

**State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights**  
**Commission Meeting**  
**June 8, 2021 – 10am**  
**Meeting Held by Google Hangouts Meet**  
**MINUTES**

**Commissioners Present:** Janssen E. Evelyn, Esq., Vice Chairperson; Eileen M. Levitt, SPHR, SHRM-SCP; Diane Bernier; Stephanie Suerth, MPA, CCEP; Jeff Rosen; Rabbi Binyamin Marwick; Magdalena Navarro, MSc

**Management Present:** Alvin O. Gillard, Executive Director; Nicolette Young, Assistant Director; Glendora C. Hughes, General Counsel; Kara N. Hunt, Ph.D., Director of Education & Outreach

**Staff Present:** S. Spencer Dove, Executive Associate; Melissia Dorsey, Investigative Supervisor; Alesha Bell, Investigative Supervisor; Maria Andrews, Civil Rights Officer

**Guests Present:** Karen Remaley, Pride Center of Maryland; Reggie Turner, WMAC; Tereance Moore, WMAC

**Meeting called to order at 10:04am**

- Motion to approve April, 2021, and May, 2021, minutes made by Commissioner Bernier, seconded by Commissioner Levitt; motion carries unanimously.

**Board Statement on LGBTQ+ Pride Month & Other Policy Areas**

- Commissioner Evelyn, serving as Chairperson for the meeting, provided a statement to recognize the contributions and efforts of the LGBTQ+ Community in honor of Pride Month. Commissioner Suerth echoed the sentiments and support offered by Commissioner Evelyn. Commissioner Rosen highlighted the importance of the Board engaging and proactively supporting the communities that we serve as a Commission.
- Commissioners are eager to resuming in-person meetings in order to get to know each other better, build relationships, and begin making a concerted effort to bring Board initiatives to the next level.
- Commissioner Evelyn thanked the entire Board for the collaboration and respectful discourse that took place as the Board drafted and approved its recent statement condemning the rise in Anti-Semitism and discrimination both in Maryland and around the nation.

**Guest Speakers**

- Karen Remaley, Associate Director, Pride Center of Maryland
  - Shared a brief history of the name and work of the Pride Center. Changing their name to the current Pride Center of Maryland was intentional to focus on serving the entire State.
  - Provided background on issues facing the LGBTQ+ community, to which the center also refers to as the Sexual & Gender Minority (SGM) community in order to be more inclusive.
  - Shared information on services offered to the SGM community, such as HIV/STI information and referrals to accessing medical care. Also, the Pride Center has

worked diligently to conduct wellness checks and remain in contact with the community during the pandemic.

- Commissioner Rosen asked how the Pride Center receives funding. As a non-profit, they rely heavily on grants but also do fundraising.
- Commissioner Evelyn asked how the Pride Center seeks to serve the entire State, and Associate Director Remaley shared one such initiative is a goal of opening satellite offices across Maryland.
- Commissioner Suerth asked how individuals can get involved. Individuals can visit [pridecentermd.org](http://pridecentermd.org) or call 443-873-0369.
- Commissioners welcome the opportunity to connect offline to talk about how MCCR and the Pride Center can partner to support the SGM community.
- Reggie Turner and Tereance Moore, Western Maryland Advisory Council:
  - In Hagerstown (Washington County), there is a 27% poverty rate. The Historic Jonathan Street community is one of the oldest free communities in Maryland. It has a very rich history. Much of this history has been suppressed, but a lot of new information is being unearthed – such as the historic Harman Hotel. In 2019, Mr. Turner went before the Hagerstown City Council to express concern over the actions that were being taken that suppresses the historical importance of the African American community within the city. Historic landmarks are being destroyed and the City is taking few steps to preserve them. The Jonathan Street community, for example, has been rezoned for development as residential.
  - Mr. Turner went before the Hagerstown City Council to urge efforts to preserve and promote the Jonathan Street community – it was not received well.
  - Mr. Turner hosts a local television program called “The Flip Side” and Mr. Moore is a panelist. The issue of historic preservation was going to be a topic of the show. However, officials from the City Government intervened and expressed disapproval of this coverage. The studio also received harassment and threats from the general public. The show was pulled as a result by the producer.
  - Commissioner Evelyn asked how MCCR can be of assistance on this. Mr. Turner requested a letter of support from the Commission for the efforts of the community to preserve the history of the Jonathan Street community. He also asked if an investigation may be appropriate, if authorized by the Commission’s statute.
  - Staff will connect with the guests to compile information requested by the Commissioners.

### **Executive Director’s Report**

- The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights successfully completed its Performance Improvement Plan given by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development 9 months ago. Congratulations to Supervisor Melissia Dorsey, the Housing Unit, and all MCCR Staff for their diligent work in making this happen. Commissioner Evelyn offered congratulations, too.
- MCCR is grateful for Mr. Turner and Mr. Moore from our WMAC for sharing information of great concern to the local community, as well as for the Commissioners’ strong interest in looking into the concerns further.

### **Assistant Director’s Report**

- Reviewed submitted written report.
- Once the contractual positions have converted to full time employees, MCCR will have 34 full time employees and 1 contractual position (Civil Rights Officer I in Case Processing).
- MCCR hopes to fill the Deputy Director position this summer.
- MCCR will be requesting additional resources in the agency's FY2023 budget request.

### **General Counsel's Report**

- Reviewed submitted written report.
- Discussed a case that was filed with the Office of Administrative Hearings that settled. This information was not previously shared with the Commissioners because the Commissioners may have had to sit as an Appeal Board if the OAH decision was appealed. However, the case was successfully settled. The matter involved a complaint of housing discrimination based on disability.

### **Education & Outreach Director's Report**

- Reviewed submitted written report.
- Read a prepared written statement in honor of Pride Month.
- Additional information will be shared with the Commissioners on upcoming events.

### **Old/New Business**

- Covered briefly the Board expectations, public comment process, etc., which have been previously reviewed and approved by the Board.
- Commissioner Suerth floated the idea of exploring ways the Commissioners can communicate and collaborate more efficiently outside of meeting times. The Commissioners will look into potential tools that can be used.
- A statement is being drafted for release by the Commission in honor of Pride Month.

**Meeting adjourned 11:49 am.**