

Topeka Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

October 6, 2014

Commissioners met on October 6, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. for the October 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
Ms. Stephanie Mott
Ms. Amy Cohen
Mr. Mike Padilla
Ms. Joyce Grigsby
Mr. Bill Beachy
Mr. Anthony Fadale

Commissioners absent: Ms. Darcella Goodman

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

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

IV. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from August 28 (September) meeting were presented. Margo noted a grammatical change under her report. Bill made a motion to adopt the minutes as amended; Stephanie seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

V. Staff Report

Shawn reported that she was the recent award recipient at the Mana de Topeka event. She appreciated the honor and thanked everyone for their support.

VI. Committee Reports

- *Prejudice & Poverty Committee Update*

Stephanie reported that only commissioners were in attendance and it provided exposure of the program to commissioners that had not had the opportunity to attend before. Commissioners Darcella, Amy and Lorean shared interest to participate. Stephanie's committee met and plans to move forward with a second program. She still encourages that they continue to work to get the program shared with the governing body. Anyone interested let Stephanie know. She would like to invite public officials to participate. She has Chad Sublet that agreed to participate and plans to make sure that they involve the youth to participate.

Lorean is looking forward to participating in the complete program to get the full experience of the program so that she is fully informed and can share when asked. She would like to get something planned before thanksgiving.

Amy would like to discuss the issue of prejudice and poverty community wide and would like to know if this is the time to discuss. She will discuss under new business item.

- *Troy Scroggins Award Committee Update*

Stephanie shared copies of the first article in the Topeka Capital Journal about the initiation of the award. She has talked with Ally who will help get information out to the public and nominations. Applications extended to October 31 so that information can be submitted at the November meeting. To help generate nominations and publicity for the award. Clarification on the nominations being received from individuals living outside the city of Topeka. Shawn shared the background and that the commissioners are required to live in the city and therefore followed the same process.

Stephanie would like the commission to consider expanding the boundaries for potentially eligible candidates. They recommend for the next time for award recipients. Lorean stated that the commissioners were to bring back nominations to the committee and there should be a list of past recipients and it has been difficult to have a variety of nominations since commissioners have not been submitting potential nominations to the committee.

Amy stated that she was not aware that commissioners were responsible for bringing nominations to the committee. She wanted to know if the language could be changed. It was shared that the committee could bring language changes to the commission for recommendation. It is not a part of an official bylaw so it can be changed at any time with the consent of the commission.

Margo said that there were four categories and that it was modified to help simplify the categories to help achieve nominations. She believes it is difficult to get individuals to submit nominations and understand it is difficult for other organizations as well. She is not against changing the language but doesn't think it needs to be right away.

Bill recommended that the committee take a look at the information and report back after the first of the year. Stephanie said that the committee is going to evaluate the process and bring back suggestions for discussion and recommendation.

Anthony said that he believes that he was given consideration to nominate the falling officer or the Topeka Police Department for what they have had to go through - or the family. He doesn't suggest going outside the perimeter but believes it has had a significant impact to the community and believes recognizing the police department.

Joyce she believes that if you have to do it for one you must do it for all of them. She believes that you should not just recognize him and maybe the entire department. Anthony agrees and feels that the community has gone through a lot. That is the number one subject people are talking about is that a police officer got shot. He was making a suggestion and agrees and that it not be restrictive of just one officer. He feels that they should honor all of them.

Stephanie believes it is a valid suggestion to recognize the police department and their falling officers. The committee will take the suggestion to the committee. She believes it is critical that the community engage in the nominations process. She would like someone to make a nomination of the police department and submit it to the committee. Anthony will submit the nomination.

Bill does not believe that the department comes to mind for the nomination but understands the rationale. Mike said that he understands what everyone is trying to do and he has spoken with Chief Brown on how they do their job and how they respond. How the community came together to do what needed to be done by donating food, time, etc. in recognition of the horrible events. That is the thing that bonds a community and looks past those things that may have keep them from being engaged. He believes that is not just the agency but the community that came together to show their concern for the department. Anthony will take into consideration the discussion from everyone when he completes his nomination and to develop a good relationship with the new police chief.

Stephanie believes it is the responsibility of the committee to review the applications and believes it has been compromised and going outside the process of

the committee by not respecting the process. She is not comfortable of the position the committee. Margo commends everyone and said that this is what this is for and sometimes things don't always get addressed and believes it was a really good conversation. She will try to get something into the paper by the end of the week.

- *Town Hall Committee Meeting Update*

Margo said she fell short. Her and Mike had planned to meet but did not have the opportunity to do so. She believes there is a need and there is still an opportunity to still get something out on the program. She still would like to do the Get Out the Vote program. She plans to contact League of Women's Voters, Mark Stock deputy director of the election commission office. There is a meeting on October 8 from 1-3pm at Garfield Center hosted by (TILRC) Topeka Independent Living Resource Center looking at constituent services.

