

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](mailto:anis.ahmed@montgomerycountymd.gov)

## **Committee on Hate Violence**

### **Montgomery County Office of Human Rights**

**21 Maryland Avenue, Suite 330, Rockville, Maryland 20850**

#### **COHV Meeting Minutes of May 9, 2012**

**Members present:** Lorraine Lee (Acting Chair), Larry Smucker (Secretary), Nick Crouch, Susan Kerin, Thomas Nephew and Fatou Gayle-Coulibaly

**Members Not Present:** Sartaj Dhami, Ruth Magin, Chris Rutledge

**Non Voting Members:** OHR Director Jim Stowe, Loretta Garcia (OHR), Anis Ahmed (OHR), Jean Arthur (OHR), David Baker (Montgomery County Police Dept.) and Matthew Murguia (Human Rights Commission)

**Chair called the meeting to order at:** 7:12 PM

**Discussion Item #1 Sister City Program:** Mr. Bruce Adams, Sister Cities Program, briefed COHV on the Program, which has been in existence for over 10 years. It is designed to bring together citizens of Montgomery County and those residing in cities outside the US, The program encourages cross national and cross cultural activities, including discussions of issues common to municipalities across the world. Mr. Adams explained that the Montgomery County program is managed entirely by volunteers and has had the backing of County leadership, including that of Mr. Leggett. Travel under this program is entirely self funded, for those who are citizens of the County.

Cultural exchange activities help people involved in the program to understand each other – including comparisons of local government, joint business possibilities, and people to people interaction.

A public forum was held several years ago to organize the Sister Cities Program. It was created outside of Montgomery County Government, staffed by part time people, and self funded. The initial focus was on El Salvador, from which many Montgomery county residents originated. The next program focused on Ethiopia, which also has many people in the County and in DC who came from Ethiopia to settle in this area. People from the county also traveled to Ethiopia and established rewarding relationship with people there.

Another program was considered for implementation over the past 4 years – based in Beit Shemesh, a smaller city in Israel. This Sister City prospect was more controversial, as there had been recent, and well publicized attacks by local extremists opposing elementary school education of girls. While one recognizes that no municipality in the world is perfect, the action of the extremists was troubling and counter to the educational values cherished in

Montgomery County. For that reason, Mr. Adams and others on the Sister Cities board, decided to put this prospective program on hold at this time. A mother from the Beit Shemesh community sent a letter to Mr. Leggett explaining that the city has gotten the extremists out of the way with respect to girls' education.

**Other Business**

Director Jim Stowe noted that OHR has successfully placed film footage in several theaters showing how COHV operates in the county with respect to its opposition to all aspects of hate violence. He also noted that over the next month, OHR and COHV should plan an event based on the killing of Trayvon Martin, as previously discussed.

Finally, Fatou urged members to participate in the DC "Unity March" on Wednesday, June 13. OHR will make available information about this event, which has occurred each year for at least the past 8 years.

The Chair concluded the meeting with a discussion of the just completed CERB report on COHV, prepared by Lorraine and other COHV members. Members were unanimous in their praise for this effort. The CERB staff will review the CERB in the coming weeks.

**Police report:** Dave Baker indicated that there were no reports of new occurrences over the last month.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM