



## HENRIETTA LACKS COMMISSION

Chair, Mattie Cowan  
Vice Chair, Dr. Nettie Simon-Owens  
Jeri Lacks-Whye

Sen. William Stanley, Jr.  
Del. James Edmunds, II  
Hon. Ed Owens

Dr. Adele Newson-Horst  
Brian Brown  
Jason Studley

**Henrietta Lacks Commission Minutes**  
**Monday, September 23, 2019 – 12:00 p.m.**  
**Halifax Industrial Development Authority**  
**1100 Confroy Dr, South Boston, Virginia 24592**

**Members present:** Mattie Cowan, Dr. Simon-Owens, Dr. Adele Newson-Horst, Brian Brown, and Jeri Lacks-Whye

**Members absent:** Del. James Edmunds, Jason Studley, Sen. Stanley, Jr., and Ed Owens

**VDH staff present:** Dr. Lauren Powell, Director of the Office of Health Equity; Jasmine Smith, Executive Administrator

**Others present:** Sable K. Nelson, Director of the Division of Multicultural Health and Community Engagement; Kristy Johnson, Deputy Director for the Halifax Industrial Development Authority (IDA); Reverend Chandler, Pastor of St. Matthews Baptist Church

### **Call to Order**

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

### **Determination of Quorum**

A quorum was confirmed with five of nine members present.

### **Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved unanimously by a voice vote, motioned by Dr. Newsonhorst and seconded by Brian Brown.



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**New Appointments**

The Henrietta Lacks Commission welcomed, Brian Brown, recently hired as the Halifax County IDA Executive Director and will now serve as the IDA representative on the Commission, the position held by interim director Kristy Johnson.

***Action Items:***

- *VDH staff will include Brian Brown on the Contact Roster for the Henrietta Lacks Commission, and the Henrietta Lacks Commission Letterhead.*

**Approval of June Draft Minutes**

After the discussion of various points for clarification, and a motion by Dr. Simon-Owens, seconded by Jeri Lacks-Whye for a correction on page four of six, the draft minutes from the June 26, 2019 meeting were approved, by a unanimous voice vote, motioned by the Chair, and seconded by Dr. Simon Owens.

***Action Items:***

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

**Old Business**

**Program Director Position**

Dr. Lauren Powell reported that a budget amendment was completed for the Program Director position, for specific funding towards the line item for administrative support. This amendment will go up for review to the Secretary's office and the Governor's office. Dr. Powell made the Commission aware that funding from the budget amendment will not go into effect until July 2020.

During the waiting period for the funding to go into effect, Dr. Powell has spoken with Virginia Department of Health leadership, including the Commissioner, and received a commitment from the agency to receive funding support for this position in the interim. VDH staff has a job description, as well as a budgeted amount towards payment for this position in place.

Due to the timeline of the Commission, the Chair reported that she and Dr. Simon-Owens plan to meet with senior leadership (I prefer this to higher-ups) to express the importance and need for this position, as it pertains to the Commission's success. Dr. Powell has expressed that if the need for VDH staff presence in this meeting is present, VDH staff will plan to attend.



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***Action Items:***

- *ACTION: VDH staff will proceed with contacting a contracting agency to fill the position.*
- *ACTION: VDH staff will have someone in place by the end of the 2019 year.*

**Committee Reports**

**Communication Committee (Commissioners Johnson, Lacks-Whye & Newson-Horst)**

Brian Brown agreed that Kristy Johnson continue to work with the Communication Committee.

Dr. Newson-Horst reported that the Henrietta Lacks Commission Mission Statement, “To plan and execute activities to promote national and regional awareness of the Commission and its activities,” has received approval by the Chair.

The Communications Committee will create three (3) human interest features, relevant to the Commission, with plans for the features to go nationally. These features are 1) the Lacks family’s commitment to the work of the Commission; 2) the milestones achieved by the Commission; 3) a general call for support of the Commission.

***Action Items:***

- *ACTION: The communications committee will have the three (3) features completed and given to the Chair, upon committee approval.*

The Communications Committee reported that Jeri Lacks-Whye and Dr. Newson-Horst met with Heidi from Howard University in regards to a podcast. Heidi stated that the Commission has not yet completed any tasks that can be highlighted within a podcast. At the point to which we have tasks to report, Heidi will contact the Chair and Jason Studley for completion of a podcast.

Dr. Newson-Horst reported on the production of the tri-fold brochure. The brochure shared was a draft and the floor was opened for review and edits.

***Action Items:***

- *The Communications Committee will place a professional, and all-inclusive, picture on the brochure. This will include either individual headshots or a full group picture.*
- *Kristy Johnson will assist the committee with acquiring the photos of the Commission.*
- *The Communications Committee will include a call for action, mission, and plan to achieve the mission within the brochure.*
- *The Communications Committee will include Hope Gayles on committee correspondence and within the brochure.*
- *The Communications Committee will decrease the verbiage amount and font size within the brochure.*



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A suggestion was made for the Commission to have a social media platform in order to better spread the work of the Commission. The Commission has agreed that social media will be managed by VDH staff.

