



## **AGENDA**

**Tuesday, April 20, 2021 6:30 PM**

**Public Telephone Conference  
(816) 743-4875 - Conference ID: 301 866 160#**

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

Pursuant to Jackson County Executive Order dated November 18, 2020 and any subsequent amendments and Phase 2.5 of the Eastern Jackson County Recovery Plan limiting public gatherings, this meeting will be conducted by taking safe social distancing measures as required by the Order. The public may participate in the meeting via conference call at **(816) 743-4875; Conference ID 301 866 160#** as provided in Section 610.020(4) RSMo.

### **Call to Order**

### **Attendance**

**Approve March Meeting Minutes:** HRC Meeting March 16, 2021 & HRC Task Group March 18, 2021

### **Introductions of New Members and Visitors**

### **Old Business:**

1. Update regarding Young Democrats and Conversion Therapy.
  - a. Approve Letter for Conversion/Reparative Therapy for Minors
2. Discussion: "Let Your Voice Be Heard Forum"
  - a. Create committee, including volunteers from the community.
  - b. Share ideas for how to follow-up.

### **New Business:**

1. Committee Reports
  - a. Education Committee Update
    - i. Educational Programs at libraries
    - ii. Schedule committee meeting date.
  - b. Business Committee Update
    - i. Orientation packet for new HRC members and volunteers.
    - ii. Schedule committee meeting date
2. HRC Task Force meeting reminder schedule March 22, 2021 at 6:30 pm
3. Community Views
  - a. Any concerns or inspirations to note.

### **Request for items to be discussed at next meeting**

### **Adjourn**



*The next regular meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. A quorum of the City Council and HRC Task Force may be in attendance; however, no City Council or HRC Task Force votes will be taken.*



## **MINUTES**

### **Thursday, March 18, 2021 6:30 pm**

A quorum of the Blue Springs Human Relations Commission was in attendance at the Human Relations Task Force meeting held on Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Pursuant to Jackson County Executive Order dated November 18, 2020 and any subsequent amendments and Phase 2.5 of the Eastern Jackson County Recovery Plan limiting public gatherings, the Task Force members participated in this meeting via video-conference and telephone to ensure safe social distancing measures were taken as provided in Sections 610.020(1) and 610.020(4) RSMo. The public was able to attend via telephone conference.

#### **Call to Order**

##### **Attendance:**

Gino Bueno – Vice Chairperson  
Leslie Gleason – Commissioner  
Courtney Yount McGinnis-Commissioner  
Lucas Taylor-Commissioner  
Susan Culpepper – City Councilmember  
Captain Jeff Sargent – Staff Liaison  
Jenna Herring – Staff Liaison

##### **Absent:**

Shawna Squire – Commissioner  
Vacant – Chairperson  
Vacant-Commissioner  
Vacant – Student Rep (BSHS)  
Vacant-Student Rep (BSSH)

**Agenda Item #5: Discussion with Human Relations Commission members-** Dr. Haynes asked the Task Force to consider for a future meeting whether the Public Safety umbrella was the best place for the HRC to reside?

Chair Haynes asked the current members of the HRC to also consider the following three questions and to send the responses prior to the next meeting:

Are there any issues of great urgency that need to be addressed?

In order to take advantage of the most promising and unexploited opportunities, what needs to occur?

What are you doing well as an HRC?

HRC Acting Chair Gino Bueno shared his experiences with the current HRC structure and management.

Due to the time, Dr. Haynes suggested the HRC members attend the next meeting and share their thoughts on the three questions posed, as well as other input they would like.

**Note:** No votes were taken by the Human Relations Commission during the HRC Task Force meeting.

**Adjournment-** Meeting adjourned by HRC Task Force Members

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Gino Bueno, Chairperson

*The next regular meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. A quorum of the City Council and HRC Task Group may be in attendance; however, no City Council or HRC Task Group votes will be taken.*

DRAFT



## **MINUTES**

### **Tuesday, March 16, 2021 6:30 pm**

A meeting of the Blue Springs Human Relations Commission was held on Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. with Commissioner Courtney Yount McGinnis presiding due to Vice Chairperson Gino Bueno having technical difficulties.

