

# Topeka Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes  
February 2, 2015

Commissioners met on February 5, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. for the January monthly meeting  
Holliday Building – Conference Room  
620 SE Madison Street  
Topeka, KS 66603

To request an ADA accommodation, please contact 368-3606 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. no later than 3 working days in advance of this meeting.

## **Mission Statement:**

*The mission of the Human Relations Commission is to conduct outreach and educational activities that promote justice and cultural understanding, and improve relationships among all citizens of the City of Topeka.*

Commissioners present:

Ms. Lorean Williams  
Ms. Margo Rangel  
Ms. Amy Cohen  
Ms. Stephanie Mott  
Mr. Mike Padilla  
Mr. Anthony Fadale  
Mr. Bill Beachy  
Ms. Darcella Goodman  
Ms. Joyce Grigsby

Commissioners absent:

- I. Call to order – Commissioner**  
Noting a quorum, Lorean Williams, Chair, called the meeting at order at 5:30 p.m.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a Moment of Silence**
- III. Approval of Agenda**  
Bill made a motion to adopt the agenda and Mike seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.
- IV. Approval of Minutes**  
Minutes from January meeting were presented. Mike made a motion to adopt the minutes as amended; Margo seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

## V. Staff Report

Shawn was unable to attend the meeting tonight and she has not been told who her replacement will be at this time. Thanked Shawn for getting a recorder for the meeting.

## VI. Committee Reports

- *Prejudice & Poverty Committee Update*

Stephanie has commitments from Precious and Marsha to facilitate another session. She has sent emails inviting Councilmembers Hiller and Harmon based on the makeup of the group she plans to have. She has tentative yes from Councilmember Hiller. She has not heard back from Councilmember Harmon and may need to identify another council representative to attend. She has sent out other emails to other individuals in the community but have not heard back. She did note that the other fellow Commissioners plan to attend as well, but need confirmation.

She does not recommend more than 10 people participate in the program – that would be the maximum.

- *Troy Scroggins Award Committee Update*

The next recognition is approximately June for an individual who can be either an adult or youth. The committee should set a date for applications to be due to them for review prior to coming before the entire Commission.

Need to make sure the information is on the website and ask a Commissioner to work on a PSA getting out the information for nominations. It helps the Commission to be more visible. The Commission would like to work with the next Communications Director to help get their message out.

Stephanie said that 580 radio has a show and could reach out to see if the committee could be a guest on the show. They will see what they can do and what is available for radio or television. Anthony volunteered to be the person talking for the committee. He will work with Joyce and Amy.

- *Town Hall Committee Meeting Update*

Margo reported that is talking with Mark Stock for potential dates of February 26/27 for a meeting. Mike talked with Joan Wagon and she is out of town until the following week so she would not be available. The conference room is available but has not heard anything back from Mark. If Mark cannot do anything on those dates, may have to look for another location – including the public library or CRC locations which may help attendance.

Lorean suggested that this committee could also conduct a PSA to help get the message out to the community.

## **VII. Old Business**

### **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Nominations from the floor for Chair –

- Margo nominates Amy – she declined
- Lorean nominates Bill – he declined
- Darcella nominates Mike – he declined
- Stephanie Mott nominated
- Darcella nominates Anthony – he declined
- Darcella nominates Joyce – she declined

Bill moved; Anthony seconded to accept the unanimous ballot for Stephanie Mott as Chair. Motion carried. Congratulations Stephanie.

Nominations for Vice Chair –

- Bill nominates Lorean – she declined
- Amy Cohen nominated

Anthony moved; Mike seconded to accept the unanimous ballot for Amy Cohen as the Vice Chair. Motion carried. Congratulations Amy.

### **Annual Report**

Margo reminded each commissioner review their information. Commissioners reviewed their information. Commissioners discussed on the recommendation at the end of the report on what to include or not. They can discuss what the Commission would like to address over this coming year and get the changes to Shawn by tomorrow.

