***Mission Statement:*** ***The Montgomery County Committee Against Hate/Violence works to eradicate acts of hate and intimidation through community education, advocacy, collaboration, and legislation.***

**Meeting Date and Time**: **WEDNESDAY, December 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**

Virtual-only meeting

**Zoom Meeting:** [**https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82447362082**](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82447362082) **Meeting ID: 824 4736 2082**

**Phone Number: 301-715-8592**

1. List of attendees:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Voting Members | Non-voting members & County residents |
| Present | Pablo Blank, Chair  Gabrielle Zwi, Vice-Chair  Sanjeet Sam Dey, Secretary  Richard Allen  Maria Herrera  Sheik Hassan  Femi Richards  Susan Stolov  Lisa Taylor  Craig Simon  Tony Jia | Anis Ahmed, Office of Human Rights  James Stowe, Director Office of Human Rights  Rachel Breslin, Human Rights Commission  Kate Chance, Office of Community Partnerships  Lt. Jeff Innocenti, MCPD  Janita Love, MCPS  Wesley Darden, Office of County Council member Mink  Kristen Roe, Montgomery College |
| Absent | Leah Michaels  Vanessa Morris  Stephany Troyer | Selena Singleton, County Council  Capt. Jordan Satisnky, MCPD  Kimberly Jones, Montgomery College  Loretta Garcia, Office of Human Rights |

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:06pm.
2. Craig moved a motion to adopt the December 2024 agenda, including the discussion on the retreat within the “Other Businesses section.” Richard seconded the motion. All members voted affirmatory. The December 2024 agenda was adopted.
3. At this time, there is not a Meeting minutes for November 2024. It will be prepared by Gabrielle and Sam to be approved on the January meeting.
4. Committee members discussed the Montgomery County Police Department Bias report. Members expressed concern about the language accuracy on some of the reports. There was a discussion about whether the language was from the County resident who started the report or from the police officer who took it. There were also questions about category classification for each incident. Members requested Lt. Innocenti to invite the MCPD person in charge of report categories to the January meeting.

***The Committee Chair will follow up on this request to schedule the participation.***

Finally, in one of the incidents, the perpetrators were identified and charged with first- and second-degree assault and burglary. But perpetrators did not receive hate charges. MCPD said the State Attorney potentially places those charges. This Committee does not have the tools to follow up on those instances. ***The Chair will explore how to complete the process of those incidents.***

1. The Montgomery County’s Office of Community Partnership presented the new County website to collect reports on hate incidents. The presentation included a demo and discussion about the tool.

Committee members expressed satisfaction about the County developing a tool to facilitate County residents to report hate incidents. However, they expressed some concerns about the development of this tool and the current version available. The concerns included:

1. During the May 2024 meeting, MCPD reported being working with the County Executive Office in developing a system to collect hate incidents, aiming to facilitate the process. At that time, MCPD mentioned the system will based on the 311-phone system. There was an agreement that once the system would be on development, this Committee will be contacted for feedback and ideas.

Committee members expressed dissatisfaction in not having been engage during the development process, and learning about the tool after it was rolled out and presented by the County Executive to the general public.

Committee members expressed this Committee not only has a wealth on community engagement skills with different groups, but also, we have experts on relevant feels such as law, information technology, customer service, government, and process design.

Finally, Committee members also expressed concerns that the members of the Anti-Hate Task Force created and led by the County Council this year were not engaged in the process either.

1. Privacy may be challenged, for example through,
   1. Does the County store the device’s IP from where the report is being completed?
   2. When asking about the incident location, the user may inadvertently include data such as the home address or place of work, making it easier to identify them.

Understanding that these records may be subject to FOIA requests, taking extreme precautions to avoid identifying the reporter seems crucial for the tool's success.

1. As the new system is web-based, this solution excludes residents who are victims of the tech divide. Indeed, some County residents may not have access to internet connectivity, a device to fill out the form, or knowledge of how to interact with this tool.
2. Even though the tool seems to translate into different languages the form, Committee members expressed concerns about language access:
   1. The website does not include many languages spoken by County residents. For example, Indigenous languages such as Quichua (Many Mexican and Central-American individuals living in the county speak this language)
   2. How will the language translation tool work in the reverse process, translating into English the comments written in a different language? How “smart” is the tool in understanding the cultural components of the speech?
3. What is the rollout plan for this tool? Are the 311 operators being trained in using and explaining this tool?
4. What funding did the County spend on developing this tool, and what funding is available to educate the general population about this new tool?
5. Committee members were not offered a “development or test” environment where they could interact with the system and learn how to use it before sharing it with their community networks. That would be helpful so they can educate other community members.
6. Understanding that the County does not want to censor any voices, residents will be able to write any comments on the tool. How will the system filter those individual reports, including profanities, hate speech, or non-related messages? How will those reports be isolated from the other reports to produce a database that would allow the aggregate data and study trends?
7. There should be an oral solution so blind- or hard-to-see individuals can use this tool.
8. Based on the presentation, the rollout does not include a "test environment" for community leaders and educators to run "user experience testing." That option would have prevented many of the comments included in this feedback.

***Committee members voted affirmatively to send a letter to the County Executive expressing these concerns.***

1. The Committee discussed to run a four-hours retreat early in 2025. All members agreed on the idea. The retreat was approved by unanimous vote.

***A sub-committee formed by Sam, Craig and Pablo was created to plan the retreat.*** This sub-committee will submit the plan on January, and the retreat will be run on February. ***A doodle calendar call will be shared to select the preferred date for the in-person retreat.***

1. Richard attended the MCCR & OAG Southern Maryland Hate Bias Forum on November 16 and gave a report on issues that were discussed at the event.
2. The Committee decided to staff a table on 01/19/2025 to promote the Partnership Fund and disseminate anti-hate materials. ***Gabrielle and Richard will attend this event.***
3. Sam moved to adjourn the meeting, and Richard seconded. Members voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:50pm.