They are also registering people to vote at the event. Stephanie said to add a city clerk's office representative. Anthony believes that it ties into the human relations issue because it is putting out a message to encourage voting for individual that can help represent you and protect your services. Amy said that in Kansas you have to have identification and there are issues around status, race, poverty and it clearly ties relations and rights. Stephanie stated that the current voter rights - maybe we think of how anyone with a label or difficulty getting out to vote - Amy appreciates what Stephanie said and she thinks we need to help get information out on the information and help take down the barriers since they may be educational barriers. There may be potential waivers that could be possible to help eliminate and connect though the website. It would be a great way to get out action for the program. Anthony it is important for people to know what they need and anything we can do to help let them know what they need in order to vote and will not take a position.

Lorean asked Amy to get a list of things people will need in order to vote. Margo would like to host it on October 23 from 6-8pm Also another one is to make sure people know where they are to vote and how to find out their location. Amy will work with Shawn to get that information posted.

October 14 is the deadline to register and people can call number 266-0285 election commission. You can always vote through a provisional ballot. People don't know what a provisional ballot is and that is the information that needs to get that type of information out. It has to be done during the regularly schedule time. If individuals can't pay for an ID there are waivers that can be applied for based on a financial hardship. There are many reasons why you need to re-register to vote based on marriages, divorce, moved, etc.

Amy is speaking to a nursing home and would be happy to mention her involvement with the Commission.

VII. Old Business

Stephanie does not have information on the other opportunities for the potential funding at this time.

VIII. New Business

A - Discussion Ferguson -Amy wanted to discuss the larger picture of social justice and the commissioners role - social equity. One of the statements that she read in the mission is working with other groups and she is not sure we already do that. She wants to make sure that we are working with other events/program. She went to the Washburn event and the discussion on social media and community tragedy as it related to race. She hopes that the commission can participate in events such as that one. It is her vision and as we look at bridging community commitment and events. She would like the commission to have a place at the table for the commission. She volunteered with Habitat for Humanity and believes that it fits its mission.

Margo said that others attend events and shared examples of how commissioners represent the commission, but it is difficult to find out what is going on in the community. How do we find out because if you don't know how can you go. Dave with equality house is working on a website to pull together a site to post events that deal with social justice. Topekacares.org is the site. She continues to get information about activities and represent the commission. Margo would like to see Amy would like to help connect that link. Need to check if it is possible to put it on their website. These are events that support the mission. Bill is frustrated and it has been frustrating on the commission's role since the change. Stephanie agrees that the commission is going through the changes and supports Amy ideas and there are dozens of things going on and there are always ways to engage the commission and commissioners. Facebook helps her stay connected and it is a centralized location for events that could be helpful. She has been talking with a web developer on the potential of pulling together an event feed to bring everything together that deals with social justice. She will be talking it to the Topeka Pride board on the ideas. People will be able to submit items.

Lorean said we should try to connect what we can on the HRC site. Try to move forward representing HRC and try to link up in what is going on in our own city.

B - Symposium - Mike provided a 2-3 page follow up report. After that report he saw more articles on military policing which he found interesting. Agencies are looking more about guard units and less like police departments. The public sees a different looking department and he visited with the new chief. There are many articles on line as well and there is an attempt that legislation is trying to prohibit it from happening. He would like the video to be shown at the next meeting. Anthony agreed. Margo would like to find out if the HRC could have an opportunity to watch the video and then invite either Barry Grishom or someone else to follow up as an idea. Mike would like it on the agenda at next month's meeting - it is based on a video on hate and an awareness that it brings to the committee. Segments on where

the community is at over time and how it brought together a community and how it will react if something would happen.

IX. Public Comments

None.

X. Commissioner remarks

Commissioner Cohen - October is disability month.

Commissioner Fadale - suggested speaker for THM is Mark Stock.

Commissioner Grigsby - last month the candidates for Register of Deeds office were invited to Tacos de Mexicana. There were bands and food for Hispanic month - she had a good time.

Commissioner Mott - The Kansas National Organization for Women State Conference will be held from Noon to 5pm in KCMO. They are looking for speakers and the main focus is on women who face discrimination - if you know someone available for conference let who know. She is speaking at several faith organizations - going to Joplin MO to Joplin diversity fellowship then Sunday to Norman Oklahoma.

Commissioner Padilla - Margo didn't fall short just has a lot of irons in the fire. The get out the vote will it is admirable to follow up. He expressed his thanks for commissioners showing up while he has had difficulty showing up. We spend a goodtime discussing topics and have a good momentum going forward. He hopes to continue to provide an open door and encourage visitors to attend the meetings. He invited the Chief.

Commissioner Beachy - Habitat for Humanity had a fundraising concert - great to see professionals play and get involved. He is on the nomination committee for the NAACP -let him know if you have suggestions. ACLU for Kansas is interested for bias-based policing may have an opportunity for the commission to be involved.

Commissioner Rangel -Mana de Topeka celebrated 40th anniversary at the capital plaza. Shawn was one of the recipients and DeLalsla's comments were right on target in regards to Shawn.

Commissioner Williams - She appreciate your hard work and we don't get paid and to make sure we work hard. If it is not you today it could be you tomorrow. As we talk about voter registration. She shared a story about her mom that she would show up to register to vote and was not allowed so she stood there anyway. She faught for her right to vote and that is why she is dedicated to getting out and vote. There were a lot of people that fought and died to get rights that people have today.

We need to help getting the information out to help people get out to vote. We appreciate you all.

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned.

The next meeting will be November 3, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Shawn Maisberger.