

Montgomery County Government
Office of Human Rights
21 Maryland Ave.
Suite 330
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Meeting Minutes
of the
Human Rights Commission
Of 2012

Staff Liaison: Anis Ahmed
Contact: 240-777-8454
anis.ahmed@montgomerycountymd.gov

**Human Rights Commission
Montgomery County Office of Human Rights
21 Maryland Avenue, Suite 330, Rockville, Maryland 20850**

HRC Meeting Minutes: February 27, 2012.

Meeting Place: 21 Maryland Avenue, Suite 330, Rockville, Maryland 20850.

Commissioners Attended: Russell Campbell (Chair) William England (vice chair), Barron Oakcrum, Betsy Jett, Jeremiah Floyd, Stacey Ormsby, Selena Singleton, Ruth Martin, Terry Vann, Matthew Murguia and Stephanie Mason; Tina Patterson; Sajjad Durrani

Commissioner Excused: Doug Ryan.

Commissioners Absent: Dr. Suresh Gupta

Guest Speaker: Bruce Adams, Director, Community Partnerships;

Staff attended: Director James Stowe and Anis Ahmed.

1. Call to order:

- **Meeting:** Vice Chair William England called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.
- **Agenda:** Commission passed the agenda unanimously.
- **Minutes:** Commission approved January 23, 2012 minutes unanimously with a minor corrections;
- **Introduction:** Chairman Campbell introduced Mr. Bruce Adams, Director, Community Partnerships to the committee.

2. Guest Speaker: Bruce Adams:

Addressed the following:

- County Executive asked Bruce Adams to initiate Sister City program just after he took office.
- State of Maryland and City of Rockville had similar programs before Montgomery County took this initiative. State of Maryland has 10 Sister Cities around the world;
- Sister City program is basically a relationship between “people to people” of the city to city, state to city or county to city of another country;
- Sister City is run independently and without any citizen’s taxes. Its’ funds come from donations;
- Sister City Advisory Committee oversees it’s activities;
- Montgomery County Sister City program initially supervised by a Sr. Fellow who’s worked hourly whose annual gross wage was less than \$10,000 and the money came from donations;
- People who travel overseas for Sister City program bear their own cost;
- Immigrants of any national origin living in Montgomery County usually recommend a potential sister city through the County’s Sister City Advisory Committee. The Office of Community Partnership act as a resource to complete the project;
- Mr. Adams read out the Mission Statement, Vision and Objectives of the Montgomery County Sister City Program in the meeting;

- Morazan, a province of El Salvador was the first Sister City of Montgomery County after an agreement signed between County Executive Isiah Leggett and the Governor of Morazan. The signing ceremony took place in Morazan on July 10, 2011.
- It is widely known that the largest El Salvadorian population lives in Montgomery County outside El Salvador. Approximately, 60,000 El Salvadorian immigrants currently live in Montgomery County, Maryland.
- El Salvadorian immigrant population of Montgomery County took care of the total expenditure of this project;
- Habitat Montgomery, a non profit organization has supported the Sister City program with a Latin American nation;
- Proposed by the Montgomery County African American Advisory Group, the Sister City Advisory Committee has taken an initiative to build Sister City with an African nation. The committee has selected a northern city of Ethiopia to make Sister City of Montgomery County. County Executive Hon. Isiah Leggett will visit Ethiopia last week of September 2012.
- Bruce Adam stated that he and the committee will look into the Female Genital Mutilation issue before finalizing Sister City project with the proposed city in Ethiopia.
- He also mentioned that Commission for Women did not give any input in to this issue.
- Bruce Adam mentioned about a heartfelt letter written by an eight years old girl "don't abandon us". The girl wrote letter to the Montgomery County in response to reactions of various groups and concerned citizens of Montgomery County, Maryland.
- In response to a question, he stated that, County Executive has six advisory groups. Out of them, African American and Hispanic American Advisory groups are the largest. The main issue of the Hispanic American Advisory Groups is about "secured community" due to the presence of a large number of undocumented immigrants in the county.
- Bruce Adams mentioned that Jewish Federation of Greater Washington has 15 year relationship with the citizen groups of Beth Shemesh. Discussions are underway between the two on Sister City issue.
- He mentioned that the Montgomery County Sister City Advisory Group will have an open discussion on Beth Shemesh issue on March 13, 2012 @ 7pm at County Executive Office Building Auditorium, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, Maryland.

