

Henrietta Lacks Commission
Minutes
Wednesday, December 19, 2018 – 12:00 p.m.
Halifax Industrial Development Authority
1100 Confroy Dr, South Boston, Virginia 24592

Members present: Mattie Cowan, Dr. Nettie Simon-Owens, Dr. Adele Newson-Horst, Jeri Lacks-Whye, Ed Owens

Members absent: Del. James Edmunds, Sen. Bill Stanley, Jason Studley, Matt Leonard

VDH staff present: Dr. Lauren Powell, Director of the Office of Health Equity; Kira Walker, Social Epidemiology Data Analyst

Others present: Kristy Johnson, Interim Executive Director of Halifax IDA; Servant Courtney Speed, President of the Henrietta Lacks Legacy Group; Alan Gernhardt, Executive Director of the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council; Dr. Mark Lineburg, Superintendent of Halifax County Public Schools; Joe Gasperini, Chairman of the Halifax County Public School Board; Elizabeth Layne, English Teacher at Halifax County High School; Michael Lewis, Principal of Halifax County High School; Walter Potts, Jr., Member of Halifax County Public School Board; Tom McLaughlin, Reporter for The News and Record; Ashley Hodge, Reporter for The Gazette Virginian.

Call to Order

Ms. Cowan, hereafter, “the Chair” called meeting of the Henrietta Lacks Commission, hereafter, “Commission”, to order at 12:00 p.m.

Determination of Quorum

The Commissioners introduced themselves to members of the press and public present. A quorum was confirmed with five of nine members present.

Approval of Agenda

The Chair suggested changes to the agenda to include: discussion of the upcoming Bioethics Conference, group communication, meeting minutes format, committee work expectations, expense reimbursement, Program Director job posting, and additional committee assignments.

The agenda was approved with the suggested changes unanimously by voice vote, motioned by Dr. Newson-Horst and seconded by Dr. Simon-Owens.

Presentation from FOIA Council

Mr. Alan Gernhardt from the Virginia FOIA Council presented to the Commission. Mr. Gernhardt discussed the requirements of open meetings, the provision of documents when

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requested through a FOIA request, as well as the legal determination of a meeting. Mr. Gernhardt advised that meeting minutes must contain: date, time, location, summary of topics discussed, action items, and any votes taken. Mr. Gernhardt clarified the constitution of quorum for sub-committees and that quorum for sub-committees can be redefined within the Commissions by-laws. The Public Records Act dictates the file retention standards for the Commission, speaking specifically to the Commission's needs, Mr. Gernhardt advised that digital recordings of meetings cannot be deleted until the final minutes have been approved and posted.

Presentation from Halifax County Public School Board

Dr. Mark Lineburg, superintendent of the Halifax County Public Schools introduced himself and his colleagues to the Commission. Dr. Lineburg stated that he expects the Henrietta Lacks Life Sciences Center to be an economic draw for the community at large. The Superintendent stated that the School Board is seeking to build a new STEM focused high school, that he would like to be named after Henrietta Lacks, to provide future educated employees to the Henrietta Lacks Life Sciences Center as well as educate current children. According to Dr. Lineburg, the naming of the high school would allow the school and school board endless partnership opportunities as well bring attention to Mrs. Lacks' story and her ties to the county.

Dr. Newson-Horst advised Dr. Lineburg and his colleagues that the Henrietta Lacks Legacy Group was accepting entries to their Annual Essay and Video Competition through December 31. The Commission advised that there is currently a Henrietta Lacks Health and Bioscience High School located in Vancouver, Washington. The Chair thanked Dr. Lineburg for his presentation and stated the Commission was open to further information sharing and partnership in the future.

Action Items:

- *No further action is required.*

Approval of Draft Minutes

The draft minutes were approved as-is by a unanimous voice vote.

Action Items:

- *Staff will reformat draft minutes for final posting. Staff will post final minutes to Commonwealth Calendar and the VDH Commissioner's Meetings Calendar.*

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Committee Reports

Communication Committee (Commissioners Leonard & Newson – Horst)

The Committee discussed the elevator speech and its current drafts provided to the Commission. There is a need for a consistent brief message delivered, but a request for flexibility to adapt to individual speech style and role/relation to Mrs. Lacks and the Commission. The elevator speech requires a strong hook as well as a clear definition of the support needed and the projected timeframe. A suggestion was made that some items from the elevator speech be developed in to talking points. Dr. Simon-Owens moved that the Staff evolve and separate the elevator speech in to a more condensed elevator speech and talking points, the motion was seconded by Mr. Owens and passed unanimously by voice vote. Commission members requested that moving forward, clear and concise requests be made to reduce duplicative work.

