**Human Rights Commission Meeting Notes–**

**1/25/17 – Approved 5/24/17**

**Present:**

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| David Pasinski  Starr Guckert  Shiu-Kai Chin | Crystal Doody (on phone)  Doug Mackey  Suzette Melendez | Leonardo Sanchez  Mary Alice Smothers  Montanette Murphy |

Rosalie Young Gabe Ramos

**Excused:**  Bruce Carter, Rabbi Dan Fellman, Rev. Bernard Alex, Francis M. Parks

**Staff Present:** Barrie Gewanter (Director)

**Community Present:** Suzie Carman

**Media Present:** None

**Meeting Held at the Westside PEACE Inc. location as arranged by M.A. Smothers**

**Meeting was convened**

**1. Welcome & Introductions**

Leo Sanchez opened the meeting welcoming everyone and started a round of introductions of commissioners and members of the public present

**2. Consideration of Previous Meeting Minutes**

Minutes for the 10/26/16 and 11/16/16 meetings were reviewed and approved unanimously

**3. Report from Commission Chair**

Leo Sanchez spoke about the Restore Opportunity Now (RON) Press Conference organized by the Human Services Leadership Council. Commissioners requested more information about the RON campaign. It was suggested that a Commission committee could request more information to consider any involvement or statement re: this campaign.

**4. Updates from the Executive Director**

Barrie Gewanter provided an update on the staffing situation in the HR office given Bridget Owens medical leave. Barrie requested that Commissioners choose a location for the 2/22 meeting. NE Community Center was chosen. Barrie requested Commissions choose dates for the April and May meeting. April 26 and May 24 were chosen.

Barrie conveyed a request from County Legislator Chad Ryan for names of potential candidates for HRC from the Immigrant Refugee Community. Commissioners decided to add Khadija Abdulkadir and Harith Abdulbasit to the proposed list of potential HRC candidates discussed at the 12/2016 HRC meeting. Joyce Suslovic confirmed that Khadija was willing to serve. Montanette agreed to try to reach out to Harith. Barrie was asked to see if Monica Bacote was interested in servicing. Leo agreed to reach out to Sheiknoor Adan.

Barrie stated that she is attempting to resolve an issue with SU in relation to a contract to start receiving interns from Falk College. Barrie still has to reach out to Stacey Levon at OCC and Pam Heintz at SU

Barrie confirmed that Doug and Dave P were planning to attend the 2/7 Diversity Training, and that Crystal, Montanette and Mary Alice were planning to attend the 3/9 training. Rosalie and Starr confirmed that they were willing to serve as Bridge Builders for the March training at Jamesville Prison.

Barrie led Commissioners through signing up for work shifts at the HRC/JCOC outreach table at the MLK Community Event the next Saturday at Nottingham High School. Suzette, Joyce, Leo, David, Bruce, Mary Alice, Gabe and Suzie signed up for work shifts. Barrie distributed a list of Citizenship Naturalization ceremonies and CRB outreach tabling scheduled for 2017.

Barrie described several intake cases and suggested that Commissioners could team with Barrie on related intervention. Montanette agreed to work with her on a racial bias allegation at a Liverpool gas station and an industrial demolition company where an employee displayed a noose at a job site. Starr agreed to join Barrie in 2 situations involving allegations of disability discrimination. Starr also asked Barrie to note a report she received that Aspen Dental refuses to provide an in-person interpreter for a patient who was both deaf and blind.

Barrie mentioned the availability of a secure cloud based file sharing system that she would provide Commissioners with access too later in 2017. She stated that this system was being used by JCOC members to review case files and other confidential documents.

**5. Old Business**

Barrie provided an update on Commission Appointments and Term Extensions. Barrie indicated that the Mayor has sent out appointment letters for the 6 Mayoral appointees but that the county has not received any official notice of this yet. She is finding out who has been nominated as they reach out to her on their own after receiving a letter from the Mayor directly. It appears that the Mayor has selected people from the list forwarded to her by Shiu-Kai on behalf of the Commission. Barrie has asked the County Executive’s office to request official notification from the Mayor of these new appointments.