Montgomery County Award for Community Services:

- Bruce Adams mentioned that County Executive Isiah Leggett will present a Montgomery County Award for Community Services, a highest honor of the County on April 30, 2012 at 6:30pm;
- The first Life Time Achievement award will be given to Late Roscoe Nix posthumously for his services to the Montgomery County citizens.

A questions and answer period followed Bruce Adams's presentation.

3. *Chairman's Report: Russell Campbell:*

- Chairman urged commissioners to attend the open discussion forum meeting on Beth Shemesh issue on March 13, 2012;
- Chairman attended the CE's annual meeting for Boards and Commissions on 2/23/2012 to report on the activities of the Human Rights Commission;

- Chair attended the Gospel Train Ride program held at Lincoln Park Community Center where 300 to 400 hundred people attended.

4. Director's Report: James L. Stowe:

- Michael Dennis, a former Director of Office of Human Rights has joined as a Knowledge Transfer contract employee on 2/24/2012 and he will work on Appeal cases;
- Craig Brieske who also joined as contract staff will work on complex cases, such as Complaints on Multiple Basis;
- Asked Commissioners to make a decision on the letter of Oliver Brown, Chairman of the Inter-Agency Fair Housing Group Committee on reinstating the survey in compliance with Chapter 27 of Montgomery County;
- He explained that there is no barrier in reinstating the survey as the Maryland Court Appeal has ruled in favor of conducting such a survey in a law suit; According to Chapter 27 and Court decision, Human Rights Commission has full authority to enforce the code.
- He mentioned that the Office of Human Rights has a copy of the previously used questionnaire for the survey. He further stated that the questionnaire can be modified if necessary;
- The Commission can reinstitute survey and can initiate follow up complaints based on Housing Testing;
- Although Office of Human Rights does not have enough staff, the HRC can ask OHR to request assistance from the Office of Housing and Community Affairs to conduct the survey.

Discussion and Decisions:

- The Commission decided to reinstitute Housing survey as requested by Chairman Brown of the IFHCG;
- Commission Chair Russell Campbell will respond to Chair Oliver Brown in that regard.
- Commissioner Matthew Murguia brought a motion to authorize Office of Human Rights to request Office of Housing and Community Affairs to conduct Housing Survey. Commissioner Jeremiah Floyd seconded the motion . The motion was approved unanimously.

5. CRB Reports: No report to make;

6. Committee Reports:

- **COHV:** No report to make;
- **CAB:** No Report to make;
- **CPD:** No Report to make;
- **IAFCG:** Committee Chair Jeremiah Floyd reported that IAFCG has decided to send a letter to the HRC Commission Chairman requesting him to reinstitute Housing Survey in compliance with Chapter 27; discussion report is mentioned above;
- **Legislative Committee:** No Report to make

8. Old Business:

- Working Group Chair Selena Singleton reported that she had talks with Directors of 5 Regional Services Center about hosting HRC meeting.
- The possible meeting will held either in April or May, 2012
- Theme of the meeting at the RSC will be either Immigration or Housing issue;
- Terry Vann suggested to hear from the citizens instead of having a theme for discussion;

- Betsy Jett suggested to invite important citizen of the region to the meeting, particularly, local elected officials, community leaders, Regional Advisory Group members, etc.;
- Chairman Russell Campbell informed the commissioners that County Executive Isiah Leggett has shown interest in attending one of the Commission's meetings. Commissioners approved Chairman proposal unanimously;

7. *New Business:*

- Commissioner Tina Patterson shared her recent experience in South Africa tour on Women's empowerment;
- Committee has set a committee on Empowerment of South African people project. Commissioner Stephanie Mason and Tina Patterson were nominated as Co-Chairs of the project committee.

8. *Miscellaneous:*

Director Stowe stated and announced the following:

- Asked commissioner's to submit their profiles for updating purposes;
- OHR has obtained information regarding racially biased leaflets on Founding Father that were distributed in Gaithersburg area; OHR is looking into this matter for more information.
- NAACP will have it's annual dinner on May 6, 2012 at Marriott Conference Center, Rockville, Maryland;
- Issue of Affirmative Action and Preference in College Admissions is before the Supreme Court again

9. *Meeting adjourned* at 9:25pm

10. *Next meeting:* March 26, 2012 at 7:00pm.

11. *Meeting Minutes:* Notes were taken and written by Anis Ahmed, Staff Liaison; Office of Human Rights.