***Action Items:***

- *VDH staff will send out a poll to the Commission of options for the HLC social media handle by September 27, 2019.*
- *VDH will create and manage the Commission's social media accounts, until the Program Director position is filled.*

**Legal and Funding Committee (Commissioners Owens, Sen. Stanley, Jr., & Studley)**

Dr. Simon-Owens reported, on behalf of the Legal and Funding Committee, in regards to her work on the completion of the 501C3. Dr. Simon-Owens reported that the process of completing the application and information, shared to the Commission by Sen. Stanley, Jr. at the June meeting, has been started. With the assistance from Attorney James Taylor, the Chair and Dr. Simon-Owens spent time completing this and are now awaiting the review and edits from Attorney Taylor before submission. By-Laws were also required to be developed, as well as the submission of paperwork to the Commonwealth of Virginia, to which Dr. Simon-Owens and the Chair are working to complete.

**Advisory Council (Commissioners Simon-Owens, Edmunds, & Sen. Stanley, Jr.)**

Dr. Simon-Owens followed up on her report from the June meeting on the contact information from LEAD Virginia. Individuals from LEAD Virginia have continued to express their interest and excitement in the work on the commission and are eager to know if there are tasks that they can do to help the Commission.

***Action Items:***

- *ACTION: VDH staff will mail the approved advisory letter to those on the LEAD VA contact list by October 15, 2019. Contact should be made by October 30, 2019.*
- *Dr. Simon-Owens posed the question on whether the Chair would like for Dr. Simon-Owens to reach out to the LEAD VA contacts, to see if any of the individuals are interested in the Commission presenting in their communities. The Chair agreed to this question as posed.*

***Action Items:***

- *Dr. Simon-Owens will reach out to the LEAD VA contacts and report back on this matter.*

**New Business**



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### **Henrietta Lacks Legacy Week**

Due to the short time frame for planning, the Commission has agreed to cancel the 2019 Henrietta Lacks Legacy Week in order to produce a well-planned event in the future. Discussion began for the 2020 year, with a possible combining of the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration and the Legacy Week.

Brian Brown made a suggestion to have a week of community service, in honor of Henrietta Lacks, in collaboration with the Ministerial Alliance. The Commission agreed on this idea and the Chair has asked Brian Brown, and Reverend Chandler, to work with Dr. Newson-Horst on the planning of these events.

### **100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration of Henrietta Lacks**

Dr. Newson-Horst reported on the proposal for the Henrietta Lacks 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration. The proposal is to “Involve and enlighten the Halifax Community on the work of the Commission.” The prospective title for this will be the *Henrietta Lacks 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Observance: A Community Celebration of Life*. The goal will be to celebrate Henrietta Lacks’ life, and those within the area that her cells have helped. A major activity for this event will be to honor three local individuals who have benefited from the treatments developed from HELA cells. Dr. Newson-Horst reported that the planned venue will be The Berry Hill Resort and Conference Center, in South Boston, Va. The Chair stated that an alternate location for the event is The Prizery, in South Boston, Va. The change in venues was agreed upon by the Chair and Dr. Newson-Horst.

Reverend Chandler stated to also highlight the community connections with Henrietta Lacks. These would include her burial, and the connection with the church, school, and any living relatives. A suggestion was also made to create a map that can be provided to point individuals in the direction of these highlighted points of connection.

Through further discussion of the celebration, the Commission agreed on the event taking place around her birthday, during a date and time that will not conflict with other events that are being planned by Mr. David Lacks.

#### ***Action Items:***

- *PLANNING: The Henrietta Lacks 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning Committee will have its first conference call on October 15<sup>th</sup> to begin strategic planning for the celebration. A date will be determined during this call.*

Dr. Newson-Horst posed the question regarding the Henrietta Lacks documentary. The Chair reiterated the discussion from the June meeting, stating that the Lacks family has discussed the



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possibility of a documentary. The Commission does not wish to conflict with plans that are already in place, however, the Commission would be a part of this documentary, should this be asked of them.

***Action Items:***

- *Jeri Lacks-Whye will reach out to the rest of the Lacks family to confirm the development or possibility of a documentary.*

**Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved**

Dr. Powell gave an update on the publication submission, pertaining to the Bioethics Research Conference, held in January, attended by Dr. Powell and Commissioner Matt Leonard. After a request from the head of the Bioethics Research Conference to submit an abstract, Dr. Powell took part in co-writing the assignment. She shared versions of this abstract with the Chair and Vice Chair at a previous meeting and received notification, in August, that the publication has been accepted. This publication will be shared within the upcoming volume that will encompass everything that took place at the conference. The submission will be published by the end of the year.

***Action Items:***

- *Dr. Powell will share proofs with the Chair and Vice Chair once received.*

**Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting has been confirmed for December 18<sup>th</sup> from 12pm – 3pm.

***Action Items:***

- *ACTION: Staff will send out an email notification and calendar invite, following the meeting.*

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 p.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by Jasmine Smith

