

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION MINUTES

July 15, 2021 4:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers

PRESENT: COMMISSION CHAIR Derrick Thaxton
VICE CHAIR Nikki Garry
COMMISSIONERS Byron Hansbro, Francie Johnson, Richard Zaker, and
Joyce Keller,
ABSENT: COMMISSIONER Gina Taylor, Anay Hunt and Marty Watkins
ALSO PRESENT: ACTING HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER Penny Rogers and
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Sherry Beasley

I. Call to Order

Chair Thaxton called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Six 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 June 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion was made by Commissioner Johnson to approve the minutes, seconded by Vice Chair Garry. Upon roll call, Commissioners Byron Hansbro, Francie Johnson, Joyce Keller, Richard Zaker, Vice Chair Nikki Garry and Chair Derrick Thaxton, voted aye. 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) After reporting on Case #200928, Ms. Rogers asked the hearing officers, Vice Chair Garry and Commissioner Hansbro if they had anything to add to the report. Commissioner Hansbro stated the hearing officers received the complaint, the Respondent's motion to dismiss and the Complainant's response to the motion to dismiss. After reading both motions, it was decided to go ahead with the Motion to Dismiss Hearing on August 5 so both parties will be given the opportunity to state their case.

V. Unfinished Business

A. Recap of Juneteenth

Commissioner Hansbro commended the Commission on working with the African-American Cultural & Genealogical Society on this event. His concern was the lack of coordination on that day which made for a split city. He stated he believed some people did not attend the celebration in the morning at Central Park because there was a Juneteenth event at the Devon Amphitheater that evening. Commissioner Zaker stated he would like to see the Commission even more involved with Juneteenth next year. Discussion followed. Commissioner Hansbro reported he and Vice Chair Garry handed out pamphlets and had conversations about the Commission with several people who stopped by our table.

B. Update on Acts of Kindness campaign

Commissioner Zaker handed out a list of his ideas on how the Commission can promote the Acts of Kindness (AOK) campaign. He would like to hear what the other Commissioners are thinking to keep this project going. He commended Commissioner Keller for all of her input so far. Commissioner Keller commented on the first idea on the list which is to put an article in the Herald & Review (H&R). Commissioner Zaker stated he received an email from a higher-level editor from the H&R who asked about the AOK project and other Commission activities. He thinks there is interest in following up with the story. Commissioner Keller and Commissioner Johnson suggested promoting the AOK project to the Coalition of Neighborhood Organizations (CONO). Commissioner Zaker asked what our steps should be to get this program out beyond the Commission's Facebook page. Discussion followed. Chair Thaxton asked Commissioner Zaker and Commissioner Keller to head the AOK program. They both agreed. He also asked the Commissioners to let Commissioner Zaker or Commissioner Keller know if they are aware of a person or an organization that should be recognized for an act of kindness.

C. Discussion on speaker from Decatur Landlord's Association

Chair Thaxton reported he has not gotten in touch with anyone. He left a message for a return call from the Decatur Housing Authority.

D. Discussion on MLK 2022

Chair Thaxton asked the Commission if they had thought of any other speakers for the luncheon other than the ones that were listed at the June meeting. Commissioner Zaker suggested Illinois State Senator Doris Turner. Chair Thaxton asked if this would be a conflict of interest. Ms. Rogers stated she did not think it would be as long as she is not running for office. She will check to make sure. Vice Chair Garry asked if there is a list of potential speakers or are we still collecting names. Chair Thaxton stated we are still collecting names. Chair Thaxton talked about sponsorship. The more sponsorships the Commission has, the more we are able to

do. Discussion followed. The Commission talked about having a forum on the Monday afternoon of MLK weekend. It was suggested we contact the Women's Studies program at Millikin University, the African American program at Richland Community College, the Delta Sigma Theta (Delta) Sorority and the Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority. Vice Chair Garry stated she will try to get the contact person's name at Millikin. Vice Chair Garry asked if the Commission has a place for the luncheon which is normally held on the Saturday of MLK weekend. Commissioner Hansbro suggested we contact the Decatur Conference Center where there will be more space for attendees to sit comfortably. Ms. Rogers asked if we were still planning on having a program at the church after the March on Monday since we are also planning on having a forum later that day. Commissioner Hansbro suggested doing a small program at the church. Discussion followed. Commissioner Zaker asked if the theme for this year's MLK has been determined. Commissioner Hansbro suggested our theme be, "The Women of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Movement" or "Honoring the Women of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Movement."

VI. New Business

A. Discussion on implicit bias

Acting Human Resources Manager Rogers stated she forwarded an article to the Commissioners that was published in The New York Times titled, "Who Discriminates in Hiring? A New Study Can Tell." This article was sent to her by Human Rights Investigator Fred Spannaus.

VII. Other Business

Chair Thaxton requested we put suggestions for the MLK theme on the agenda for the August meeting. Commissioner Zaker stated an interfaith group is trying to bring Bryan Stevenson to speak in Decatur next year. Mr. Stevenson is a lawyer, social justice activist and the author of the book titled "Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption." He is the founder and the Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative located in Montgomery, Alabama. Commissioner Zaker asked if the Commission would like to support bringing Mr. Stevenson to Decatur. Chair Thaxton asked Commissioner Zaker to get more information and requested this item be on the agenda for the August meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Hansbro. Upon roll call, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.