

# HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION MINUTES

August 19, 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, Marty Watkins, and Gina Taylor (left at 4:50)

**ABSENT:** COMMISSIONER, Anay Hunt

**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

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

Ms. Abeer Motan voiced her concerns and asked the Commission to be fair, considerate and understanding to people of all nationalities. She stated her concerns about racism against her throughout the community.

## III. Approval of the July 15, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion was made by Commissioner Johnson to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Keller. Upon roll call, Commissioners Byron Hansbro, Francie Johnson, Joyce Keller, Richard Zaker, Vice Chair Nikki Garry and Chair Derrick Thaxton, voted aye. Commissioners Watkins and Taylor 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)

**V. Unfinished Business**

A. Update on Acts of Kindness campaign

Commissioner Keller stated Donnette Beckett from the Herald and Review interviewed Mercedes Benz about the removal of the large tree on her property and the people who helped remove the tree. Commissioner Keller also stated she gave Ms. Beckett the Human Relations Commission's email address for individuals to submit acts of kindness. Commissioner Zaker thanked Commissioner Keller for all she has done to get the act of kindness program out to the public. He also thanked Ms. Rogers, Ms. Beasley and the City's IT support person in setting up the email address. Commissioner Zaker suggested putting the email address on the Commissions and City's Facebook page, as well as on Channel 18 which is the government channel. Ms. Rogers gave the Commission the email address [humanrelationscommission@decaturil.gov](mailto:humanrelationscommission@decaturil.gov). Discussion followed regarding posting acts of kindness anonymously. It was decided to reach out to the nominees to let them know about the nomination but let the person who nominated them remain anonymous if they wish to be anonymous.

B. Discussion on speaker from Decatur Landlord's Association

Chair Thaxton reported he has continued to try to reach someone and has not gotten a response back. He said we can close this item.

C. Discussion on MLK 2022

Chair Thaxton asked the Commission if we should continue with the planning of the MLK events or if they should be canceled due to the rising Covid-19 cases. Commissioner Hansbro suggested doing the women's panel virtually. Commissioner Taylor suggested that if the banquet is canceled, we should do something virtually with a speaker. Some parts of the program can be filmed a head of time. Vice Chair Garry asked if the banquet is held virtually, will tickets be sold to help pay for the cost of the speaker or will the Commission try to get sponsorships to help with the cost. Commissioner Hansbro stated the Commission can ask people to help sponsor as we plan. The cost is not only for the speaker, but it is also for the scholarship and gift cards for the essay, poetry and drawing contest. Discussion followed. It was decided to hold the MLK events virtually. Ms. Rogers asked if the Commission will still have the Freedom March. Chair Thaxton stated although the March is outside, people gather in the church afterwards. He advised we continue to plan for the March but have a back-up plan in place. Chair Thaxton asked Commissioners Hansbro and Taylor to be on the ad hoc committee to come up with ideas regarding the MLK events.

D. Theme for 2022 MLK

Ms. Rogers stated at the last meeting Commissioner Hansbro suggested the theme "Honoring the Women of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Movement."

Commissioner Keller suggested "The Women Behind the Man - Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." Commissioner Watkins suggested, "A Tribute to the Women in the Honoring of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." Discussion followed. Chair Thaxton stated if there are any more suggestions for a theme to submit them to Ms. Rogers or Ms. Beasley by Friday, September 10. The theme will be voted on at the September meeting.

E. Discussion on helping to bring Bryan Stevenson to Decatur

Commissioner Zaker said there is a group in Decatur that is trying to bring Bryan Stevenson to Decatur to speak. Mr. Stevenson is an American lawyer, social justice activist and founder/executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative. Commissioner Zaker suggested the Commission be involved in bringing Mr. Stevenson to Decatur.

**VI. New Business**

A. There was none.

**VII. Other Business**

A. Appreciation from the African-American Cultural & Genealogical Society

Ms. Rogers stated she received a plaque from the African-American Cultural & Genealogical Society with the Human Relations name on it and a letter thanking the Commission for participating in the Juneteenth program. The plaque will be placed on the wall in the Human Relations Office in the Human Resources Department. She will email a picture of the plaque to the Commissioners.

B. Commission vacancy

Mrs. Rogers reported that Commissioner Hunt has resigned from the Human Relations Commission because she has joined the Decatur Public Library Board which meets the same time as this 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 4:55 p.m.