

Topeka Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

August 3, 2015

Commissioners met on August 3, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. for the August 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. Amy Cohen
Ms. Joyce Grigsby
Ms. Stephanie Mott
Ms. Darcella Goodman
Mr. Bill Beachy
Mr. Anthony Fadale
Ms. Crystal Irwin

Commissioners absent:

Mr. Mike Padilla

I. Call to order – Commissioner

Noting a quorum, Commissioner Mott, Chair, called the meeting at order at 5:35 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a Moment of Silence

III. Approval of Agenda

Lorean made a motion to adopt the agenda and Amy seconded. No Discussion.
Motion carried.

Commissioner Mott welcomed new Commissioner Crystal Irwin. The Commission and staff extended salutations.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Corrections –

- Commissioner Williams would like to strike the following verbiage in the Commissioners remarks section: *“monitory basis update will be helpful,”* located on page 3.
- Page 3 – City of Topeka Non-Discrimination Ordinance section the sentence should read as follows – *“Keep on agenda how the HRC feels about amendment to include sexual orientation and gender identity. HRC is open to the discussion.”*
- Page 3 - City Housing Survey sentence to read as follows – *“Questions on discrimination didn’t include discrimination and sexual orientation and gender identity.”*

Commissioner Fadale motioned to approve the minutes as amended. Commissioner Cohen seconded. Motion carried.

V. Staff Report

Monique went over the following items with the HRC staff

- In response to the recent increase in violence in the Hi-Crest West neighborhood. The Department of Neighborhood Relations and Topeka Police Department created a new approach to building a stronger neighborhood, “Friday Family Fun Night.” The kick-off event will be held on Friday, August 21st; 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. located at Avondale East NetReach Center. I would like to extend an invitation for Commissioners to volunteer at the event.
- Name badges - Monique will inquire on options and cost for obtaining badges for the Commissioners to wear during community events, trainings, etc.

Director Sasha Stiles made a presentation on the Department of Neighborhood Relations programs, staff responsibilities and provided an organization chart. In addition, she informed the Commission that the City Manager approved the proposed \$2,500 budget. If approved, it will be included as a line item in the Division of Community Engagement’s budget. The HRC budget is earmarked for the August 11th final budget approval.

- Commissioner Grigsby wanted to know when Sumner School would be demolished. Director Stiles informed the Commission that the Ward Meade NIA has worked vigorously to collaborate with the owner of the property and has not had a lot of traction. The next step is for the violations to be turned into Municipal Court for the abatement issues. The Department of Neighborhood Relations will track the process.

- Commissioner Cohen inquired on issues (mold, violence, etc) at 635 SW Harrison – St. Gregory Suites. The Commissioners were informed that tenants must call Property Maintenance and invite them into the unit for an inspection of a potential violation. The City does not have the authority to demand entrance into a property. Commissioner Cohen believes that tenants must know their rights and would like to have a Tenant Rights Training/Awareness/Fair. HRC would be willing to sponsor the event. In addition, she is concerned about tenants having breathing problems due to potential mold in the building. Director Stiles will call the Shawnee County Health Department to discuss the potential mold issues.
- Commissioner Fadale had concerns from an ADA perspective. Is the building ADA compliant under the Title 3 settlement for public accommodation which covers accessible features and the maintenance of accessible devices? Director Stiles will inquire with the Division of Property Maintenance and Code and the Fire Marshal. In addition, Commissioner Fadale will forward the policy manual link for reference purposes.
- Commissioner Grigsby indicated that in the past Property Maintenance & Code would receive a complaint and take immediate action. Why isn't the City doing a better job? Director Stiles shared with the Commission that in 2010 the Division was taken from twelve (12) inspectors to eight (8). Currently, each inspector is responsible for 15,000 lots each and can only be reactionary until more staff is acquired.
- Director Stiles will come back to the next meeting with a report on the following:
 - ✓ Mold
 - ✓ ADA Compliance
 - ✓ Budget line item status
- The Department of Neighborhood Relations will include the Human Rights Commission in future survey verbiage prior to distribution.
- Commissioner Goodman inquired on the DNR funding for Emergency services. Director Stiles explained that it is three-fold. Money is distributed to local Social Service Agencies who assist constituents in need of rental assistance. And, the Shelter Plus Care program provides rental assistance to constituents with chronic persistent mental health and severe substance abuse issues. The department administers the program and the participants must be active in a case management program by an approved provider. Lastly, there is an Emergency Repair Program and Continuum of Care program that she would like Division Director Corrie Wright to present to the Commission. Director Wright will be scheduled for a future presentation.