Pursuant to Jackson County Executive Order dated November 18, 2020 and any subsequent amendments and Phase 2.5 of the Eastern Jackson County Recovery Plan limiting public gatherings, the Task Force members participated in this meeting via video-conference and telephone to ensure safe social distancing measures were taken as provided in Sections 610.020(1) and 610.020(4) RSMo. The public was able to attend via telephone conference.

#### **Call to Order**

##### **Attendance:**

Gino Bueno – Vice Chairperson  
Leslie Gleason – Commissioner  
Courtney Yount McGinnis-Commissioner  
Shawwna Squire – Commissioner  
Lucas Taylor-Commissioner  
Susan Culpepper – City Councilmember  
Captain Jeff Sargent – Staff Liaison  
Jenna Herring – Staff Liaison

##### **Absent:**

Vacant – Chairperson  
Vacant-Commissioner  
Vacant – Student Rep (BSHS)  
Vacant-Student Rep (BSSH)

**Approval of minutes from October 20, 2020 & February 16, 2021-** Commissioner Lucas Taylor motioned to approve the minutes for October and February. Motion seconded by Commissioner McGinnis. Minutes approved unanimously.

**Introductions of New Members and Visitors:** City Clerk Sheryl Morgan, City Attorney Jackie Sommers, HRC Task Force/City Councilmember Kent Edmondson, HRC Task Force Chairperson Dr. Warren Haynes, HRC Task Force Member Nichlaus Stephens and Tamara Bueno.

#### **Old Business:**

1. Update regarding Young Democrats concerns of Conversion Therapy: Commissioner Taylor inquired if there was anything the Commission needed to follow up with to move it forward to Council. Councilmember Culpepper stated the letter was received; nothing else is needed from the HRC; she is working with the City Attorney, and ensuring the wording is proper and will continue the process once Task Group is concluded.

2. Discuss formation of committee, including members of the community, to follow-up to “Let Your Voice Be Heard Forum” and/or other events: City Attorney Sommers asked HRC to describe what Let Your Voice Be Heard was about. Commissioner Taylor responded informing that it was a platform for the community to directly speak to city and community leaders allowing residents to voice their concerns regarding Black Lives Matter, response to George Floyd murder and local protests. It provided discussion for people of color in our community and allowed HRC, City and community leaders, to show they are taking their concerns seriously. Small numbers attended in person due to coronavirus but there was great turnout and dialogue through Facebook Live. Commissioner Taylor also stated a follow up is critical but due to Chairperson stepping down; the formation of the Task Group; and not having a clear direction or leadership makes it difficult to plan.

Table formation of committee to follow up to Let your Voice be heard and other events motion by Commissioner Taylor. Motion seconded by Commissioner Gleason and carried unanimously.

#### **New Business:**

1. Committee Reports
  - a. Education Committee-Vice Chairperson Bueno motioned to move forward on education programs suggested by Commissioner Taylor, which included partnering with library by hosting virtual topic forums and a follow-up to Let Your Voice Be Heard. Motion seconded by Commissioner Yount McGinnis and carried unanimously.
  - b. Business Committee Update-Commissioner Yount McGinnis stated plans are on hold due to HRC Task Force but would like to meet with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss minority owned and/or women owned business and help support and highlight equity and inclusion.
2. Address HRC Task Force members- Suggestions made by Commissioner Gleason and Yount-McGinnis that Liaisons and Task Force members should review applications approved by the Mayor to provide insight to Commissioners qualifications and educational background.

Commissioner Taylor reviewed Task Group’s minutes and was made aware that Dr. Ngmosi is receiving a monthly stipend and asked to see more of his presence and would love to hear his expertise.

Commissioner Yount McGinnis disagreed that the agenda should be set by Council. Stating it would limit HRC ability for citizens to come and reach out to the Commission.

