

# Topeka Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

June 2, 2014

Commissioners met on June 2, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. for the June 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  
Ms. Stephanie Mott  
Ms. Joyce Grigsby  
Ms. Darcella Goodman  
Mr. Mike Padilla

Commissioners absent: Mr. Anthony Fadale

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. Approval of Agenda**  
Stephanie made a motion to adopt the agenda; Joyce seconded. No discussion. Motion carried
- IV. Approval of Minutes**  
Noted amendments to minutes - on page 3 – name change from Sublet to Manspeaker; line 27, aware to are insert with after to do, page 5 (4th bullet) motion carried is deleted, page 6 top Stephanie made the motion and bill seconded, page 4 top change is to if; spell out names, move Anthony bullet after Bill on public comment. Bill made a motion to adopt the minutes as amended; Mike seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

## V. Staff Report

Lorean and Bill were reappointed to the Commission. Bill reported that at the council meeting that the minutes were not on the website. Stephanie noted that she verified the posting.

Congrats to Stephanie for her hard work with the council on the ordinances. She felt that it was successful since it was vetted through the commission and sufficient time was allotted and prepared.

## VI. Committee Reports

- *Prejudice & Poverty Committee Update*
  - Stephanie has contacted the participants and facilitators to confirm dates that they would be available. She is planning on the 6 participants as provided which include Joseph Williams - social work master student at WU, Farai Herald WU student. Finding a time is going to be difficult, but working to get a consensus on a date for at least the first meeting. Then to plan out future dates. Originally talked about 4 - 2hr sessions could be 2 - 4h sessions. She will step up the pressure for the group to provide.
  - Mike inquired about how soon. She would like to get it going ASAP. If there is one person who is locked into a time then he suggests locking in their dates and times. Hope to wrap it up in June.
  - Have not identified anyone from high school but the Washburn students are in their 20s. If anyone knows of someone from high school they could work them in to the group. Bill mentioned a counselor at Topeka High School about a group called the "STRAP" group that might be a good resource.
  - Mike recommended Maria Torrez-Anderson who works at Kansas Family Partnership - she would have access to student's right out of high school that might be interested in attended.
  - Bill wants to make sure it is diverse. Stephanie said that she believes that the group is.
  - Bill asked about the agenda and the use of social justice and how it is used. Stephanie would like to talk with the group and make some of those suggested and discuss the items.
  - Stephanie just needs to know when the panel group can meet. That will help finalize the date. Saturdays are best. Margo offered some dates that work for her.
  - Stephanie will check Public Library for room availability.
- *Troy Scroggins Award Committee Update*
  - Stephanie reported that they only had the one group nomination from Cindy White and she will contact her that the group is not going to be awarded until December.

- Earl Williams submitted Jeremy Beard as an individual award. The committee believes his involvement in the community makes him a positive candidate for the award especially with his work with the youth.
  - Stephanie said they are requesting Jeremy be awarded the Troy Scroggins award.
  - Shawn will check with the Mayor on the format of the presentation for the award. Shawn will order the plaque. If the committee can confirm his attendance on the 10th or 17th.
- *Town Hall Committee Meeting Update*
    - No report

## **VII. Old Business**

*None*

## **VIII. New Business**

*City Attorney's Office - Liaison*

- Stephanie - she thinks that we have taken steps forward for equality for citizens, but have a long wait; the waiting length for KHRC is 1,000.
- When HRC had investigating powers most of the complaints were handled quickly
- She would like to see the HRC have a liaison to do investigative process.
- She doesn't know what it would look like. Lawrence's model is more complicated than she knew.
- She would like to see the liaison from legal to help with the guidance and investigative powers. It is budget time and she spoke at the budget hearings and gave her input about the Legal liaison.
- Invite Catherine - discuss investigatory options to help people that are the most vulnerable. She doesn't know if the funding is there or will ever be. She would like to see the commission to develop a model could work.
- Margo - there is a loss of revenue - the city had HUD funding. Number of cases vs the money received, how much money for staff, 1 ED and 3 staff persons. Could you do with a director and no staff?
- Bill likes calling it something different so that they don't think it is the same model. He remembers handling about 20 cases. Topeka mediated most of their cases.
- Margo - how much money was allocated by HUD to the HRC? They would like to work with staff to see what options are to move forward.
- Bill thought that Ruth Glover from the State HRC could be a resource.
- Stephanie - need to build a broad spectrum of support - Bill supports discussing it internally to build a plan. See what is possible - get the facts - Margo said it about timing and atmosphere.

