, Berea College and the City of Berea. Criteria has not been created and there has been no discussion with partners. Decision about Janice Blythe Award was delayed to next meeting. There was discussion about creating a memento for Fee Award recipients to take with them. Bland noted she planned the autism training that was carried out under Gregory’s auspices. Motion from committee for Fee Award to Brown and Gregory passed after discussion.
* Research on Housing Insecurity
  + Pride reported that Jasmine Routon, PhD Candidate Teaching and Research Assistant Human Development and Family studies, has been studying rural housing insecurity, including impacts for marginalized groups. She is interviewing people in Madison County and will prepare a report. She also hopes to develop a survey that we could use to track the availability of housing for minority populations.
* Report on URLTA Council Work Session
  + Burnside reported on URLTA work session that was held with two members absent. Juan Pena, KHRC Art Crosby, Kentucky Fair Housing and Adrienne Bush Homeless & Housing Coalition made the case that URLTA is important to protect the interests of tenants and also good business for landlords. A packet containing the state statute and a model city ordinance was provided to Council members. Crosby and others agreed to make themselves available for future conversations with Mayor and Council and interested business leaders. Pena will include URLTA training in future Fair Housing presentations.
  + Mayor Fraley has advised that there is not Council will to pass the ordinance in Berea. Commissioners will continue to keep this on the agenda and will seek opportunities to educate local business people.
* Response to Blair Complaint
  + BACKGROUND (presented by Pride): The BHRC has received a formal complaint regarding the public statements of a BHRC member in regard to the BHRC. The complaint pointed to the BHRC bylaws which provide for the Commission to vote on the removal of any Commissioners for cause including “failure, unwillingness, or inability to carry out the duties of the commission as defined in the organizing ordinance.”
  + The organizing ordinance includes the charge that the Commission shall “***promote mutual understanding and respect*** among all economic, social, racial, religious, sex, age, and ethnic groups” [emphasis added].
  + The complaint cites multiple instances of derogatory references to the Commission including efforts to have the Commission disbanded. However, these instances took place prior to the appointment of the Commissioner. The one exception to that time frame, referencing a vote at a Commission meeting, does not constitute a conflict of interest. Pride noted she reviewed this with our attorneys.
  + As Human Rights Commissioners we should all hold ourselves and each other to a high standard of conduct and communications; actively support the Commission’s purpose of promoting mutual understanding and respect; and refrain from conduct or public communication that undermines the credibility of the Commission.
  + MOTION (by Hille): The Commission finds that because the communications detailed in the complaint predate the appointment of the Commissioner, the instances cited lie outside of the purview of the Commission.
  + MOTION: Hille; SECOND: Dinsmore. Passed
  + Hille observed that the motion to dismiss the complaint is due to the timing of the actions covered in the complaint predating the commissioner’s appointment to the Commission, and that if such actions were taken by a sitting commissioner the response would be different.

**Old Business**

* Office Report
  + Hogsten reported having problems resulting from a computer program update. Backups prevented anything from being lost.
* Tabling at Levitt AMP.
  + Sign up sheet was circulated and updated.
* Update on connecting with Berea College Students
  + Classes have not started. Burnside will follow up with Student Life and Hogsten will with SGA.

Dinsmore advised that October is National Employment for the Disabled Month. He is considering a program on hiring the disabled for October.

Hille asked whether we had acted on adopting the Municipal Order regarding conduct of meetings. Commissioners to review the Order and place on the agenda for September.

Public Comment

Ethan Connelly

Municipal Order is not available online. Expressed appreciation for the HRC and believes that the HRC plays an important role in the community. He also expressed appreciation for BHRC funding for Levitt AMP which he described as a rare opportunity for Bereans of all socio economic classes and all walks of life to share their cultural traditions in an open and free setting. He expressed concern about the Council action regarding BJTC budget and expressed his opinion that the BHRC has always been in the budget. Thanked the Commission members for their work. He further indicated that it is his belief that there may be general misunderstanding about the nature and role of the BHRC. Some appear to think of it as a 501-C3.

Ali Blair

Suggested that the BHRC commission an artisan created memento and Plaque for Fee recipients. She also thanked the Commission for considering her July 30, 2019 complaint and asked that the complaint in its entirety be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

Stinchcomb

Commented on the importance of the mission and work of the Commission in light of the continuing mass shootings. He expressed concern about White Supremacists and noted that we have not had that problem in Berea.

Hille

Noted that our research including oral histories on file at Berea College and the research on the 1968 shooting indicate that White Supremacy has been and continues to be an issue in Berea.

Jacque Bowling

Questioned the Commission decision not to select a Youth Achievement winner of the Fee Award.

7:36 P.M. MOTION MOVED and CARRIED to ADJOURN.

Prepared By:

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[Eric Hogsten, AA]

Administrative Assistant

Minutes Recorded: August 02, 2019

Minutes Approved:

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[Mim Pride, Chair]

Berea Human Rights Commission

November 04, 2019