3. Community Views
  - a. Any concerns or inspirations to note: Commissioner Taylor would like to utilize social media more, create hashtags, build our brand, publish our efforts of the commission and plan future events surrounding the Monthly National Awareness Calendar.

Commissioner Yount McGinnis mentioned she is still in contact with Raven, the young student who spoke at the Let Your Voice Be Heard, and would like to amplify her voice and future events.

Commissioner Squire stated she remained hesitant to share ideas until the HRC Task Group provides direction.

**Public Comments**

Councilmember Edmondson thanked the Commission for candid remarks and wanted to let the group know that his too wishes the Task Group is moved in a timely manner and resolved.

Tamara Bueno has comments that she may share in a follow up email due to virtual meeting technical difficulties.

**Request for items to be discussed at next meeting-** No commissioners had requests.

**Adjourn-**At 7:34 pm there was no further business to discuss. Commissioner Taylor moved the meeting to be adjourned. Motion seconded by Commissioner Gleason and carried unanimously.

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Gino Bueno, Chairperson

*The next regular meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. A quorum of the City Council and HRC Task Force may be in attendance; however, no City Council or HRC Task Force votes will be taken.*

DRAFT

April 12, 2021

City of Blue Springs, MO  
Mayor Carson Ross  
Blue Springs City Council  
903 W. Main St.  
Blue Springs, MO 64015

Dear Mayor Ross and City Councilmembers,

On behalf of the Blue Springs Human Relations Commission (HRC), this letter is being submitted to support a proposed change to Chapter 220, Article IV of the Blue Springs Municipal Code in the interest of protecting the physical and psychological well-being of minors. Specifically, this protection will include, but not be limited to the protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or questioning youth, from exposure to the serious harms and risks caused by conversion therapy or reparative therapy by licensed providers.

This proposal was brought to the HRC by the Young Democrats of Blue Springs South High School on January 21, 2020 at which time, all commissioners voted in favor to draft a letter for council review.

Conversion therapy or reparative therapy is defined as any practice or treatment that seeks to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, including efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same gender. As recently as 2009, the American Psychological Association reported such techniques include, "inducing nausea, vomiting, or paralysis while showing the patient homoerotic images; providing electric shocks; having the individual snap an elastic band around the wrist when aroused by same-sex erotic images or thoughts; and using shame to create aversion to same-sex attractions."

Some of the risks of these practices as reported by the APA in 2009 include: depression, guilt, helplessness, hopelessness, shame, social withdrawal, suicide, substance abuse, stress, disappointment, self-blame, decreased self-esteem, increased self-hatred, hostility and blame to parents, feelings of anger and betrayal, loss of friends and potential romantic partners, problems in sexual and emotional intimacy, sexual dysfunction, and high-risk sexual behaviors.

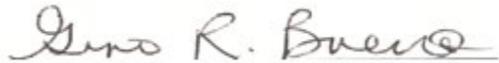
Research finds these practices to be ineffective. In fact, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association and the American School Counselor Association are just some of the agencies and organizations who find these interventions ineffective and highly damaging.

Attached to this letter are the complete documents presented by the students, including resources citing the grave dangers of conversion or reparative therapy to minors, as well as the group's official policy request.

Currently, twenty states in this country have state laws banning conversion therapy for minors. Numerous counties and cities across the country have taken the bold step to protect our children from this harmful practice including three cities in our own state. In the interest of our children's well-being, we urge you to join these many champions of children to ensure no child in Blue Springs suffers the damaging consequences of these ineffective interventions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gino R. Bueno". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Gino Bueno  
Vice Chairman  
Blue Springs Human Relations Commission

## **QUESTIONS TO CURRENT HRC MEMBERS**

**Do you think that the HRC would be better aligned to serve citizens under a different department other than the Police Department?**

