

Topeka Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

July 1, 2013

Commissioners met on July 1, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. for the July 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 by phone
Ms. Margo Rangel
Ms. Joyce Grigsby
Ms. Stephanie Mott
Mr. Anthony Fadale by phone

Commissioners absent: Ms. Renee Wiggins
Ms. Darcella Goodman
Ms. Joyce Rorie
Mr. Bill Beachy

City Present: Ms. Shawn Maisberger

I. Call to order – Commissioner

Noting a quorum, Margo Rangel, Vice Chair, called the meeting at order at 5:30 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a Moment of Silence

III. Adoption of Agenda

Anthony made a motion to adopt the agenda; Joyce G. seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Anthony made a motion to adopt the February 4 minutes; Joyce G. seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

V. Staff Report

- Shawn reported that she is working on the HRC website. Since the City revamped the site the usual site is hard to find and needs updated information. Margo recommended putting on additional links from the HUD site.

- Shawn notified the Commission that the proposed City Manager’s budget is online for review.

VI. Old Business

- *Town Hall Committee Meeting Update*
 - Margo talked with Nancy Johnson and she offered her new location at Avondale East and they would like to partner with the Commission on the next Town Hall Meeting.
 - Nancy does not have any conflicting programs. However, need to check with HUD official and THA John Johnston on the program and find out the restrictions on public housing for individuals with criminal history and what their options and resources are.
 - Question was raised what is the focus on the program? More criminal resources or general public.
 - Lorean inquired about the needs in the neighborhood area in order to get the neighbors attending.
 - Anthony stated he believes it is an important subject. The financial situation may contribute to the requirements of public housing “Housing Barriers” such as home bankruptcies, etc. – it is an opportunity for a broader market of participants.
 - Stephanie stated that if the focus on public housing to keep it broad – if focus is on recidivism then to include education, mental health, jobs, prescription. She suggested talking to Nancy to see what she thinks and then let the Commission know the outcome.
 - Margo will work with Nancy to set a date.
- *Troy Scroggins Award Committee Update*
 - No report. The committee has not met.
 - Shawn to get information to the new commissioners.
- *Prejudice & Poverty Committee Update*
 - The committee has not met.
 - Stephanie has been unable to schedule a meeting and had hoped to set a date at tonight’s meeting.
 - She plans to meet with organizational representatives such as NAACP, Nancy Johnson, Rescue Mission to find out their feeling and thoughts about the statistics and poverty.
 - Work to explore the disparity between prejudice and poverty and put together some evidence on poverty and the statistics. Then the committee and commission can move forward depending on the results.
 - The focus will be on Topeka and Shawnee County – locally in order to see change and make an impact on the community.
 - Margo inquired about the area that the committee will focus on and what will the committee do with the information. Stephanie stated that the committee will bring results to the Commission and then seek recommendations on how to proceed with the plan of action which may include surveys, message on city water bills, website, etc.

VII. New Business

- Media Plan
 - Shawn will invite Suzie Gilbert the City's Communication & Marketing Director to attend the next meeting to discuss the city's policy.
 - Stephanie has reformatted the Topeka HRC Facebook site. There are 34 likes. She thanked Suzie for her assistance and guidance on the site.
 - Shawn stated that Suzie does review the entire City's social media for content and review of information.

- Elections
 - Margo brought up that she would like to see a secretary position added to the officers. This person would serve as back up to Shawn in case she would leave early or be absent from a meeting. This person would take minutes for the Commission.
 - This position would also be in charge of sending cards out such as sympathy cards from the Commission. Having them on hand.
 - She believes it is important to identify someone for the year to fill and do some of the other items.
 - Stephanie agreed it was a good idea.
 - 2014 officers – it was decided that the Commission would decide at the September meeting on the plan to fill the 2014 officers by the end of the year.

- Call-in Attendance
 - Lorean suggested that the Commission not allow call-in attendance because it is difficult to hear and follow along with the agenda. It is important that Commissioners attend the meetings.
 - Anthony stated it is difficult for him due to his transportation arrangements and his schedule. Lorean agreed that it is difficult but must have to find a way to work it out.
 - Lorean asked that Catherine in the legal department provide another opinion on call-in attendance.
 - It was suggested that the by-laws be review and make sure Commission is in accordance with the laws.
 - Ultimately it is necessary to be present because of the Commission success and good things happen when Commissioners attend and are active.
 - Shawn will follow-up with Renee.

VIII. Public Comments

- None.

IX. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Fadale – he stated that he would like to be reappointed to the Commission. He will send an email on his request to be forwarded to the Mayor's office.

July 2015 it is the 23rd Anniversary of ADA and August 9th is the Civil Rights Symposium hosted by the US Attorney – nothing has been released yet but assumes that it will be held at Johnson County Community College from 9-4pm again.

Commissioner Williams –She appreciates everything everyone does for the Commission. To continue doing what you can even if it is outreach and education to make a difference in someone's life. To do the best with what you can and give so much of your time and talents helping others. Thanks to Margo and Shawn for your passion and work. She hopes the Commission can restore the passion and continue to work together.

Commissioner Grigsby –She appreciates everyone and being on the Commission. She may slack on items because she recently was appointed the President of the Topeka NAACP and she will have a full plate with that responsibility. She has back up and needs help from everyone in the city and may call on others for resources.

Commissioner Mott – City Council's Policy & Finance Committee is meeting on Wednesday, July 8th at Noon on the proposed changes to city code. Chad Manspeaker is the chair and she plans to attend. Chad sent out a press release on the item. She believes this is a first step and as State Chair for KEC she plans to run a state domestic partnership and equal employment initiatives. She would like to see the department reestablished but modeled after Lawrence's HRC which will include open public discussion and quasi-judicial process. She wanted everyone to know her agenda and offer full disclosure and realizes that the Commission may or may not support all of them. She wants an anti-discrimination ordinance and the council is more receptive to the language changes. Shawn offered to invite Jacque Russell the City Human Resources Director to a future meeting because the City has taken initiatives that other may not be aware of. She will be testifying at the committee meeting.

Commissioner Rangel – the city of Lawrence has a domestic partner registry that she shared and hoped the city would consider something similar. She will contact Nancy Johnson and see what ideas they come up. She thinks the Commission will be revitalized and appreciates everyone and has been calling Shawn once a week to check in.

X. Adjournment

Commission meeting adjourned.

The next meeting will be August 5, 2013 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Shawn Maisberger.