Anthony made a motion to adopt language so that it complies with Code Section 2.55.040 (a); Darcella seconded. Bill inquired about the specific language. The language should state: to support efforts to eliminate prejudice because of race, religion, creed, color, sex, disability, national origin or ancestry, age, sexual orientation or gender identity and further goodwill among all people of the city and promote goodwill, cooperation and conciliation within the city. Motion carried.

**Marketing Initiatives** – with Suzie leaving the City the item will be deferred until a new director is hired.

**Ban the Box** – Stephanie talked about the website she distributed about other cities information and map showing the states that have the statewide ban the box. It is not up-to-date and some information about the barriers and ordinance from Kansas City Wyandotte. Studies show that once the taking the box off the application form from the city but not ready to discuss with the city. It would allow people to have a better shot of getting employment when trying to get back on their feet after serving their time. She

doesn't know what the final product will look like. She would like to invite the city manager and the human resources department for further discussion.

The Commissioners agreed that they would like to proceed with the discussion with the city officials and what their preference and how to proceed. The website provides information on how to start a campaign.

Mike thinks it is a good program for further discussion. He would be interested in talking with strong employers in the city and see what their opinion. From law enforcement it is a positive idea.

Safe streets has had ongoing discussion with Valeo and the Shawnee County Jail on Breaking the Cycle it was geared to help individuals upon prison release to get training, medicine and have an opportunity, but it never got off the ground. Mike talked about individuals being challenged with not getting help so they go back to doing what they need to do to survive.

Personal discussion between the interviewer and the applicant will be better than just making assumptions from checking the box.

**Community Letter** - Amy - has 8-10 responses from the community letter wanting to participate. She would like to discuss a way to follow up with the individuals. There were 30 letters sent. Stephanie recommended sending a follow up letter reminding them to respond and that a meeting will be scheduled at a future time.

**HCCI** - Lorean talked with Elias Garcia about partnering with HCCI in April with Fair Housing Month. If the Commission wants to participate we need to let him know. They are planning on doing something in Topeka and Wichita and possible other places. Topeka would be in the evening and she didn't have a specific date. She will call him and let him know that the Commission is interested in participating but would like to know the expectations of the Commission. Margo wants to make sure that know exactly what is expected. She will help but not participate. She has a conflict of interest.

#### **VIII. New Business**

None.

#### **IX. Public Comments**

None.

#### **X. Commissioner remarks**

**Anthony** - attended the state Martin Luther King event.

**Joyce** - thanksgiving and Christmas nice, but she has been sick and got to attend the Living the Dream event and it was nice. It is a good event.

**Mike** – thanks for everyone making the effort to attend tonight and thanks for Stephanie and Amy for taking leadership roles.

**Lorean** –Living the Dream banquet was beautiful and seeing the youngest marcher when she was 8 to hear her story was absolutely excellent and to see actual people not only stood by him but sat on his lap and talked with him. She marched. That was a lot more than we can say in our life time. It gave you a sense of what you should be doing now. It gave you a new hope. Congratulations to you two and we will help you to make it a successful year and to help others that don't have a voice or know where to go.

**Margo** – congrats to Stephanie and Amy.

**Bill** – thank you to Stephanie and Amy for their leadership. He has been out of circulation with the death of his dad. He is back. Thanks to the group for the cards and individual comments.

**Darcella** – congrats to Stephanie and Amy. There are many issues on the table and she is looking forward to the year.

**Amy** – attended the Living the Dream banquet and it was very powerful and moving. She also attended the continued celebration at St. John and hearing Lorean in the choir. Topeka Pride is having a public planning meeting on March 8 at Serendipity 12-4pm. Everyone is available to attend. Thanks to everyone for their support and congratulations to Stephanie. She started a new job at Midland Hospice.

**Stephanie** – thank you to Lorean and Margo for their leadership it is much appreciated. They will look to them for guidance and experience, wisdom and knowledge of the Commission. She is excited for the Commission and the City of Topeka and believes we are becoming the most remarkable city and as a group helping it become even more amazing. She can step up now because she is resigning from the County on March 12. She has been active with advocacy, employment and school and thought that one of them had to go. She believes she can do this now and can give more of her time to HRC and appreciates the support.

## **XI. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned.

The next meeting will be March 2, 2015 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Shawn Maisberger.