**Berea Human Rights Commission**

2020 Annual Report

2020 will be a year that all of us will remember as the Year of the Virus and the many disruptions it caused in our personal lives and how we had to adjust and how we carried out business and social activities. The Berea Human Rights Commission was not exempted from these impacts.

The January meeting according to our bylaws is when we regularly elect officers for the coming year, however with only four of seven members present, and three of the current members terms due to expire in February, the election of officers was tabled until the February meeting. The election of officers was again tabled to the March meeting as two members were not returning to the Commission and one (Stinchcomb) had agreed to serve again but had not been reappointed as of the date of the February meeting. January, also saw Mayor Fraley and Randy Dinsmore conduct a training session on **­How to Apply for Disability Services.**

The March meeting was preceded by a new member training presentation by Juan Pena from the Kentucky Human Rights Commission in Louisville. Newly appointed BHRC members, Janel Lakes Davenport and John “Peanut” Johnson attended as did Jackie Burnside (Taking notes for her daughter, Commissioner Rachel Burnside) as well as several newly appointed Human Rights Commissioners from the City of Richmond. Commissioners Bland, Dinsmore and Stinchcomb, also attended the training program. During the regular meeting, a proposed detailed budget request of $5,000 for fiscal year 20-21 was approved and turned over to Mayor Fraley and City Administrator Gregory, who were present. The officers elected for 2020 were: Vice Chair – Stinchcomb, Secretary – Hille, Treasurer – Bland and the Chair position tabled upon lack of candidates willing or able to serve.

On March 20, 2020, Mayor Fraley suspended all Board and Commission meetings until further notice based on guidance from our President and Governor.

An email from Eric Hogsten on April 7, 2020 was sent to all BHR Commissioners informing us that the City of Berea was laying off all seasonal and part time workers, including himself. This was not only sad news but meant that our Broadway Building office would be closed and there would be no more support staff for the day-to-day operations of the Commission. Eric had provided conscientious and dependable part time staff assistance to the BHRC since September of 2017. Mayor Fraley arranged for Zinnia Hensley, with the Berea Police Department to receive human rights complaints (which would be forwarded directly to the BHRC Chair). Confidential files and office equipment were removed to a secure location in City Hall and the Broadway office was closed.

Rachel Burnside resigned her Commission membership during the summer. Sharyn Mitchell was appointed by Mayor Fraley to fill the remainder of Burnside’s term until Dec. 6, 2022.

In the final draft of the 2020-21 City of Berea budget, there was no appropriation for the Berea Human Rights Commission sparking concern that the BHRC was defunded out of business. The final adopted Berea budget for FY 2020-21, however, contained an appropriation of $500.

Our first teleconference meeting in July was not convened due to lack of a quorum. At the August meeting, Stinchcomb was elected as Chair Person for the remainder of the year. The Commission agreed to postpone activity on a statewide Kentucky Human Rights Commission conference due to COVID restrictions and any further public workshops or activities. In addition, the Commission adopted a statement of solidarity of no-discrimination and antiauthoritarian abuse. After discussion at two meetings and a commission-wide poll on best days and times to meet, the Commission voted to reschedule the business meetings to the first Wednesday of each month at 5:00 PM. A failed e-mail delivery resulted with a complaint filed with the Kentucky Attorney General regarding noncompliant meeting notification. The Commission was cited for a technical non-compliance and steps were taken to ensure revised notification procedures for all city meetings. Sharyn Mitchell was elected vice chair for the remainder of the year. The draft of a Conduct of COMMISSION Meetings was approved pending a statement on inclusion of comments from the public. The December meeting had to be canceled due to some technicalities with the media notification requirements and holiday conflicts.

Statistically, since June of 2020 the Berea Human Rights Commission received three human rights complaints; One was not a valid personal allegation, the second was for vandalism and passed on to the Berea Police Department, the third was committed in Richmond and was forwarded to the City of Richmond. A much more significant complaint from Berea concerning conduct at Madison Southern High School was filed directly with the Kentucky Human Rights Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Stinchcomb, Chair Person

Sharyn Mitchell, Vice Chair

Peter Hille, Secretary

Virginia Bland, Treasurer

Robert P’nut Johnson

Janel Davenport Lakes

Randy Dinsmore