VI. Committee Reports

- ***Prejudice & Poverty Committee Update***
 - **Social Justice Education Training**
Precious and Marcia (*Student Involvement Program at Kansas University*) would like to start over again and allow additional attendees to participate. The training consists of two (2) four (4) hour sessions for eight (8) - ten (10) participants. The training covers equity, prejudice and privilege. Commissioner Mott will work on future training dates.

- **Multi-Agency Meeting**
The meeting evolved under the Human Relations Commission and moved to the discussion of marginalized and oppressed populations. It provides an avenue for organizations to support each other's services with the purpose of omitting competitiveness. Agencies are encouraged to get involved in social justice issues. There is a need for an independent voice excluding the need to jump through hoops and red tape. The next meeting is August 11, 5:30 p.m. at the Shawnee County Health Department
- **Troy Scroggins Award Committee Update**
Dr. Sullivan's presentation went well. She had family in town that was able to attend the council meeting. The next nomination process begins on August 2nd.
- **Town Hall Committee Meeting Update**
The "Get Out to Vote" Town Hall was very informative. The next Town Hall meeting will be "What Is *Ban the Box*." The discussion will be targeted for employers to provide employees with a record the opportunity to work. Commissioner Williams will provide detailed information to Monique for a infographic to be produced for distribution. Please provide names of businesses to Commissioner Williams so she can send an invitation letter.

Chair Mott informed the Commission that the meeting had officially ended due to the time. Commissioner Beachy made a motion to extend the meeting for fifteen minutes. Commissioner Goodwin seconded. Motion carried.

VII. Old Business

- **PSA's and Other Promotional Activities**
The Commission would like to do a video for the Troy Scroggins Award Initiative. The video would include an interview of the family. Monique will inquire with the City Manager's office for clarification of City 4 assistance to be provided for this project and the distribution of future fliers and other promotional materials.
- **Budget**
The proposed \$2,500.00 budget will be voted on at the August 11th City Council final budget meeting.
- **City of Topeka Non-Discrimination Ordinance**
This item needs to be kept on the agenda to show how HRC feels about the amendment including sexual orientation and gender identity. The Commission is open to the conversation. The City of Topeka does not have a stance on the issue.
 - ✓ Commissioner Williams inquired if this could be done annually.
 - ✓ Chair Mott inquired if the Commission as a body wanted to make the recommendation. This provides a distinction for employees and residents of Topeka to be protected.

VIII. **New Business**

- **Commissioner Appointments**

Commissioners Fadale and Commissioner Padilla's terms will end on August 31, 2015. Mayor Wolgast will send out an announcement on the vacancies. Currently, Commissioner Fadale is unsure of his status of his application.

IX. **Public Comments**

None.

X. **Commissioner remarks**

Commissioner Goodman – No remarks.

Commissioner Beachy – Extended a welcome to Commissioner Irwin.

Commissioner Williams– On Wednesday, August 5th she will participate in taking pictures that will be utilized for the promotion of Chief Brown's Advisory Council.

Commissioner Grigsby- In July she attended the commencement of U. S. Marshal Ron Miller. It was a nice ceremony.

Commissioner Cohen – Extended a welcome to Commissioner Irwin. Please mark your calendars for September 21st – September 27th to attend the activities of Topeka Pride Extravaganza. You can visit www.topekapride.org to obtain a list of the events. She hopes to see everyone there. In addition, on August 11th the Attorney General's Office will host a Civil Rights Symposium, 9:00 – 4:00 p.m. at Brown vs. Board of Education.

Commissioner Irwin – Do Commissioners attend NCLR or NAACP trainings? She attended K.C. Diversity/Multi-Cultural trainings in Kansas City. They are inclusive of different races/ethnicities and provide fun facts and events. She would be interested in having the same opportunities in the City of Topeka. Does the City of Topeka have a Diversity Committee?

Chair Mott – She was appointed to Chief Brown's Advisory Council. The Commissioner is forging ahead on transgender work and will speak in Hutchinson on Sunday, August 9th and Columbus, MO, on August 29th. Upcoming speeches are scheduled for Little Rock, AK and Springfield, MO.

XI. **Adjournment**

Motion made by Commissioner Goodwin to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Williams seconded. Motion carried.

The next meeting will be September 8, 2015 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Monique Glaude'.