

Topeka Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

July 7, 2014

Commissioners met on July 7, 2014 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. Margo Rangel
Mr. Bill Beachy
Ms. Stephanie Mott
Ms. Joyce Grigsby
Ms. Amy Cohen

Commissioners absent:

Mr. Anthony Fadale
Ms. Lorean Williams
Ms. Darcella Goodman
Mr. Mike Padilla

City Present:

Ms. Shawn Maisberger

Guests:

Betsy and Bill Rohleder

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. Approval of Agenda

Bill made a motion to adopt the agenda; Amy seconded. No discussion. Motion carried

IV. Approval of Minutes

Stephanie made a motion to adopt the minutes; Amy seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

V. Staff Report

Introduce New commissioner Amy Cohen - she introduced herself and interest - She has a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in social work from WU. She has been involved nine years Battered Women's task force, three years with the Disability Rights Center. She grew up in Omaha and wants the Best Topeka can be.

Guests -Betsy Rohleder and her husband Ron - participated in program and wanted to see what the commissioners thought of the program.

VI. Committee Reports

- *Prejudice & Poverty Committee Update*

Stephanie reported on the social justice education training program was held on June 14 at the Library and on June 29. It lasted four hours each time - the format included two different programs - curriculum provided on CD to participants. Two facilitators and six participants were involved in both sessions. Nathan Schmidt was unable to attend. She was very pleased about the program discussion and experience - it was powerful discussion.

Discussion about this program being a THM and presentation before the city council. They would like to take a look at facilitating the program and modify in moving the program forward. It was the most powerful experience she has had just by sitting down at a table discussing people and prejudice and equality. She learned more than she was expected. The ice berg demonstration about what is seen on the surface vs what is below the surface which is unknown or unseen unless you get to know that person. It is their character, beliefs. The costs included a \$25 fee to use equipment or if you order food they waive the fee. She has the bill from the first program it was \$42. The second date the bill was \$27.30. She would like to get another location to reduce costs. She was pleased that they were able to get it done in two sessions for four hours which worked. As move forward- need to get it to the public and has an extraordinary opportunity to learn about people that you might not get a chance to learn about. Still stunned about the project. Thanks to Marsha, Precious, Margo, Bill and Betsy.

Bill - the concept of privilege was dealt within a comprehensive way that was dealt with. This is a good thing to do with a small group - the facilitators thought 20 but he felt that was too large. He thought there was a sharp difference of what the purpose between the facilitators and their ability.

Betsy - she thought that the two different types of facilitators were good and it was incredible how they worked together. Her passion is education because it is important - in the class she saw something happen from a financial - what you don't know will scare you to death. The more you know the better you are in helping others. Everyone there was open and not everyone was at the table during class and believes that the young should be at the table and perhaps the unemployed. Her passion is with people with disabilities and would like to see

them participate. Every voice being at the table and she believes that we must not make decisions for others and let them be at the table for themselves. She spoke to a person and the return comment said that it's not their job to make people know. Some challenges and barriers we know who to bring to the table. It is not their job to educate everyone. She appreciated Stephanie's reference to the ice berg. The most powerful was the equity vs equality that every child should have shoes but that those shoes should fit. She thanked HRC for having the class and can think of others to be invited for future classes. She would also be happy to help get people. The library is a central location without any barriers for anyone to attend. It has an all invited and all that can come atmosphere.

Margo- agreed with Betsy that the library welcomes all. The discussion was confidential and that location provides that. She enjoyed the time together. When you get an opportunity to see others perception of another person. The slides especially in the YouTube video where the people were running with the baton regarding equality. The scenario of another person passing the baton - but passing by a lady who is motionless and continuously gets passed by. She thought that was profound, but it was nice to listen to others experience - the humanistic side of individuals. She agreed that she would like to see more young people brought to the table and this is just the beginning and figure out how we are going to do it. Reevaluate the program and see how it could be presented and what the vision is and how it can be brought to the community. There were a lot of trust issues brought up. It is one of her issues and she is not comfortable about sharing specific information. There were there to not be judgmental they were in a safe zone. She would like to have a discussion on how to move ahead and when we could have something for THM and to have a forum and get panelist/speakers lined up.

Stephanie stated that she can't vision that yet and it was so emotional that she unsure how to proceed. The time constraints are the issue and if the program can be reduced.

Betsy - the hope was that the group could evidentially present the program. This group needs to decide what is next. It would be difficult to facilitate a group of 20 using the same format. She thinks we learn about what people accomplish. If facilitators are able to draw people out and know more about equality.

