

# Topeka Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2014

Commissioners met on March 10, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. for the March 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  
Mr. Bill Beachy  
Mr. Mike Padilla  
Ms. Stephanie Mott  
Mr. Anthony Fadale

Commissioners absent: Ms. Jean Darbyshire  
Ms. Joyce Grigsby

Guest: Councilmember Chad Manspeaker  
Jay Oyler, Director of Contracts & Procurement  
Ally – Topeka Capital Journal  
Bill Lucero, Activist  
Liatrix Studer

City Present: Ms. Shawn Maisberger

## **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. Presentation**

Jay Oyler director of Contracts and Procurement presented to the Commission about the City's bidding process. He discussed the types of projects, materials, etc that the City must put out for bid along with how vendors can sign up to bid on project. He walked through their website and showed some of the features. He also stated that his office is always willing to sit down and help them register and show them how to use the site.

Commissioners appreciated the feedback and information Mr. Oyler provided. He mentioned that his office will be hosting a vendor fair mid-late summer and will make sure the Commissioners are informed to help get the word out.

#### **IV. Approval of Agenda**

Requested that discussion for Fair Housing Month be added to New Business B and the Post Office be added as item C. Bill made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended; Stephanie seconded. No discussion. Motion carried

#### **V. Approval of Minutes**

Stephanie noted her remarks needed cleaned up from the notes from the meeting. Stephanie made a motion to adopt the minutes as amended; Mike seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

#### **VI. Staff Report**

- Shawn reported that she received a resignation notification from Jean Darbyshire. If commissioner's knew of individuals that were interested in applying for the position to contact a councilmember to be submitted to the Mayor's office.
- Councilmember Manspeaker offered that people could contact him and he would be willing to make the nomination to the Mayor's office.
- Both Bill and Margo commented on the process and liked the new process that the Mayor's office has implemented.

#### **VII. Committee Reports**

- *Town Hall Committee Meeting Update*
  - Margo inquired as to whether Stephanie's committee of P&P would be interested in facilitating a Town Hall Meeting. The committee is interested.
  - The Poverty conference in Salina was wonderful and there is interest in doing something similar in Topeka and could be a future THM. It was a mock of life during a 4-hour workshop that you were given so much money and had to pay for expenses such as food, utilities, etc, and when you only have a designated amount what choice you have to make on what to pay or not to pay for that month or week.
  - Mike inquired about the attendees and their experiences.
  - Stephanie will get Margo the contact information so that she can follow up on the specifics in regard to their target market and attendees. It was mentioned that this THM could be partnered with CRC, Rescue Mission and other agencies.
- *Troy Scroggins Award Committee Update*
  - Stephanie said that they are currently seeking nominations for the individual award. Requested that the website and a press release be issued for nominations.
  - Committee has some ideas but would like to get other nominations.
  - Shawn to confirm the month.

- *Prejudice & Poverty Committee Update*
  - Stephanie had met with Marsha Cooper at Washburn and Precious Poras with Kansas University in developing a workshop focusing on social justice, identities and privilege. The commission viewed a YouTube video presentation from Precious Poras on the proposed concept.
  - A proposed agenda was distributed and Stephanie discussed her vision of the project.
  - She proposed a pilot of the program first for 2 hours for 4 weeks that had a class of 8-10 people facilitated by Marsha and Precious. She would like HRC and councilmembers to be in the pilot workshop.
  - Stephanie hoped to conduct the workshop in April. She will bring the program outline to the Commission at April's meeting.
  - Shawn is check to see if she can present the proposed program to the City Council April 8.
  - Commissioners recommended getting the youth involved and maybe high school or Washburn students to participate. Mike agreed he would like to see the youth involved.
  - Stephanie will contact the facilitators and keep in touch with Margo about a potential future THM.
  - Councilmember Manspeaker commented that attendees could talk to the public at a roundtable discussion at a THM in several months following pilot program.

## **VIII. New Business**

### **A. Ordinance Endorsement**

Councilmember Manspeaker briefed the Commission on his proposed ordinance amendments of an equality package. The first one focuses to add gender minorities to the city's employment and hiring policy, second include partner health insurance benefits and third domestic partner registry.

He has heard some concerns about the partner registry and has asked the City's Legal department to explore the three options and make sure there are no legal concerns with the amendments prior to him bringing them forward.

There is a lot of support to add the additional rights and see this as a move in the right direction. Mr. Manspeaker requested that the Commission not seek any action to endorsement the ordinance without first seeing them. At this time is did not have the drafts to present until Legal has completed their review. It is his plan to bring it back to the Commission before moving forward and wants to make sure it is final and not having to revisit the matter again. He welcomes the Commissions feedback and once the Commission has the time to review and support the amendment he will then present them to Council.