Barrie reported that she attended the Jan 11 meeting of the Leg Public Safety where the committee unanimously approved County Executive reappointments for Shiu-Kai, Doug Mackey, Francis Parks and Joyce Suslovic. A vote of the full legislature to confirm these reappointments is expected in February. At the Committee meeting, Barrie also mentioned to the Committee that the HRC is waiting for the Legislature to bring forward their reappointment for Montanette Murphy. Legislator Ryan asked Barrie about the remaining 2 legislature appointments that have not been filled and suggested that a Commissioner from the Refugee Community be sought.

**6. New Business**

Doug asked Commissioners if he could attend an upcoming 2/16 meeting of New Feminists for Social Justice in his role as a commissioner. All present agreed to his request. Shiu-Kai expressed concern about President Trump initiating a 120 day ban on immigration for refugees. Joyce shared his concern and suggested that this would have a significant effect on students and their families. There was also a discussion about providing information about the path to citizenship and identifying services and classes that assist those seeking naturalization. Dave Pasinski also mentioned that a new Sanctuary Movement was starting locally.

**7. Committee Breakout Sessions**

Commissioners then broke into 4 groups to meet for the first time in Committee. Shiu-Kai joined the Education Committee and Suzie Carman joined the Law Enforcement-Community Relations Committee. Each Committee was asked to designate a Chair and identify issues of concern and potential projects. After approximately 25 minutes of Committee meetings, each Committee reported back to the whole Commission as follows:

**Outreach Committee, who designated Doug Mackey as Committee Chair**

The committee sees its role as getting the word out about who the HRC is and what it does. It wants to get this information out to the public, not just to our clients. They felt that tabling at events would be a key way to do that, for example at the State Fair, Westcott, Plowshares, Ecofest, Arts and Crafts Festival, Juneteenth. The committee urged other Commissioners to tell them of events where the Outreach Committee can organize a presence, including places outside the city. The Committee will compile a list of annual events. The Committee also wants to develop materials to catch people’s that are not forms. Issues that the Committee is concerned about include the increasing vulnerability of the refugee committee

**Education Committee, who designated Joyce Suslovic as Committee Chair**

Joyce is in immediate direct and constant contact with students and parents. The work of this committee is likely to overlap with advocacy. The Committee is interested in identifying how well diverse groups understand and exercise their rights and self-advocacy. The Committee wants to develop and/or deliver know your rights trainings. They also are interested in asking refugees and immigrant youth to write initial drafts of informational brochures, especially SCSD students. Barrie commented that she can provide information for know your rights trainings that she is prepared to deliver or teach others to deliver. A member of the outreach committee asked if any bi-lingual commissioners would be willing to translate materials into their own languages. Suzie Carman stated that she would be willing to translate forms and fliers. Suzie has been notified that she has been appointed to the HRC by the Mayor.

**Advocacy Committee, who designated Starr Guckert as Committee Chair**

The Committee has agreed to meet next Monday at 1:00 at Aurora of CNY and to invite Francis to the meeting. The Committee feels that immigration is one area of advocacy we need to focus on, especially in regards to interpretation for individuals who are limited English proficient (LEP) in medical settings.

**Law Enforcement-Community Relations Committee, who designated Gabe Ramos as Committee Chair**

The Committee felt that it was important to have police and youth communicate. This needs to be from the standpoint of youth. Committee members wanted to reach out to the Syracuse Chief about doing presentations at schools, then reach out to the Sheriff’s Dept. to do similar presentations at schools in the county. Barrie mentioned that she does a presentation about what you need to know when interacting with police, and can share the content with the Committee. There was strong interest in connecting with the City school district to do this in City schools. Mary Alice agreed to look at what grades are included in schools. The Committee felt that it should aim to reach youth ages 10 to 15 or to start with 4th 5th graders. Gabe talked about human relations workshops he was involved in the schools in Syracuse many years ago. The work involved helping kids to working together across race and other boundaries/divisions.

**8. Items for Feb. Meeting Agenda**

Commissioners wanted to discuss the possibility of an HRC Facebook page. Dave Pasinski stated that he would be in Nicaragua in February.

**9. Upcoming Events & Announcements**

On 2/9 at 6pm in the Atrium Building in Downtown Syracuse there will be at town hall meeting to discuss ending the occurrence of AIDS locally. Starr mentioned a film and discussion on 1/26 at 7pm at the Palace Theatre addressing the topic of Human Trafficking and its impact in CNY.

**Shiu-Kai made a Motion to Adjourn the Meeting. Gabe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**