

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION MINUTES

June 17, 2021 4:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers

PRESENT: COMMISSION CHAIR Derrick Thaxton
VICE CHAIR Nikki Garry
COMMISSIONERS Byron Hansbro, Francie Johnson, Richard Zaker,
Joyce Keller, Anay Hunt and Marty Watkins
COMMISSIONER Gina Taylor joined the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

ABSENT: None

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

I. Call to Order

Chair Thaxton called the meeting to order at 4:08 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 May 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes

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

IV. Monthly Activity Report & Summary of Cases

Acting Human Resources Manager Rogers provided a monthly status report of cases. (Exhibit A) Ms. Rogers stated in the last meeting someone asked why Case #190725 is taking so long to settle and wanted to know if there was a way that the Commission could speed this along. Ms. Rogers stated she spoke to Assistant Corporation Counsel Amy Waks who advised the Commission cannot impose a deadline for the parties to sign the agreement. Ms. Rogers reported on Case #200928 and said the respondent's attorney has filed for dismissal. Ms. Rogers and Mr. Spannaus will speak to Ms. Waks to see what the next steps will be.

V. Unfinished Business

A. Update on participation in Juneteenth

Chair Thaxton reported there will be a table and two chairs at Central Park for the Commission. Commissioner Hansbro volunteered to set up. The Commission's pamphlets and some of the t-shirts will be on the table. The other t-shirts will be given to the Commissioners so that they can pass them out while walking around the park. The Juneteenth event at Central Park will begin at 11:00 a.m., and the event will last until 4:00 p.m. Individuals will meet at the Macon County Courthouse on the corner of Wood St. and U.S. Route 51 South at 10:00 a.m. A memorial wreath will be laid in honor of Sam Bush. At 10:45, individuals will begin to line up for the March which will head North on U.S. Route 51 to Prairie Avenue to Central Park. Commissioner Johnson reminded the Commissioners to wear their Human Relations Commission nametag. Ms. Rogers distributed the t-shirts for the Commissioners to wear to the event. Chair Thaxton asked the Commissioners if they had any questions. Discussion followed.

B. Update on Acts of Kindness campaign

Commission Chair Thaxton said he re-read Commissioner Zaker's article and asked Commissioner Zaker if he had pictures of the recent act of kindness that Commissioner Keller relayed to him and shared with the Commission at the April meeting. Commissioner Zaker stated Commissioner Keller has sent him pictures of the key people who have been involved in the act of kindness. He sent some of the pictures to Ms. Beasley. Ms. Beasley stated she received the pictures but has not had the time to look at them. Commissioner Keller will send the photos she has on her phone to Ms. Beasley. The article and pictures will be posted on the Commission's Facebook page. Vice Chair Garry asked if the Commission decided on if people are going to submit acts of kindness information to the Commission. Discussion followed. Chair Thaxton and Commissioner Zaker will meet to discuss the details.

C. Discussion on speaker from Decatur Landlord's Association

Chair Thaxton reported he was told the Decatur Landlord's Association is no longer in existence and that he should contact the Decatur Housing Authority. He left them a message and is waiting on a call back. Commissioner Watkins stated the Decatur Landlord's Association is still in existence and has a new president. Commissioner Watkins stated he will give Chair Thaxton the contact information.

VI. New Business

A. Discussion on MLK 2022

Chair Thaxton stated the Commission should start looking for a speaker now. Chair Thaxton asked for recommendations for a speaker. Vice Chair Garry suggested having a woman speaker. Commissioner Hunt suggested Alana Banks who is a board member with the Decatur Public Schools and the first black transgender

woman elected to a school board in the United States. Vice Chair Garry suggested Nichelle Nichols who was in the original Star Trek series. Ms. Rogers stated the Commission did try to contact Ms. Nichols in the past to speak, but was told she is no longer doing speaking engagements due to poor health. Commissioner Zaker suggested Shelith Hansbro, Commissioner Hansbro suggested Doris Turner who is now an Illinois State Senator with the 48th District. Ms. Turner recently filled the seat that was vacated by Senator Andy Manar. Chair Thaxton suggested actor and rapper Common or Ozzie Smith, former Major League Baseball player. Commissioner Watkins suggested Rita Ali, the first black female Mayor of Peoria. Chair Thaxton stated sponsorship is needed. Vice Chair Garry wanted to know how the decision is made on the speaker. Chair Thaxton stated in the past he has met with Ms. Rogers and Ms. Beasley. He said he thinks it is best if the contact comes from someone from the City. Ms. Rogers stated that if the Commissioners know the person they suggest, they could reach out first to see if he/she is available. If the person is available, Chair Thaxton, Ms. Beasley and Ms. Rogers would follow up. Commissioner Hansbro suggested if we want to empower women and diversity, we should have a women's town hall. The Commission can bring in Ms. Banks, Ms. Hansbro and other women for the town hall forum. This would not cost much money, and we can make an impact on the community. He suggested holding the forum at either MacArthur or Eisenhower High School. Commissioner Hunt suggested to think about all the women who stood up with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and put a focus on them as well. Commissioner Hansbro suggested having the luncheon and the town hall forum as a Martin Luther King package. The essays and artwork can be about the women that stood with Dr. King and can be displayed at the school where the forum is held. Vice Chair Garry and Ms. Beasley suggested the forum be held after the March on the Monday that Martin Luther King's birthday is observed. Discussion followed.

VII. Other Business

Chair Thaxton stated he talked to Mr. Spannaus about implicit bias. Mr. Spannaus sent him an article and Chair Thaxton will share the article with the Commission.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Keller. Upon roll call, the meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.