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| Lucas Taylor            | <p>In my short time on the Commission, I have had positive experiences with the police liaisons. I also found Chief Muenz to be open to feedback, forthcoming in his responses, and flexible to consider suggestions from the community at our “Let Your Voice Be Heard” event.</p> <p>However, a primary issue in our community and in our county is relations between people of color (BIPOC) and the police, especially after numerous visible instances of police brutality. I think it sends a conflicted message that community members must go through a division of the police department to literally “let their voices be heard”, and this potential conflict may inhibit residents from coming forward with their thoughts and ideas.</p>   |
| Courtney Yount McGinnis | <p>As mentioned in the Task Force discussion, while the police officers have been extremely supportive, the housing of the HRC under the Police Department is counter-intuitive to the mission of most HRC groups. The goal is to ensure all citizens have access to the HRC without having to go through the city especially in instances in which a police officer may be involved in the issue at hand.</p> <p>In a quick review of area HRC groups, most are housed under Human Resources, the City Manager, or a Community Relations professional. As a member of the HRC, I would highly recommend that the city hire a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director and/or a Community Relations Director and move the HRC under their purview. If that is not something that is feasible at the time, I would suggest a move under Human Resources or Legal.</p>   |
| Gino Bueno              | <p>The Police Department has provided the HRC extensive support from the very beginning of the HRC. The Police Department has truly championed the HRC and appears to, not only understand the purpose and benefits of a HRC in a community, but to also truly believe in the value of a HRC. With that said, the only conflict I see with the Police Department being the liaison between the HRC and the City is citizens have to go through the Police Department to connect with HRC members. This is probably not an issue most of the time, but in the event a citizen wishes to express concerns involving the Police Department, this could cause some distrust. If there were a way (regardless of which department the HRC is under) to not have communications between the citizens and the HRC screened (or appear to be screened), many concerns – real or perceived – could be removed.</p> <p>The working relationship between the Police Department and the HRC provides additional opportunities for our citizens and officers to meet one another in a variety of non-emergent, relaxed settings. These sorts of meetings go a long way toward building relationships and trust. With the current strains across the country on the relations between people of color and police, these sorts of meetings couldn’t be more important. The very fact that the Police Department has provided resources beyond measure to help make such opportunities possible demonstrates the desire of the Department to serve citizens and improve relations.</p> <p>If the HRC begins to work under a different department, my hope is it will continue to partner on events with the Police Department.</p> |

**Are there any issues of great urgency that need to be addressed?**

Lucas Taylor

As stated above, we need greater focus on responding quickly and effectively to the major issues facing our nation and our local community, namely the treatment of BIPOC by police and government officials. This could start with a follow-up conversation around our “Let Your Voice Be Heard” event.

Similarly, there seems to be a growing divide among ideological groups, as evidenced by posts about race relations and politics on the Blue Springs Community Awareness Facebook page. If our purpose is to bring citizens and community members together, we have to first acknowledge the rift between us, identify factors/causes, and determine ways to effectively intervene. This starts with education about diversity issues, visibility of our commission (e.g. effective marketing, ongoing events & initiatives), and a clear focus/direction from city leadership.

Regarding the functioning of the Commission, I have some scattered thoughts. First, we need a full and complete Commission of passionate, well-trained Commissioners who will faithfully attend meetings execute the mission of the HRC. This starts with filling vacant positions quickly. Second, we need ongoing refresher training so all commissioners—new and old—understand their roles, responsibilities, and limitations, as well as the same for other ancillary members like City Council and police department liaisons. There appears to be a need to build trust between the Commission & City Council, as it has been the perception of current and past commissioners that the implementation of unnecessary barriers hampered the good-faith efforts of the HRC. Assuming best intent, it would be helpful for commissioners to understand the rules and regulations that govern City Council members’ input into our processes so we can work more effectively and efficiently towards our goals.

