

**State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights
Commission Meeting
January 20, 2020 – 10am
Maryland State Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped
415 Park Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21201
MINUTES**

Commissioners Present: Gary C. Norman, Esq., Chairperson; Allison U. Dichoso, Esq.; Eileen M. Levitt; Rabbi Binyamin Marwick

Commissioners Present by Phone: Roberto Allen, Esq., Vice Chairperson

Management Present: Alvin O. Gillard, Executive Director; Cleveland L. Horton II, Deputy Director; Nicolette Young, Assistant Director; Glendora C. Hughes, Esq., General Counsel

Staff Present: S. Spencer Dove, Executive Associate

Guests Present: Ashley Biggs, LBPH; Lori Markland, MDOD

Meeting called to order at 10:10am.

- December 2019 meeting minutes reviewed by Commissioners, Chairperson approves minutes.

Chairperson's Report

- Chairperson opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, and asked Commissioner Marwick to provide a non-sectarian affirmation and reflection to open the year.
- Chairperson thanks the Maryland Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped for serving as host.
- Chairperson reviewed the agenda.
- Chairperson provided the following remarks: "As a Board, we have a goal to have as many of the monthly meetings "on-the-road" as we are able. When the Vice Chair and I met with the Secretary of Appointments, this was a point stressed to us. IN 2020, I look forward to holding our meetings in the public eye. (As we are able.)"

As a lawyer and as a blind person, I am incredibly thankful to our guest host who provides an array of services to those who cannot read standard print.

So, there cannot be light without learning. There cannot be learning without liberty. There cannot be liberty without access to information.

As someone who loss vision regularly and steadily during a trajectory of time from my youth through my adulthood, I know the challenges some encounter in accessing information. Since a lad, when I could no longer read the newspaper or other forms of standard print, I have dreamed of being as other citizens who can simply walk into a library and pull books from the shelving units. I stopped being able to access the newspaper when I was in second grade. Then, as a lad, I received my first recorded volume from the Library for the Blind – as located in Cleveland, Ohio.

On the other hand, I also know the thrill of contributing to the world of letters. (Indeed, I have contributed notably to the world of letters despite my disability.) However, I would not be able to access information and the world of letters without the greatness of this republic that provides resources, such as the Md. State Library for the Blind.

For among other reasons, this is why I also love libraries and museums. We are fortunate in this republic to have an incredible resource of the Library of Congress and an array of state-based distributing libraries. For the blind, this is even truer. (As you will learn.) Resources, such as the State Library for the Blind, provide me the ability to access information and books.

So, we will hear guest briefings by two co-speakers today. There will then be a tour.”

Executive Director’s Report

- Commissioner Reception is scheduled for January 28 at 5:30pm in Annapolis. Staff will continue contacting members of the General Assembly to further increase the attendance.
- February 21 from 8:30am until 12:30pm for the Maryland Association of Human Rights Agencies’ annual Human Rights Day in Annapolis. Registration information will be circulated soon. Program topics include hate and bias in Maryland, the civil rights implications of the 2020 Census, and celebration of the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the women’s right to vote.
- Biennial Gala Celebration is Saturday, April 25, 2020 at the Maryland Live! Hotel Ballroom. Featured speaker is Dr. Mary Frances Berry, former Chairperson of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and historian. Commissioners are invited to send contact information to Spencer Dove for individuals they would like to receive a copy of the hard mailing promotion. Chairperson joins Executive Director in requesting Commissioners assist with securing sponsors for the event.

Deputy Director’s Report

- Reviewed submitted written report.

Assistant Director’s Report

- Reviewed submitted written report.
- MCCR has budget hearings scheduled with the General Assembly on Friday, February 14 and Wednesday, February 19. More information will be shared with Commissioners who are welcome to join the hearings.
- DoIT will set up Maryland.gov email accounts for Commissioners. Commissioners who would like to have an account should contact Nicolette Young.

General Counsel’s Report

- Reviewed submitted written report.
- Per the Chairperson, the weekly Legislative Calls will begin next week, January 30 at 1pm.

New Business

- Presentation from Ashley Biggs with the Maryland State Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped. Topic: technology and services available at the Library.
- Presentation from Lori Markland with the Maryland Department of Disabilities on the Maryland Assistive Technology Program.

Meeting adjourned 11:26am.