- Mike questioned who is on the council now that voted to dissolve. Talk to them about establishing. Talk to them about getting a foot in the door and discuss options - get a unified suggestion to the council - adjust and then re-approach the discussion. The public outcry would be helpful, but more effective to show the leaders that we have thought this through and show constituents that you've heard you - we are going to respond to your desire. Commission must really represent as a unified group asking and not demanding.
- Stephanie needs to look at the HUD funding and may not make it this budget cycle.
- There is some history - so you don't step on the land mines and consider the statements and be ready for the counter discussion.
- Stephanie - the previous city manager wanted to cut the department.
- Lorean - asked Mike to take the lead. He said he can knock on a few doors. He recommends talking to Catherine first and sees what her ideas and thoughts are on the subject.
- Could meet in executive session to discuss with Catherine for non-personnel issues. To discuss options available.
- Mike would receive comments /suggestions/ within 2 weeks and he will share with Shawn so that the meeting with Catherine will have an end. He can then clarify questions/responses, etc. before the next meeting. It is important that all commissioners are on the same page when talking with Catherine as a body. Including any changes that need to be made as a group.
- Margo is being fueled by the conversation.
- Topeka's against discrimination - rallied in front of the Brown v Board building. Need to study it and come up with a plan that is drastically different. Look for funding, etc. Might not make the 2015 budget cycle but could be planned for 2016.
- Lorean reminded commissioners to follow up - and send it to Mike only. There is no need to send it to everyone.

## **IX. Public Comments**

None.

## **X. Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Padilla

- Thanks for indulgence while on vacation and keeping him in the loop. He thinks the commission is moving forward especially with the Prejudice & Poverty Committee work. Talking about issues and taking action on them. Appreciates everyone's attention. Enjoyed the meeting.

Commissioner Beachy

- No additional comments. Excites him in the commission's movement.

### Commissioner Grigsby

- She missed the last meeting of the KHRC and will be attending to see what is going on.

### Commissioner Mott

- Noted that there are 14/15 meeting spaces are available at the library. She is going on vacation to New England on the 17th - graduation gift to herself. Other conversations she would like to have to establish a LGBT liaison with the TPD and Mayor/CM office. On the Municipal index - Nat'l Human Rights - was rated 29 out of 100 now in the 40s. Lawrence is only 55 - she would like to see Topeka higher than Lawrence. It is on many different criteria's. There is not a citywide LGBT liaison. Someone who serves in a capacity to be involved in discussions regarding training, action, - she knows of transgender people who have been treated terribly - Topeka actually reports hate crimes.

Margo made a motion to extend the meeting to 7:05 p.m.; Bill second. Motion carried.

### Commissioner Goodman

- No comments - good meeting

### Commissioner Rangel

- The meeting was good - where is her pineapple Mike? She believes this was an exceptional meeting and charged for their initiatives and don't want to lose the momentum.

### Commissioner Williams

- She reported that the Police department does have a law enforcement panel which is designed to review complaints of discrimination or any issues from the community - they serve as the liaison. Stephanie wanted to know if there is LGBT representative. They do not believe so. They may be down one panel person. There is an opening for one person. Mike applied but had not heard anything you have to pass a back ground check. Margo said that sometimes it is the checkmark that people don't want to have to go through. The group is there to help to keep fighting. Want to do the things that matter if not today then tomorrow. People are people and need to be treated with respect and not always been treated with success. Had a department that could work – but if you can educate people to get the information out to help get the word out. Appreciate everyone - and everything to do. She appreciates everyone. Fight for what is right and that is what we are going to do.

## **XI. Adjournment**

Commission meeting adjourned.

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

Respectfully submitted by Shawn Maisberger.