

Abington HRC: Meeting Minutes for April 3, 2024

Present: Members Kristin Chapin, Michele Cooper, Shelley Rosenberg, Cheryl Rusten, Justin Williams

Ambassadors: Bonnie Dalzell

Guests: Jim Lee

The minutes from March 2024 were approved.

Old Business:

AHRC Anti Semitism Video: The video is complete and will be released shortly. It cannot be posted on the Township website so we will post on our Facebook and Instagram pages.

AHRC Anti-Islamic Video: We decided to table this until there is an actual event in our community to respond to. We agreed that, in general, we would not issue statements or make videos condemning hate against specific groups unless there is either an actual event in our own community or a significant regional or national event to respond to, as there was for the anti semitism video.

Community Dialogue Training: There are no updates to report as Shelley has not heard back from Tri States about this. The next Tri States meeting is April 17th so perhaps there will be an update for May. She did find her old training material on mediation. Justin will review it and see if he can scan and post relevant information to our Google docs folder for consultation as needed or interested.

Annual Report: Kristin updated the report and is in the process of recording it for submission.

Social Media Update:

- As of the end of March we had 861 Facebook followers, an increase of 11 over last month. Instagram followers stayed constant at 12.
- We made 3 posts in March.

New Business:

State HRC presentations: During the prior month, we learned that Chad Lassiter, Executive Director of the PA Human Relations Commission, was traveling the state giving presentations on "Beloved Community" and listening to concerns of community members. Beloved Community is a framework to assist communities to build a culture of peace, understanding and tolerance despite differences. We agreed we would like to present this program in Abington and Shelley agreed to contact the state about dates. At tonight's meeting we learned that June 5th is the preferred date to present, from 6:30-8 pm. We further decided that, while we might invite another neighboring HRC to co-sponsor this with us, we would like to hold the event in Abington. Numerous location suggestions were made. As of the time of this writing, we have secured the Crestmont Community Club House for the event. The PHRC will create the publicity for the event; we will disseminate it through our usual channels as well as community organizations such as the library and houses of worship.

Springfield Township HRC: Mr. Jim Lee, Springfield Township Commissioner and currently Board president, talked about Springfield's desire to start an HRC. The Commission was approved in 2011 but nothing has happened since for a variety of reasons. Now the Township is eager to get started and Mr. Lee was interested in learning about the challenges and successes the Abington HRC has faced during its history. He was especially interested in whether we have addressed civil rights in policing. We shared a lot of information and extended an invitation to Mr. Lee and his colleagues to talk with us again as they start the process of forming an actual HRC.

Police Dept update: Michele talked with our Police liaison, Lt. McGee. He said that there have been no reports of anti-Islamic activity in Abington that he is aware of, but he did note a prior event in Elkins Park regarding a statue in a cemetery of someone who was anti-Jewish. He agreed to keep Michele posted on any relevant incidents he becomes aware of.

Human Library and Braver Angels: Bonnie spoke briefly about two initiatives she thought might be relevant for our HRC. The Human Library is a library of people who serve as open books that community members can have conversations with that they would not normally have access to. Every human book represents a group in our society that is often subjected to prejudice, stigmatization or discrimination because of their lifestyle, diagnosis, belief, disability, social status, ethnic origin etc. A Human Library event is taking place in Moorestown, NJ on April 21 and some AHRC members may attend to see it in action. Braver Angels is a citizens' organization uniting red and blue Americans in a working alliance to depolarize America and promote civil conversation amongst various viewpoints. The AHRC is also interested in this and will try to invite a speaker to our May meeting to tell us more.

Next meeting: May 1, 2024

Respectfully submitted: Cheryl Rusten, Secretary