Bill - the facilitators did a good job about the issue of trust right off the bat. The larger the group opens up the issue of trust depending on the facilitator it could be done. Margo - she did hope to be a facilitator and is not ready because she was a participant and not ready to facilitate. Bill - facilitators for a larger group there are people around.

Stephanie - she feels that the library is also a welcoming place. She feels that they should explore other facilitators. She didn't feel that they had a group that represents everyone, but did have a variety of participants. She believes that

there will be more people attending in the future. The material could be condensed but she would still see two sessions. As it moves forward - she sees it as a photograph that has not been developed yet. We don't need to sit down and said that this is what it will look like. It can and will change and the development of the photograph.

Before we ask anyone to facilitate that they will help get them trained. The group was very courage able. But that will not always be the case. Beautiful information was shared. Her vision has always been that we could start with a pilot group and do a few more groups to develop. Participate in the experience. Can something spin off on this- it is unknown. She doesn't feel that a THM is possible right now but can work toward that when she feels that.

She would like to give an overview to the city council. Brief them on the experience on getting to know individuals. Everything she does or says is from a different lens because of her experience and to be able to see it from a different lens. It is a question that she never asked before. Am I doing this because of my race, education, etc. now asking the question before the training?

Moving forward - do a report to the council - can do it as an individual or group. She wants to make noise about doing the mission - no press and no mention in the paper - need to get the citizens involved and work on the commissions own marketing of itself. Margo agrees that the commission has been silent and needs more action to be heard. They are the voice to speak for others that can't be heard.

Bill - expansion of authority - to help fulfill the mission as well. Discussion on Whether or not to use justice in general or social justice. The discussion was based on social justice.

Thanks to Betsy and Ron for attending and appreciated her experience. You could have after the fact media - publicity.

Margo - not what you once were but at what you want to be. Stephanie - need to fill in the gap and be able to keep working.

Joyce - sitting her listening - she is working with TPD and needs to sit down with the neighborhoods and getting a better relationship. She has talked with the mayor on this as well. Invite the Lt to be a part of the discussion. Joyce will invite him to participate. Margo - will make contact Mike to see if he needs assistance putting together with everything. Need clarification on whether or not the city attorney needs to attend at this point. So far several have sent Mike some things. Need to see what he has available and what he has put together. She doesn't think he would have had time. She doesn't want to lose the momentum. Shawn expressed concern about the commission talking prior to the city attorney attending. The commission should need to have a plan completed by March for the 2016 budget session.

Shawn to contact Mike on the proposed ideas and see how much time he would need to get it coordinated and when the commission could discuss it. Possibly next month if not sooner. Then following that the city attorney could be invited following that discussion. Commissioners want to make sure that they keep moving forward. Make sure that commissioners send Mike their thoughts - he has campaign experience. It's a plan of attack and need to prepare and be organized in order for it to be successful.

They noted - September date is a holiday - they would like to know if Aug 28 as an alternate date. Shawn will send an email.

- *Troy Scroggins Award Committee Update*
 - It was reported that Jeremy Beard was really happy and excited and appreciative. He was nervous about the presentation. He was going on and on about receiving the award.
 - December is the next award for an organization. Start advertising for award.
 - Margo inquired about the legacy of the award and if the committee could provide a brief write up for the Mayor to read introducing the award prior to the presentation.
 - - THM - Margo no update but would like to visit with Stephanie to discuss future
- *Town Hall Committee Meeting Update*
 - THM - Margo no update but would like to visit with Stephanie to discuss future.

VII. Old Business

- Delayed until next month – Shawn to check with Mike.

VIII. New Business

- None

IX. Public Comments

None.

X. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Rangel

- No further comments - Fiesta starts next week. She is in a booth for Mana De Topeka and its purpose. They provide scholarship for young Latina women. They provided four scholarships at \$1,000 each.

Commissioner Grigsby

- NAACP branch meeting - guest speaker Chris Meinhardt with Friends of the Free State Capital gave a presentation on Constitutional Hall. Everyone enjoyed it. Good attendance.

Commissioner Cohen

- Glad to be a part of the commission.

Commissioner Beachy

- Add to Joyce - impressed with his discussion with the struggles with freedom and the struggles that we all have.

Commissioner Mott

- Attending a transgender conference in Wichita - 2 full days of workshop at College Hill College. Grants are available - Friday and Saturday. She is doing several public presentations which include Aug 10 at Unitary Fellowship. July 27 - KS Equity Coalition is hosting a bowling tournament at Gage Bowl.

XI. Adjournment

Commission meeting adjourned.

The next meeting will be August 4, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Shawn Maisberger.