Margo inquired as to other cities and what they are doing. Mr. Manspeaker said that the city of Lawrence has similar wording and is leading the way but will be fine-tuned for Topeka. He said Lawrence has the registry but it is not public. The city clerk is the official record keeper. He has the information from Lawrence but is

someone tried to find it on their site it is difficult to find. Stephanie can send out the information to the Commission.

Stephanie stated that people would not be required to register and employers already have forms. The registry would provide the confirmation of the relationship that it has value and is a long-lasting relationship. The documentation can assist with medical, property issues, etc.

The consensus of the Commission was to vocally endorse Mr. Manspeaker movement towards preparation of the documentation. Mr. Manspeaker stated that it sends a message that all employees are treated the same, not implying they are not but this ensures it.

Anthony made a motion to extend the meeting until the end of the agenda. Bill seconded. No discussion motion carried.

Mr. Manspeaker encouraged the Commission to continue to work in assisting with the opportunity for minority businesses to work with the City. The Chamber has funds to assist minority businesses. Supporting local business is important and need to continue to help where possible. The State Law had changed where we could not require contractors to pay minimum wage which had an effect on local jobs and funding. Any work HRC can work with him to support the community he is open to because low bid is not always the best. Since we can't address wages, we can provide some training to employees in order to make our workers more marketable.

He stated he appreciated HRC support and offered if there is anything he can do to help to let him know.

B. Fair Housing Month

Bill stated that he spoke with Cindy White of the City's Diversity Committee about partnering with HRC in hosting a Town Hall Meeting. They have Housing & Neighborhood Development staff Warren Woodruff to present on Affordable Housing. He did not have the date available.

Mike inquired as to what is the participation expected by HRC. Bill said he would contact Cindy for additional information and follow up. Margo stated that her experience is that Cindy does not follow up on suggestions or does not consider talking with the THM chair but only the HRC chair.

C. US Post Office

Anthony expressed his concern with recent announcement of the close of the US Post Office from downtown Topeka as it has symbolic history in relation to Brown v. Board. He would like the Commission sentiment to go on record. He understands that they will do what they need to as a business.

He would like to see an endorsement proposed in relation to the historic integrity elements to Brown v. Board. He has not talked with the staff at BvB to see what their thoughts are. Mike suggested getting an elected official to make such an endorsement. The Commissioners agreed that they should make a public statement that included the

protection of the historical location and present it to the local, state and federal representatives. Anthony agreed to put together language and send to Shawn for legal to review. Mike asked to see if the Mayor and HRC could sign the letter as endorsement to make it public. Move forward and ask other to join and not wait by to see what happens.

## **IX. Public Comments**

Ally with Topeka Capital Journal in attendance and plans to attend future meetings. Reporting on the items on the agenda.

Liatrix Studer – is a transgender living in Topeka for 60 years and retired employee of KDHE. She loves Topeka and wants it to be the best it can be. In support of Mr. Manspeakers initiative and she strong urges the Commission to support it when they get it.

## **X. Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Mott

- She is traveling to West Plain MO – named as a semi-finalist for a \$25,000 scholarship. She was accepted into the Master of Social Work program and invited in June to Pittsburgh, PA to speak.

Commissioner Goodman

- She enjoyed the meeting and having the councilmember talk about businesses and Chamber with his comments. She is impressed with the Chamber and know that there are other ways they could improve.

Commissioner Beachy

- He announced that the NAACP Program Common Core Education System speaker is Carolyn Campbell on March 22, 2014 at 1:00 pm at the BvB site. It is free. He agreed the meeting had good discussion and good relationship with the councilmember.

Commissioner Padilla

- Chamber use of funds should be used for more development. A presentation from the Chamber showed that their results are minimal. It was important that the councilmember attend tonight's meeting and it is important to acknowledge his attendance and thank them for spending time with HRC. In the future he would like to see the Commission move the councilmembers to the front of the agenda for consideration of their time. He stated that the Commission needs to keep an eye on the clock and make sure we move things along or otherwise people won't want to come because the meeting will last too long.

Commissioner Fadale

- Congratulations to Mike for retiring from the State of Kansas. David Bevens is serving as the new ADA Coordinator for the City. His number is 368-3801. They have been working together regarding snow.

Commissioner Rangel

- Wonderful meeting. She thanked those that attending for their staying since it went later than usual.

Commissioner Williams

- Always thank Shawn for what she does. Thank you to the public for being here and commenting. Remind it may be you tomorrow. The commission must speak loud and not to quit eliminating prejudice because it does exist and we must do what we can. Commission to stay focused and to stay on track and she looks forward to what the Commission has going on.

**XI. Adjournment**

Commission meeting adjourned.

The next meeting will be April 7, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Shawn Maisberger.