

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION MINUTES

June 20, 2019 4:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers

PRESENT: COMMISSION CHAIR Derrick Thaxton
VICE CHAIR Nikki Garry
COMMISSIONERS Marty Watkins, Francie Johnson, Mary Jo Comerford
Richard Zaker and Kenneth White

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS Joyce Keller and Byron Hansbro

ALSO, PRESENT: DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES French Wilson
ACTING HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER Penny Rogers
ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY Angie Roberts
HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATOR Fred Spannaus

I. Call to Order

Chair Thaxton called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Seven out of Nine Commissioners were present at the time of roll call. Chair Thaxton declared a quorum does exist to conduct and approve business.

II. Concerns, Comments or Questions from the Audience

There was none.

III. Approval of the May 30, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Motion was made by Commissioner Johnson to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner White. Upon roll call, Commissioners Derrick Thaxton, Nikki Garry, Marty Watkins, Francie Johnson, Mary Jo Comerford and Kenneth White voted aye. Commissioner Zaker abstained. Chair Thaxton declared the motion carried.

IV. Monthly Activity Report & Update/Summary of Cases

Acting Human Resources Manager Rogers presented the monthly status report of cases for Human Rights Investigator, Jan Runion (Exhibit A). There is no status report of cases for Human Rights Investigator, Fred Spannaus because he currently has no cases.

V. Unfinished Business

A. Update on Protecting Houses of Worship Presentation

Chair Thaxton shared that he, French Wilson, Penny Rogers and two officers from the Decatur Police Department met with Kenith Bergeron from the U.S. Department of Justice regarding protecting houses of worship. The presentation is tentatively scheduled for Friday, September 13th from 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. The venue has yet to be determined. Mr. Bergeron stated the name of the presentation has been changed from Protecting Houses of Worship to Protecting Places of Worship in order to be more inclusive.

B. MLK Celebration 2020

1. Discussion on MLK Theme

The theme for the 2020 MLK celebration has been tabled until the next meeting.

2. Discussion of MLK Banquet speaker

Acting Human Resources Manager, Penny Rogers showed the Commission a short video featuring Chris Singleton. Mr. Singleton is a former professional baseball player and the son of one of the nine victims of the shooting that took place at the Emanuel Church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015. The Commission agreed Mr. Singleton would be a good speaker for the MLK Banquet. Ms. Rogers reached out to Mr. Singleton's agent about speaking, and was told the cost would be at least \$15,000. Chair Thaxton discussed the importance of getting sponsorships to be able to move forward with the speakers that we are wanting for the MLK banquet. The vote on the MLK Banquet speaker will be made at the July meeting.

3. Discussion of Freedom March Speaker

Chair Thaxton proposed that Vice Chair Garry be the speaker for the program after the Freedom March. The decision for the speaker will be tabled until the next meeting.

VI. New Business

There was none.

VII. Other Business

A. Human Relations Commission Orientation

The Commission has agreed to hold the regular July meeting at 3:30 p.m., and schedule the orientation immediately following the meeting. Any commissioners that are unable to stay after the meeting who still need or want to attend orientation, should set up a time to meet with Fred Spannaus to complete the orientation.

B. Discussion of Implicit Bias

Human Rights Investigator, Fred Spannaus discussed how implicit bias is a continual problem in the community. Fred explained that implicit bias is not considered to be illegal discrimination; therefore, cases that fall under implicit bias are dismissed. Human Resources Director, French Wilson spoke about when HR had a full-time Human Rights Officer that was employed by the City. The Human Rights Officer instituted training with businesses in our community to meet with supervisors and speak to them about discrimination. The supervisors were very receptive to this training. Director Wilson feels that businesses have cut a lot of their training programs due to budgetary constraints. Director Wilson suggested

that the Commission brain storm some ideas on how to educate businesses and organizations on implicit bias. Commissioners discussed and decided to contact other places and municipalities to see what their practices are in educating businesses on implicit bias. HR will also see if the previous Human Rights Investigator left notes on the presentations he conducted.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Vice Chair Garry.

Upon roll call, the meeting was adjourned at 5:18 p.m.