



BARNSTABLE COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMISSION

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www.barnstablecountyhrac.org

Minutes of Monday, April 12, 2021 Meeting

Remote participation

Advisory Commission Members Present: Kate Epperly (Chair), Wendy Bierwirth, Jeanne Morrison, Patricia Oshman (Vice-chair), Mwalim Peters, Paul Thompson, Lynn Levine, Leo Blandford, and Isaac Lopez.

Also Present: Susan Quinones (HRAC Coordinator), Lou Cerron (Guest)

Absent: Brian O'Malley (AoD Liaison), Sheila Lyons (Regional Commissioners' Liaison), Katie Riconda (excused).

1. **Call to Order:** Kate Epperly called the meeting to order, and Susan conducted a roll call @ 5:00 pm. Kate asked for a volunteer to take minutes, which Isaac agreed to do; and a timekeeper, which Jeanne agree to do.
2. **Reminder of OML:** Susan reviewed the Open Meeting Law and that the meeting was being recorded. She also announced that there was a quorum, and that there was no public comment.
3. **Approval of March 28, 2021 minutes**
 - Motion and a second to approve minutes.
 - Three minor comments/corrections were made to final version.
 - Minutes unanimous approved.
4. **Comments from Chair and introduction of new County Administrator Beth Albert**
 - Kate Epperly announced that she will be moving to Washington, D.C. at the end of June.
 - Patricia Oshman, Vice Chair, will lead the July meeting, after which the chair duties will be shared amongst the members, until elections in January.
 - Susan will immediately start looking for another Board member from the many good candidates that were previously interviewed for openings on the Advisory Commission in 2021.
 - Kate expressed a desire to work with Wendy, Lynn, and Susan on continuing to work on the Strategic Plan for the HRAC.

- Kate reported on the Vaccine Equity Taskforce, that is working with 3 Portuguese churches and other churches services non-English-speaking parishioners.
 - Small clinics of 70-80 people are being planned.
 - The J&J vaccine is coming next week, and there are high hopes that because the J&J vaccine only requires 1 shot, people may be more willing to get vaccinated.
 - Other clinics are planned in Falmouth, Centerville, and Yarmouth.
 - Taskforce is hopeful it can provide vaccines through Catholic Social Services.
 - Leo Blandford has been working on educational materials for outreach to Jamaican, Haitian and Portuguese and Spanish speaking populations.

5. Comments by County Administrator, Beth Albert

Beth gave the Advisory Board an overview of her background. She has been with the County for 13 years, most recently as the Director of Human Services, before being picked as the first female County Administrator. Prior to coming to the Cape, Beth spent approximately 20 years in Philadelphia, as the Executive Director of a Fair Housing organization. Before that she spent over a decade with the Center for Independent Living working on rights for people living with disabilities.

Beth expressed interest in working closely with the HRAC. She would like us to consult her when we take a position on an issue, that may impact the County. Furthermore, Beth suggested that the Advisory Board prepare a briefing for the Regional Commissioners on the activities of the HRAC, possibly as early as September.

6. Chair opens discussion of Ordinance and the Strategic Plan

Susan read into the record a letter from Jeanne Adams of Falmouth and a Founding Member of the of the Human Rights Commission. Ms. Adams provided a historic perspective on the origins of the Commission. Ms. Adams letter will be posted with the May meeting documents.

There were many complaints of unfair treatment from individuals living on the Cape, that were being referred to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD). This resulted in MCAD suggesting to Barnstable County create a commission to handle these claims of unfair treatment and discrimination, to handle these issues locally. Only the most egregious claims would be sent to MCAD for handling. The commission was expected to create a platform for responding to allegations of human rights violations, staffed by volunteer commission members, representing a diverse geographic portion of the Cape.

Kate Epperly reviewed the Ordinance and shared a PowerPoint with the preliminary work done by last year's Strategic Planning group. In reviewing the PPT, Kate asked members what should stay, what should be eliminated, and what is missing.

- Mission statement looks good, no edits necessary.
- Board list all the areas that it is currently involved in and limit the list to those activities it has the resources to engage in, and not try to duplicate another organization's expertise.

- The revised Ordinance specifies that our role is to serve the individuals in Barnstable County by advising and assisting them in resolving issues, and where necessary, referring them to the appropriate agency for resolution.
- Between now and the retreat, Kate asked to Board to give thought to:
 - What/how we have done
 - List priorities for the future
 - What is reasonable?
 - Refer to Ordinance.
- Need to reevaluate current committee system; are these the right committees?
- Jeanne suggested that we use our networking with other groups to look at the goals of other groups, and what services they currently supply to the public; then we should ask what additional resources and education we can provide to enhance those offerings.
- Lynn agreed with Jeanne's approach, noting that we must examine both our internal vs. external focus; Are we being accountable to our mission?
- Kate suggested that the County's vision should align with our obligations.
- Susan will look for a date for the HRAC Retreat and communicate it to the Board.

7. Coordinator's Report

Upcoming events:

- **MA Human Rights Coalition** Annual Convening, "Bending the Arc Toward Housing Equity" on Friday, May 7, 2021, 8:45 am-12 noon. Registration details are on our website.
- **AG Civil Rights Division** will offer a webinar to the public on "What constitutes a Hate Crime", in conjunction with our May 10th Board meeting.
- **Video of the HRA Spring session** will be posted on our website as soon as available.

Other items:

- **Board vacancy** in July will be filled by looking at the list of previously interviewed candidate and selecting the first runner-up from the list.
- **Police Chief Frank Frederickson** will address interested Board members on community policing plan being implemented in Yarmouth. We have also invited Officer Brian Morrison, Barnstable Police Department Community Liaison and Civil Rights officer, to join this presentation with Chief Frederickson. Currently working on details.
- **Fundraising** is necessary to fund awards sponsored by HRA and other activities of the BCHRAC. Susan asked for volunteers to work on a fundraising campaign with her.

8. Proposals/informational Items

- Patricia Oshman reported that advisors and students from approximately 11 schools are expected to participate in the Human Rights Academy. This year a junior and a senior will be awarded a \$250 gift certificate under the McDowell

award. Additionally, in the Fall the Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum and Cultural Center will also give an award to a junior with an interest in human rights.

- Leo Blandford introduced a proposed statement in support of renaming Race-Point Beach to Meeshaun Point, in honor of the original tribal village of the area. After discussion, the Board agreed, by unanimous voice vote, to send a letter in support of the proposal, assuming there is no objection to the stance by the Regional Commissioners. It was also pointed out that this action may be timely, with the appointment of the first Indigenous female Secretary of the Department of Interior.
- Mwalim Morgan gave a brief update on the Curating you Child's Education. The program is available online. The next step is to spread the word among parents that this resource is available. One thought is to reach out to parents through houses of worship.

9. No items for Executive Session

10. Motion to Adjourn.

Before accepting a motion to adjourn, the Chair expressed sincere appreciate to former Advisory Board member Paul Thompson, for all his hard work he put in during Katie Riconda' medical leave. Katie has announced her intention of rejoining the Board at the May HRAC meeting.

Motion to adjourn was approved unanimously @ 6:40 pm.