

**MEETING OF THE MONROE COUNTY
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Wednesday, April 24, 2019 at 5:00 p.m.

1. Meeting began with the Roll Call and Call to Order:
Members present: Byron Bangert, Doris Parlette, Kathleen Sideli, and Paul White
Staff present: Margie Rice, County Attorney
Special Guests: Guy Loftman and Ruth Aydt
2. Byron moved approval, Paul seconded the approval, and the Commission unanimously approved the minutes from the January 23, 2019 meeting. Margie noted that there were no minutes to approve for February and March because there was not a quorum either month.
3. The Commission welcomed guests Guy Loftman and Ruth Aydt, to discuss their report: *Race and Criminal Justice in Monroe County, Indiana: A Long-Range Perspective*.

Kathleen explained that the HRC became interested in incarceration and the Monroe County Correctional Center (MCCC) about one and a half to two years ago, because of complaints or questions members heard (personally) while in the community. She pointed out that the HRC has invited guest speakers on the topic and related to criminal justice. It was noted that their race report comes at a good time, given the County's comprehensive criminal justice review and Kathleen's conversation with Commissioner Julie Thomas about the HRC's interest in the subject. She invited an overview of the study from Guy and Ruth. The following summarizes the conversation:

- Guy gave a history of his interest in the topic and his active involvement with the NAACP for the last 20 years. Clarence Gilliam prompted Guy to look into whether black people were incarcerated at a higher rate than whites and, if so, why. Guy thought the question "should not be too hard to find out", and has been looking into the issue ever since.
- Guy began looking at statistics regarding race and the MCCC in 1997.
- Guy found an "immense disparity" in rates of incarceration based on race.
- The criminal justice system did not necessarily always agree upon Guy's results; however, Prosecutor Carl Salzmann was extremely helpful and opened his office every Saturday for Guy to access and review files and conduct a study.
- Guy's 2003 study was an outstanding example of community cooperation, but the results and recommendations were not implemented. After Carl Salzmann's defeat, a key graduate student leaving for a job elsewhere, and Guy being appointed to the Election Board, momentum failed.
- Every couple of years thereafter, Guy would ask the MCCC for numbers, and the response always showed a disparity between the rates of white and black persons incarcerated.
- Guy and Ruth began discussing Guy's study and Ruth, who has a background in computer science and analyzing data, suggested Guy's statistical analysis could be more sophisticated; therefore, they began working on a new and improved study, which came out in 2019. Guy was able to help Ruth understand aspects of the criminal justice field, since Ruth had no background in that field.
- The resulting 2019 study is being discussed, and Guy and Ruth will be meeting with the Presiding Judge and the Prosecutor in June.
- Guy and Ruth discussed the executive summary and recommendations with the HRC.
- A discussion began about trusting data, how we can improve the collection of data, and remove human bias from the process. It was pointed out that whatever data set you look at, humans will bring their own bias when looking and reviewing data.
- Collectively, the group discussed the comprehensive criminal review, the jail population, and agreed they are concerned with putting things in place to change the future.

- Guy and Ruth were invited to stay engaged in this topic and the conversation around the criminal justice review.
4. The HRC discussed the Commissioners' desire to have the HRC involved with and participate in community conversations about the County's comprehensive criminal justice review. It was agreed that Kathleen and others (less than a quorum) would meet with the County Commissioners on May 1st during staff time to discuss the HRC's involvement with the criminal justice review.
 5. The Fourth of July was discussed, and the HRC stated their interest in joining in the Parade. It was agreed that the HRC, with County Commissioner funding, would like to get bracelets to hand out at the Parade again this year.
 6. Byron mentioned that bias legislation was passed by the General Assembly
 7. The meeting was adjourned.