

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION MINUTES

June 18, 2020 4:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers

PRESENT: COMMISSION CHAIR Derrick Thaxton
VICE CHAIR Nikki Garry
COMMISSIONERS Marty Watkins, Joyce Keller, Francie Johnson,
Byron Hansbro, Richard Zaker and Tina Gist

ABSENT: Kenneth White

ALSO, PRESENT: ACTING HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER Penny Rogers
ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY Sherry Beasley

I. Call to Order

Chair Thaxton called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Eight 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 were none.

III. Approval of the February 20, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Motion was made by Commissioner Zaker to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Hansbro. Upon roll call, Commissioners Derrick Thaxton, Nikki Garry, Marty Watkins, Byron Hansbro, Joyce Keller, Francie Johnson, Richard Zaker, and Tina Gist voted aye. Commission Chair Thaxton declared the motion carried.

IV. Monthly Activity Report & Summary of Cases

Acting Human Resources Manager Rogers presented the monthly status report of cases for Human Rights Investigator, Fred Spannaus (Exhibit A) and Human Rights Investigator, Jan Runion (Exhibit B). Discussion followed.

V. Unfinished Business

A. Update on Commission Fair

Commissioner Watkins reported that when he spoke to the City Manager, he stated that he would reach out to the City's staff to get more clarification on the Human Relations Commission and have either French Wilson or Penny Rogers reach out to the Commission after speaking to him. As of today, he has not heard back. Acting Human Resources Managers Rogers replied that due to Covid-19, the City's offices have been closed for the past 3 months, and they just reopened on June 15th. The Commission Fair could not be held right now with all the restrictions on the number of people allowed to meet. This event will have to be postponed. Discussion followed. This topic will be tabled. Commissioner Hansbro suggested the Commission provide an informational table at City events to make people aware of our presence and that we are willing to do our part as a Commission to make sure their human rights are being protected.

B. Protecting Places of Worship – Part II

Commission Chair Thaxton stated he would still like to hold this event; however, due to Covid-19, it will need to be tabled. Commission Chair Thaxton has requested this item remain on the agenda for future meetings.

VI. New Business

A. MLK 2021

Commission Vice Chair Garry stated the MLK luncheon would be contingent upon what phase the state of Illinois is in at that time. It would be wise to have a speaker in mind even if it is someone local. Commissioner Zaker suggested Jeanelle Norman, Sheriff Brown, or Vinney Barbee as local speakers. Commissioner Watkins stated that we need to be mindful of the sponsorship from the community because of the impact of Covid-19. Commission Chair Thaxton stated depending on what phase the state of Illinois is in, we might want to move the March to February or possibly June in conjunction with Juneteenth. The cut-off date should be at the end of September to decide if we are able to continue with the plans for MLK 2021. Acting Human Resources Manager asked about the essay contest. Commission Vice Chair Garry stated even if the Commission doesn't have the luncheon, we should still be able to have the essay/poetry/drawing contest. Commission Chair Thaxton stated that the winners can be posted on our Facebook page and in the Decatur Public Schools newsletter. Commissioner Hansbro suggested we check with the Herald & Review to see if they can run the essays and poems in the newspaper and possibly be a sponsor. Commission Chair Thaxton suggested the Commissioners have a theme by the next Zoom meeting. Commissioner Zaker stated if the Commission decides to have a local speaker the theme could be something like "Bringing the Fight Home." Commission Vice Chair Garry stated considering the current events with police brutality and racial injustice, if the Commission goes with a local speaker such as Sheriff Brown, maybe we can tie that in as how can we work together as a community. Commissioner Hansbro suggested if the Commission wants to go local, that we have two speakers, Chief Getz and Sheriff Brown. Discussion followed. Commissioner Hansbro suggested the theme "Decatur - Walking Together into Our Future." When putting the program together, we should pull people from across our community and make it a community event. Commissioner Zaker suggested finding youth groups in Decatur (ex. drumline) to put at the head of the March.

B. Commission's Possible Involvement with ALERT

Acting Human Resources Manager Rogers contacted Chief Getz and asked him what he thought about somebody from the Commission being part of the ALERT. Chief Getz stated the ALERT has already been established with a wide variety of people from our community such as ministers, school teachers, and the NAACP. This is an independent group from the city, therefore, he felt like it wouldn't be appropriate for someone from the Commission to be in the group. Commissioner

Hansbro stated he is a member of the ALERT, as he is a local pastor. He stated the purpose of the ALERT is to keep people informed and to bring harmony and peace between the police and the community.

VII. Other Business

- A. Commission Vice Chair Garry acknowledged the statement that the Director of Human Resources Wilson put out on behalf of the Commission to address recent events in our nation, and said it was well spoken. Acting Human Resources Manager Rogers said that the statement is on the Commission's Facebook page as well as the City's website.

Commission Chair Thaxton acknowledged Commission Vice Chair Garry's recent award. She was named as one of the winners in the Twenty Under Forty segment of the Herald & Review for her involvement in the community.

VIII. Adjournment

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

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