Action Items:

- *Staff will return a condensed elevator speech and separated talking points to all Commissioners for review and input prior to the next meeting.*

The Committee discussed the narrative developed. The Communications Committee advised that this narrative is a sample of interest pieces the Commission should disseminate to press on a quarterly basis to attract and maintain attention to the efforts of the Commission. This narrative is not a final and requires minor edits and refinement. Mr. Owens moved and Dr. Simon-Owens seconded to accept the narrative with the suggested edits, the motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

Action Items:

- *Staff is to confirm with the Office of Communications to ensure that the Commission can communicate/disseminate information directly to the press.*
- *Chair asks that the Communications Committee produce special-interest pieces quarterly for dissemination to press in accordance with any restrictions or procedures from VDH.*
- *Staff will edit and refine narrative document.*
- *Final narrative to be disseminated to press.*

Legal and Funding Committee (Commissioners Owens & Studley)

The Committee discussed that they should consider carefully what, if any, non-profit organization temporarily houses funds. The Legal and Funding Committee suggested that the Attorney General's Office might provide some guidance as to who can legally house funds for the Commission. The Commission stated the need to start the 501(c)3 process immediately. The Committee stated that in regards to pro-bono legal advice, the Commission should ensure that the Attorney General's Office will permit pro-bono guidance.

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Action Items:

- *Legal and Funding Committee will continue to research opportunities and options for funding storage.*
- *Upon selection of agency temporary funding placement, Commissioners will notify Staff for addition to the narrative document to be released to press.*
- *Legal and Funding Committee will meet with the Chair to start 501(c)3 process.*
- *Staff will provide contact information for the Attorney General's Office representative, Amanda Lavin, assigned to the oversight Agency.*
- *Legal and Funding Committee will communicate with Ms. Lavin to confirm AGO will allow pro-bono guidance for Commission.*

****Commissioner Owens departed at 1:38 p.m., quorum is lost, no votes moving forward****

Advisory Council (Commissioners Edmunds, Cowan & Simon-Owens)

The Advisory Council Committee discussed the working documents provided and the names provided as potential committee members. The Committee stated the need for a minimum of two persons per category, with no more than three persons per category for consideration. The Commission discussed the current candidates on the working documents and provided additional names or eliminated excessive candidates based on best fit as needed. The Committee predicts an active Advisory Council by March 2019.

Action Items:

- *Advisory Council Committee will revise working documents based on input provided.*
- *Staff will provide contact information for organizations suggested for inclusion.*

Old Business

The Communications Committee requested additional members assigned. The Chair assigned Mrs. Lacks-Whye to the Communications Committee. The Vice Chair advised that outside support for the Communications Committee could be provided through Mrs. Hope Harris-Gayles, Associate Director of Communications & Outreach at the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center.

The Commission discussed that the by-laws should be amended based on the guidance provided by the FOIA Council during their presentation. The by-laws will reflect that a quorum of sub-committees will be all members. Further by-law review and comments were tabled until a future meeting when a quorum is present.

Action Items:

- *Staff will amend by-laws based on the guidance given and disseminate to all Commissioners for their review and input prior to the next meeting.*

New Business

The Commission's abstract to the Second Conference on Bioethics Issues in Minority Health and Health Disparities Research in Opelika, Alabama from January 23 to 25, 2019 was accepted. The Commission discussed that prior to their participation in this event, they must ensure the Commission has consistent, clear messaging and talking points.

The Commission discussed recent lapses in communication within the Commission and with Staff. It was requested that email subject lines are all actionable. An example is listed below:

1. For Review: [subject line]
2. Action Required: [subject line]
3. Deadline: [subject line]
4. FYI: [subject line]
5. Decision Needed: [subject line]

Staff suggested the following items for improvement to communication for the Commission:

1. Email hosted on VDH server for staff dissemination and communication.
2. Dropbox account to act as a central repository for meeting documents, presentation materials, and publicity materials gathered in between meetings.
3. Conference call check-in's in between meetings with Staff.
4. Text group with Staff, Chair, Vice Chair for speedy check-in's.

Staff advised the Commission as to the review status of the Henrietta Lacks Commission's 2018 Annual Report to the Governor and General Assembly. No action is required by the Commission.

The Commission discussed the formatting of the meeting minutes. The Commission requested that minutes no longer be recorded in a transcription style, but instead contain a summary of the topic, action items, and any votes taken.

The Commission reminded all Commissioners that Halifax IDA covers all non-legislative members' expenses and they must be cognizant of what constitutes a valid business expense.

Action Items:

- *Staff will set up a conference call following the holidays with Dr. Newson-Horst and Mrs. Lacks-Whye to confirm messaging and talking points.*
- *Staff and Commissioners will adhere to the request for actionable subject lines.*

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- *Staff will develop a central email and Dropbox account.*
- *Staff will prepare training for any technological solutions as needed.*
- *Staff will implement the requested meeting minute style.*

Public Comments

Servant Courtney Speed stated that she appreciated the presentation by Halifax County Public School Board and the information provided.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will take place during the regularly scheduled quarterly window, in March 2019. The meeting will begin at 12 p.m. Date and location are pending the response and availability of Commissioners.

Action Items:

- *Staff will send out a Doodle Poll to determine staff availability for the meeting. Options provided will be:*
 - *Monday, March 4 at 12 p.m.*
 - *Thursday, March 7 at 12 p.m.*
 - *Friday, March 8 at 12 p.m.*

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by Kira Walker