

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

Meeting Minutes
of the
Human Rights Commission
Of 2012

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Committee on Hate Violence

Montgomery County Office of Human Rights

21 Maryland Avenue, Suite 330, Rockville, Maryland 20850

COHV Meeting minutes of September 12, 2012

Voting Members Present: Lorraine Lee Stepney (Acting Chair), Nick Crouch, Ruth Magin and Sartaj Dhani.

Non Voting Members Present: Director James Stowe (OHR), Anis Ahmed (OHR), David Baker (MC Police) and Dr. Gregory Bell (MCPS), Matthew Murguia (HRC representative);

Guests from Sikh Community: Anthony S. Arneja, Mirin Phool, Gurneet S. Bawa, Rajwant Singh, Arvinder Singh, Chattar Saini and Shai Gurdarshan Singh

The Acting Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM

- Acting Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05pm;
- Approval of Agenda and Meeting Minutes of June 13 and Discussion as per Agenda were put on hold for community discussion.

Introduction:

Acting Chair welcomed the members of the Sikh Communities of Montgomery County to the COHV meeting. She opened the forum discussion with following remarks:

- COHV is deeply shocked by the terrible incident that caused several innocent deaths inside a Sikh worship place in Wisconsin.
- COHV sent letters to the Sikh community leaders and Sikh Temples in Montgomery County showing condolences and supports.
- Director James Stowe and Staff Liaison Anis Ahmed visited Sikh Temples to show support on behalf of the Office of Human Rights and Committee on Hate Violence.
- Acting Chair asked the leaders how the COHV can help the Sikh communities.
- She also mentioned that all discussions in the meeting will be kept confidential.

Discussions:

- Sikhs were victims of 9/11 because of their physical appearances although this community was never part of the heinous incidence. Two Sikhs were killed just after the 9/11 incidence,
- One participant wanted to know how COHV can protect Sikh Temples in Montgomery County. Madam Chair responded that COHV can not protect temples other than make awareness of the County citizen about the Sikh community, educate the citizen about the Sikh cultures and involve citizens in the Community forum and discussions;

- Educate the school students through social studies and curriculums about Sikh religion and cultures,
- More people from Sikh community need to be involved with various advisory Boards, Commissions and Committees of Montgomery County Government, such as, HRC, COHV, etc.
- Make literatures, brochures and pamphlets about the Sikh religion and cultures and distribute to the county residents and every public and private schools in Montgomery County,
- Make partnerships with various community and interfaith groups and start dialogues. Such as, Montgomery County Muslim Council, Jewish Council, Churches, etc.
- Take positive roles, ask Sikh people, particularly students to volunteer in every County and community events to show that Sikh are not only takers but also givers too,
- Make bus tour to various religious groups and interact with them to know each other,
- Sikh Temples should start “open house” and invite people of other faiths to attend,
- Organize “Baishakhi”, an annual Sikh Cultural festival in a large scale and invite residents to attend the event,
- Participate every County and community fairs and events to show cultural diversity,
- Make awareness to the County residents through developing programs and broadcast through County Cable and Public TV channels,
- Report to the police, Office of Human Rights and Committee on Hate Violence immediately if any incidence of hate violence occur,
- Write letters to local and national newspapers and bring their attention to Sikh’s existence,
- Take steps to build relationships with elected officials, various government agencies and non-governmental organizations,
- Encourage Sikh adults and students to participate in every Human Rights Day event, Human Rights Camps and Human Rights Freedom Tour,
- Post information about the Sikh events in the OHR website,
- Contact Mr. Tim Warner who recently was appointed as a Diversity Chief of the Montgomery County Public School and share information about Sikh religion and cultures so that he or his office can disseminate information to all county schools. Ms. Mirin Phool was advised to contact Mr. Warner and deliver recorded video caption on Sikh religion and culture.

Meeting adjourned at 8:54pm.