

Topeka Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes
November 2nd, 2015

Commissioners met on November 2, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. for the November monthly meeting
Dale Cushinberry – 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
Mr. Bill Beachy
Ms. Crystal Irwin

Commissioners absent:

Ms. Darcella Goodman

I. Call to order – Commissioner

Noting a quorum, Stephanie Mott, Chair, called the meeting at order at 5:30 p.m.

A. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a Moment of Silence

B. Amendment to the Agenda

Amy made a motion that would afford her the opportunity to make an announcement and Bill seconded.

C. Approval of Agenda

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

D. Approval of Minutes

Lorean made a motion to correct page 3 under New Business to read “The entire Commission would like to do it and not just Stephanie.” Amy seconded.
Motion carried.

II. Staff Report

Troy Scroggins Award

Commissioner Cohen has attempted to reach individuals provided by the family and has had a difficult time making contact.

The current nomination is for an organization. As of today there are no nominations. The deadline date will be changed until November 30th, 2015.

The Award presentation will be scheduled for the Tuesday, December 15th City Council meeting. Monique will contact the Mayor's office and request a placeholder on the agenda.

Commissioner Mott empowers Commissioner Cohen to move forward to make it happen.

Monique informed the Commission she will extend an invitation to an upcoming meeting. The City of Topeka Division of Community Engagement and the Topeka Police Department Community Policing Unit will meet with the grassroots Latino leadership group to discuss strategies to build a stronger relationship.

Commissioner Williams attended a two day conference discussing racial profiling. Attendees included the Topeka Police Department, Shawnee County Sheriff's Department, KBI, HRC representatives, citizens and other law enforcement from surrounding cities. The conference was facilitated by an African American Professor from KU. The topic of discussion was the Ferguson, MO issue. There was emphasis on what was learned from this tragedy.

She is unsure how participants were chosen. Commissioner Williams will email documents obtained from the conference.

III. Committee Reports

A. Prejudice & Poverty Committee Update

i. Social Justice Education Training

Precious and Crystal are still interested in providing the training. Commissioner Cohen is interested in participating and shared that Commissioner Goodman has expressed interest as well. Please contact Commissioner Mott if you are interested in attending. Stephanie will get dates and provide them to everyone.

ii. Multi Agency Meeting

Commissioner Cohen hasn't heard anything further on a future meeting date. If she doesn't receive a response from the Health Department regarding utilizing the facility she will seek a new location. She will send an email to the participants and make a determination on how to move forward and discuss it at the December meeting.

Commissioner Mott encouraged Commissioner Cohen to make a request of the Committee for assistance if she feels it's needed. Commissioner Beachy asked that Amy send minutes to commissioners.

B. *Troy Scroggins Award Committee Update*

Monique will request a placeholder for the Tuesday, December 15th City Council meeting.

C. *Town Hall Committee Meeting Update*

Commissioner Williams is aiming for Wednesday, March 16th, 6:00PM. She is working with Lazone Grays to identify on identifying businesses that will hire felons. It is imperative to provide an understanding on what “Ban the Box” means. Additional emphasis needs to be provided that President Obama initiated the Federal Ban the Box only. She wants to ensure that the targeted audience is made aware of the opportunity. This information is important to all persons being released from prison seeking employment.

Please provide any business names you have to Commissioner Williams ASAP. Commissioner Beachy will forward African American business names to her.

In addition, Mr. Grays will converse with attendees about the option of expunging their criminal record.

IV. Old Business

A. *PSA's and Other Promotional Activities*

Commissioner Mott would like to discuss the HRC brochure at the December meeting. Commissioner Williams would like to know if there could be a Ban the Box PSA. Monique will have to check with City 4 to see if this is an option.

B. **Budget**

This discussion will be tabled until the next HRC meeting. Please bring information or ideas pertaining to any line items that will to be included in the 2016 budget. There will be an in-depth discussion at the December meeting.

C. **City of Topeka Non-Discrimination Ordinance**

This discussion will be tabled until the next HRC meeting.

V. New Business

A. Annual Report

The report is due in February. Please provide all of activities, trainings and any other pertinent to Commissioner Mott so she can begin the process.

B. Amy's Announcement

Commissioner Cohen wrote a "thank you" letter informing the Commissioners that she will be moving to Lawrence and the December meeting will be her last. She extended her appreciation to the Commissioners for allowing her the opportunity to sit side by side while trying to make Topeka a better place. She will still be working in Topeka.

Commissioner Mott is excited about Commissioner Cohen efforts while working with the Human Relations Commission. She appreciates the amazingness she brought to her work with HRC.

The Commission would like to know the process to have the City Ordinance amended that requires Commissioners to reside in the City limits. Monique will inquire and upon receipt will provide the Commission with a response.

VI. Public Comments

Brett Kell, Eligibility Specialist with the Department of Children & Families. His position consist of various activities. One important component is the opportunity for him to work with the Department of Corrections in Lansing to assist offenders in trying to find gainful employment once released. It's easier for offenders to find a job in Kansas City, KS versus Topeka.

Mr. Kell was a previous recipient of DCE and understands the issues at hand. He understands the vital importance for persons released from prison to succeed.

The current Secretary of Kansas DCF is trying to change the system to remove the personal opinions of people of potentially clouding the vision of doing what is right.

Please contact Mr. Kell via Facebook or 785-640-2580.

In addition, Mr. Kell will provide the NAACP's business listing to be utilized at the future Town Hall meeting.

VII. **Commissioner Remarks**

Commissioner Joyce Grisby- She is appreciative of all the work done by Commissioner Cohen. Additionally, she attended the two day law enforcement conference on racial profile along with Commissioner Williams and felt it was very informative. Commissioner Grisby will be out of town for both Christmas and New Year's.

Commissioner Crystal Irwin - What does HRC do for promotion of diversity in the community? How does the Commission help the community? Is it possible for the Commission to tie in the promotion of the underserved community? How about creating a PSA /Infographic that talks about programming.

Commissioner Mott requested that Commissioner Irwin create a plan on how to promote HRC.

Commissioner Lorean Williams – She feels it is imperative that all efforts are used to let people know about HRC is vital. Can there be a Topeka in Two created for HRC? She stresses for Commissioners to pass out business cards. It is vital to get out into the community and make a difference. Commissioner Williams expressed her appreciation to Commissioner Cohen's efforts and being a part of HRC.

Commissioner Bill Beachy – Commissioner Mott's Ted Talk speech is on December 8th at the Topeka Civic Theatre & Academy. In honor of good things to lift the spirits "Let's Go Royals."

Commissioner Amy Cohen – She will attend the December meeting. And, she'll continue to work on getting the PSA for the Troy Scroggins Award.

Commissioner Stephanie Mott – We're doing good things. She can see in the near future that HRC will be well known. Getting information out about HRC to the constituents of Topeka is critical.

VIII. **Adjournment**

Motion made by Bill to adjourn the meeting. Lorean seconded. Motion carried.

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

Respectfully submitted by Monique Glaude'.