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| Courtney Yount<br>McGinnis | <p><b>Current Events:</b></p> <p>We need to follow up on our community forum from last summer. With the additional deaths that have occurred at the hands of police officers since the George Floyd murder, we need to hold ourselves and the City accountable for checking in with our citizens and addresses concerns that were brought to the table during the forum. Additionally, although we have been told we are not to be involved in school district business, there has been a situation at the high school in which a well written and produced discussion of Black Lives Matter on the high school news station led to all future broadcasts being removed from the elementary schools in the district. Students and their parents have requested support.</p> <p><b>Organizationally:</b></p> <p>There are two central issues that must be addressed in order for the HRC to move forward successfully. First, an agreed upon mission with a detailed job description needs to be created and implemented. Then the Commission must be given time to create a strategic plan. Also, the board should be expanded at that time.</p> <p>Second, some training needs to be held for any city official or staff who will be working with the HRC and who may be unfamiliar with DE&amp;I principles and current trends. The training would need include a sharing of expertise from both outside sources and HRC Commissioners. I believe this may lead to a deepened sense of trust and a feeling of actual support. In my experience on the Commission, the connection between the Councilmembers and the HRC has been a strained one. With this particular Commission, it's crucial that the liaison is both familiar with and supportive of initiatives aimed at creating systemic change.</p> |
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| Gino Bueno | <p>The issue of greatest urgency that needs to be addressed is filling vacant HRC positions in a timely matter. The position of Chairman has been vacant for over a year, nearly a year and a half. An orientation for new members should be created as well so they know exactly what sorts of commitments will be expected of them and what the HRC can and cannot do.</p> <p>Additionally, action steps and parameters must be established for the HRC. The mission and vision statements of the HRC, as well as the City Ordinance provide a clear roadmap for the HRC. The steps to achieve those goals, and the parameters in which the HRC are able to work to achieve those goals, are many times unclear and often appear to be fogged by “red tape” and political interests. Indeed, it often feels as though the HRC was established for appearances only.</p> <p>Some examples of these unclear lines would include when a black-owned business in our city was the victim of destruction of property with racial slurs being painted on his building, when someone complained of being pulled over by the police time and time again simply because of the color of their skin, and when a student at one of our high schools had a racial slur written on one of her papers. These issues were brought to the attention of the HRC and each time, the HRC was, in effect, instructed to “stand down”. Finally, when protests were beginning to take place in our city for BLM, the HRC responded with a plan to facilitate the “Let Your Voice Be Heard” forum. While City leadership was ultimately supportive in allowing this event to take place, the road to holding the event was quite bumpy and likely the reason your task force was formed. If the HRC was not formed to address these sorts of issues, why does it exist?</p> <p>Another item of urgency is the need to make the community aware of the HRC and any events the HRC has planned. Perhaps a Communications Committee, perhaps the freedom of the HRC to access social media, perhaps City support for signage to promote special events – these are just a few thoughts as how to better promote the HRC.</p> <p>Finally, follow-up with the “Let Your Voice Be Heard” event needs to be addressed. Numerous citizens who watched the event asked, “What’s next?” This is a question to which the HRC and City leadership needs to respond.</p> |
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**In order to take advantage of the most promising and unexploited opportunities, what needs to occur?**

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| <p>Lucas Taylor</p>                | <p>First, as mentioned above, we need a bit of education to ensure everyone is on the same page regarding expectations, roles, and limitations. Second, we need greater visibility in the community, and that starts with being more active in the existing events going on in the city. I see no reason we could not partner with other Commissions and city-affiliated groups to sponsor and/or participate in events that are taking place. I suggest one or two large events per year (to maximize impact and conserve resources), as well as monthly small events. This brings me to point three: we need access to social media in order to effectively market our activities and purpose without having to go through “red tape”. It seems hosting a “World Kindness Day”, mental health awareness campaigns, diversity/inclusion messages, Black History Month posts, etc. would be some of the simplest ways to be effective in our community. Finally, we need strong leadership (chairperson), a clear vision from the mayor and his appointed task force, and specific action steps that follow our mission and vision. I feel we need guidance from someone who knows the system and can empower us to get something done without feeling hampered.</p> |
| <p>Courtney Yount<br/>McGinnis</p> | <p>HRC needs to meet more often. There are untapped opportunities to apply for grants, host events, and partner with area groups to support other equity and inclusion efforts. HRC members needs to be out in the community to learn more about gaps and needs that aren’t always easily identifiable. For instance, some community members have reached out lately to discuss the need, especially in wake of the pandemic, for increased social services and affordable housing in Blue Springs.</p> <p>The HRC needs a Chair person appointment and needs to be trusted to follow out the duties as described in the charter or in a revised charter. Additionally, it would be helpful to be able to bring in community members for committee work.</p> <p>Finally, we need guidance on if we can use a shared platform (google docs, Microsoft teams, etc.) that would allow us to continue working on specific goals, but still maintain compliance with the Sunshine law. Does that exist?</p>   |

