



## **ROCKVILLE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

7:30 p.m.

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Commissioners:** Rebecca Murphy, co-chair; Gabrielle Zwi, co-chair; Zach Huebschman, vice chair; Sarabjeet Bhutani; Rachel Blomquist; Jake Goodman; Sirrah Jah; Florence Jewell; and Anne Leong.

**Student Ambassadors:** Noah Ash, Ida Liben, Ashna Verma.

**Guests:** Mayor Monique Ashton (joined at 7:43 p.m.), Delores Scott (city ADA coordinator and incoming HRC staff liaison), Dominic Russoli, Andrea Bernardo.

**Mayor and Council Liaison:** Councilmember Izola (Zola) Shaw (joined at 7:47 p.m.).

**Interim City Staff Liaison:** Sean Sedam.

#### 1. Convene and Welcome

Co-Chair Zwi convened the meeting at 7:33 p.m. and welcomed guests, including new commissioners Jake Goodman and Sirrah Jah.

Mayor Ashton introduced herself, praised and thanked the commission for its work on the unity gathering dialogue in February, and thanked the newly appointed commissioners and those who had expressed interest in joining the commission.

The interim staff liaison introduced Delores Scott as the incoming staff liaison. Delores Scott introduced herself to the commission.

#### 2. Agenda Approval

Co-Chair Murphy made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The amendment moved approval of the minutes to later in the meeting and moved the co-chair report to the next item of discussion. It was seconded by Co-Chair Zwi and Commissioner Bhutani. The motion carried.

#### 3. Co-Chair Report

Vice Chair Huebschman updated the commission on the gender-affirming care subcommittee and shared a draft letter from the subcommittee to the city manager requesting a briefing from the City Attorney's Office about gaps in protections for the transgender community and for access to gender-affirming care. The commission discussed and amended the content of the draft letter.

The letter states that the commission would like to bring attention to areas to strengthen protections for transgender residents by safeguarding health care providers and patients from out-of-state prosecution, ensuring insurance coverage for gender-affirming health care, and establishing guidelines for city departments and staff on collecting personal data and protecting privacy. It asks for the City Attorney's Office to brief the commission about how the city is complying with the Maryland Trans Shield Act and any other state or county protections, about ongoing efforts to identify gaps and strengthen protections, and about the impacts of potential federal policies.

Vice Chair Huebschman made a motion to approve the letter as amended. It was seconded by Commissioner Bhutani. The motion carried.

#### 4. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Co-Chair Murphy moved to approve the Jan. 22 meeting minutes, seconded by Commissioner Jewell. The motion carried.

#### 5. Staff Report

The interim staff liaison reminded the commission that April 18 is the deadline for applying to host a booth at Hometown Holidays, which is from noon-6 p.m. Saturday, May 24 and Sunday, May 25 in Rockville Town Center.

The commission discussed partnering with another board or commission for a booth, such as the city's Transportation and Mobility Commission or the transit subcommittee of the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities. Co-Chair Murphy will contact the transit subcommittee of the county commission. The commission could also consider partnering with the city's Board of Supervisors of Elections to register voters. Councilmember Shaw said she was emailing the city clerk's office to ask if the elections board would be interested in sharing a booth.

Three commissioners indicated interest in staffing a booth. Co-Chair Zwi said it would be important to partner with another board or commission to have enough people to staff the booth for all six hours of both days of the festival.

#### 6. Pride Update

Commissioner Blomquist, chair of the Pride Subcommittee, said the subcommittee met with the library and is planning activities with them.

The applications for performers and artists are open for several more weeks. The HRC is working with the city's Cultural Arts Commission on the city's artist-in-residence program.

The subcommittee will vote on performers.

Staff gave an update on city staff efforts. City staff met Friday, March 21 and discussed how to handle sponsorship and vendor contracts. The staff group will meet again.

City communication efforts include an article in April's "Rockville Reports," posters and flyers. Co-Chair Zwi asked about a Facebook Event page. Staff said he would ask city communications staff about creating that.

#### 7. Restructuring Subcommittees

- Task Force on the Right to Gender-Affirming Care in Rockville
- Human Rights Cities Subcommittee
- Public Policy Subcommittee

This item was tabled until April's agenda.

#### 8. Other Committee and Liaison Reports

Co-Chair Zwi said the Mayor and Council have asked the commission to accept an Autism Acceptance Month proclamation in April.

Commissioner Blomquist said the Current Affairs Subcommittee is monitoring talk of rent stabilization in Rockville and thanked Councilmember Shaw for her support and her quote in a recent news article about the issue.

Commissioner Jewell, as liaison to the Montgomery County Commission on Remembrance and Reconciliation, said the county would be enhancing the memorial marker site in front of the County Council building in mid- to late April and that the commission would be beautifying the site with a bench, pavement and flowers.

There will be a county Juneteenth celebration on Saturday, June 21 at BlackRock in Germantown.

The commission discussed creating a subcommittee about disability issues. Commissioner Zwi said that the commission, at its next meeting, will vote on the creation and specific name of a disability rights or related-name subcommittee.

#### 9. Other Business and Announcements

Co-Chair Murphy thanked the interim staff liaison for his service. The interim staff liaison thanked the commission for treating him well, said he would continue to work through the communications department to promote commission events and would work to make the transition to the new staff liaison successful.

#### 10. Adjournment

Co-Chair Murphy made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Jewell seconded the motion. The motion carried, adjourning the meeting at 9:35 p.m.