

**Sayers, Margery**

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**From:** Sachs, Steve <Steve.Sachs@willis.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 02, 2015 3:11 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Cc:** Sigaty, Mary Kay  
**Subject:** Office of Human Rights

**Importance:** High

Members of the Council:

I am writing to you to provide some background on the recommendations that the Office of Human Rights Transition team made to County Executive Kittleman. Alice Giles chaired that committee and I was a member of it.

All of our interviews were based upon "having a discussion" so that we could listen and learn more about the Office, and its strengths and possible opportunities for improvement. In preparation for those meeting, we reviewed materials on the Office Of Human Rights site as well as to review the recent Annual Reports published by the Office of Human Rights.

We met with Dr. Vernon Grey and he was very open and candid with respect to his role as the director and the responsibilities of the office, as well as his thoughts on the Commission. He discussed the opportunity to do more outreach and Dr. Grey was very complimentary of the staff, especially with respect to Mary Campbell. After meeting with Dr. Grey, Alice and I decided that we should meet with Ms. Campbell and found out that Dr. Grey was absolutely correct. In fact, when Alice had to leave to attend another meeting, I spent almost an additional hour meeting with her. One of her recommendations to us was with respect to the Hearing process, which she felt could be better handled by the County hiring a hearing officer. It was my impression that she also felt that Commission members might have more impact with respect to Outreach efforts. We further discussed outreach and she both advised me and showed me copies of outreach efforts and community forums that were utilized by previous administrations. She believed that they had been very effective.

With both Dr. Grey and Ms. Campbell, Alice and I discussed the need to have more conversations within the diverse communities in Howard County. We all noted that the County had become much more diverse, not only in numbers of minority persons, but in the numbers of

minority populations. I thought that this presented a great opportunity for the County to create forums for healthy “conversations” within our numerous communities before we had a “react to” scenarios as faced in other parts of our country.

With respect to hiring a Hearing Officer, I initially wrote to Alice that I did not think that it made sense given the County’s financial challenges in FY 2015 and FY 2016. However, I was also on the legal transition team and to my surprise, Margaret Ann Nolan from the Office of Law made the very same recommendation to that Committee, Chaired by Michael Davis. That helped me to change my mind with respect to what might best serve the County and the parties involved in a dispute.

I am saddened that the communication of our efforts has been lost in the present situation that you have been and are facing. If it would be helpful for the Council to question me on the process or the interview, I have notes and would be glad to sit down with you. I truly believe that there are wonderful opportunities for the Office of Human Rights and The Commission on Human Rights to continue to do their good work and find ways to create even greater impact within Howard County.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Sachs

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Cc: Mary Kay Sigaty, Council Chair

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