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| Gino Bueno | <p>Again, the parameters within which the HRC is able to work need to be made clear and procedures eliminating the “red tape” allowing for action steps to be implemented need to be established. Having these systems in place will additionally allow the HRC to respond in a timely matter when issues occur in our community.</p> <p>The HRC needs to be able to move forward with plans to provide community educational programs (partnering with local libraries) and events that promote unity and awareness. Some future events discussed include celebrating World Kindness Day, hosting a unity circle around the lake at Rotary Park at Railroad Lake, reviving the HRC Fair as well as holding smaller, monthly events celebrating diversity and promoting awareness/unity/education. Final decisions need to be made on which major events the HRC wishes to pursue and committees with volunteers need to be established to help organize and produce the events.</p> <p>The HRC should establish referral chains. For example, when suggestions are brought to us for changes in City Ordinances, we guide the suggestion to City Council; when neighbors are having issues, we guide them to a mediator or other resources for resolution; when a student is having a problem in one of our schools, we guide them to the proper department in the school district; etc., etc. While we feel confident individually and collectively in our abilities, we realize we are not the experts in every concern that will be presented to us. To have a plan and relationships with various other organizations, we can help citizens resolve concerns in a more efficient and effective fashion.</p> |
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**What are you doing well as an HRC?**

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| Lucas Taylor | <p>Our success begins and ends with the Commissioners who volunteer their time and expertise to bettering our city. We currently have several well-educated, dedicated, and hard-working commissioners who are ready to work on behalf of our mission.</p> <p>In the short time I’ve been with the HRC, we’ve had a moderately successful event—“Let Your Voice Be Heard” community forum—as well as participated with the “Haunted Candy Cruise” at Halloween. We have also heard a proposal from students at the high school on abolishing conversion therapy within Blue Springs city limits, although again, we were unsure of our role in this process and how we could advance this cause within the course of our duties.</p> <p>We also have split into committees—Business and Education—which allowed us the opportunity to meet more often than monthly and work towards smaller targeted projects. Though our partnership with Blue Springs School District is another area in which we invested time and energy only to later learn we were outside our scope of practice, we were able to make inroads with key individuals and had a solid plan to gain valuable input from our partners at the schools. We now have plans to sponsor community education on various topics, a goal I am hopeful will lead to enhanced understanding and connection between community members.</p> |
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| Courtney Yount<br>McGinnis | <p>Despite all of the changeover in commission members, I believe the Commission has a dedicated group of people who are willing to come together and spur change, listen to citizens, and apply their expertise and resources to better the Blue Springs community. The additional of the committees allowed the Commissioners more time to work outside of regular meetings, which led to some good action plans prior to Co-Vid.</p> <p>Additionally, our commission members have years of experience and expertise in their fields. By having such a vast area of backgrounds, it has helped us gain perspective and actively thinking of new ways to support every sector in Blue Springs.</p>  |
| Gino Bueno                 | <p>We have started moving forward in a more organized and focused manner. With the establishment of the education and business committees, we are able to have break-out work sessions outside of our regular meetings, allowing for more planning and more efficient monthly HRC meetings.</p> <p>We have hosted several events that allow neighbors to come together. In today's hectic society and culture of spending time in our homes or our back yards, neighbors seldom have the opportunity to get to know one another. We feel knowing our neighbors helps to break down barriers and stereotypes, resulting in meaningful relationships and more understanding.</p> <p>As an HRC, we have continued to move forward and bring awareness to several issues despite COVID-19, despite having multiple vacancies on the Commission for long periods, and despite having clear parameters within which to work.</p> |