



City of Topeka

Human Relations Commission

Annual Report

2010

Mission Statement

The mission of the Human Relations Commission is to ensure fair and equal rights for all citizens of Topeka in the area of employment, housing and public accommodation.

Role of a Commissioner

The Topeka Human Relations Ordinance requires that the Commission be non-partisan. By historical custom, the Commission's composition reflects a varied geographic representation; individuals with disabilities; a diverse gender, racial, religious, and ethnic mix; a variety of professional backgrounds; and, a demonstrated interest in civil rights. The Commissioners shall reside within the corporate limits of the city.

Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor from Council nominations and are confirmed by Topeka City Council for two (2) year terms, or until their successor is appointed.

Duties and Responsibilities

In 2010 the Commission's role changed from filing and investigating complaints and holding public hearings when the Human Relations Department was abolished in late June 2010. Commissioner Susan Zuber-Chall and Commissioner Maria Revilla resigned from the Commission following the abolishment.

The Commission supports the efforts to eliminate prejudice and further goodwill among all people of the city and promotes positive relations among our citizens and guests through community outreach. The Commission continues to promote and facilitate Town Hall meetings and public forums on issues of interest and concern; participate in outreach activities and public education; and partner with groups that share similar goals.

Member of the Human Relations Commission

Chairperson	Bill Beachy Term Exp: 12/01/10 – 11/30/12
Vice Chairperson	Lorean Williams Term Exp: 05/31/10 – 05/31/12
Commissioner	Margo Rangel Term Exp: 02/28/10 – 03/02/12
Commissioner	Anthony Fadale Term Exp: 09/01/09 – 08/31/11
Commissioner	Joyce Grigsby Term Exp: 12/16/09 – 12/15/11
Commissioner	Sharon Joseph Term Exp: 09/01/09 – 08/31/11
Commissioner	Ezell Monts, Jr. Term Exp: 02/01/09 – 01/31/11
Commissioner	Renee Wiggins Term Exp: 09/14/10 – 12/15/11
Commissioner	Darcella Goodman Term Exp: 11/23/10 – 01/19/12

Discrimination Complaints and Investigations

Statistical Information for the number of complaints received, investigations conducted and outcomes prior to July 1, 2010 have not been confirmed due to the abolishment of the Department. Therefore the annual report for 2010 does not include this data.

Staff

The ordinance adopted by the City Council abolished the department. By ordinance, the City Manager shall designate staff to assist the Commission. Staff

coordinates meetings of the Commission, Committees formed by the Commission, and other request made by the Commission. Staff is responsible for answering the Commission phone line and assist in the referral to other supporting agencies. Staff also assists with other Commission outreach into the legal support, assistance, research, and training on an as needed basis.

Designated Staff:

Assistant to the City Manager	Shawn Maisberger
Assistant City Attorney	Catherine Walter

Community Outreach Activities

❖ **Town Hall Meetings**

- **Gangs and Graffiti in Topeka** – February 25, 2010

A presentation was provided by the Topeka Police Departments Cpl. Ruben Salamanca with the Gang Unit. Cpl Salamanca presented information regarding gang activity in Topeka including graffiti and its connection to gangs and the national database which documents gang graffiti. Lt. Tom Glor and Patty Burkholder with the City's Code Enforcement Division provided information concerning the abatement of graffiti and the soda blaster.

- **"Trans"formation** – June 17, 2010

A community education presentation by Stephanie Motts with K-Step shared clear, balanced and accurate information and personal stories and challenges about the transgender community. This meeting provided an opportunity to see the issue in a personal way by members of the transgender community.

- **Just the Facts: H1N1** – December 16, 2010

A presentation on the facts on H1N1, what it is, how to treat it and how to avoid it was provided. Information regarding the vaccine administered by the Shawnee County Health Agency throughout the community was shared including information that all populations were served. Kathy Summers, SCHA Public Education and Michael McNulty were presenters.

❖ **Speaking Engagements**

Chair Bill Beachy and Vice Chair Lorean Williams spoke at the "The Rally to SAVE the Topeka Human Relations Commission and Department" on May 29, 2010.

❖ **Training Attended by HRC Commissioners**

HUD Policy Conference July 19th - July 23rd, 2010 New Orleans, LA

The biennial conference is the first one of President Obama's Administration and the ninth in HUD's history. The theme of the conference, "Fair Housing 2010: Time to Act," reflects the Department's recognition of the urgent need to foster communities where everyone has equal access to housing, transportation, education, and economic opportunities.

The five-day conference featured leading scholars, advocates, government officials, and community leaders focused on providing equal housing opportunities, increasing economic opportunities for low-income individuals, and meeting the needs of persons with disabilities.

Other topics discussed included lending discrimination, combating housing discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, and creating affordable housing opportunities for residents of New Orleans still rebuilding their lives five years after Hurricane Katrina.

❖ **Co-Sponsored Events and Outreach Activities**

NAACP Annual Freedom Fund Banquet
Living the Dream Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Banquet

❖ **Memberships**

- Bill Beachy
 - Topeka NAACP Executive Committee, Member
 - NAACP Community Coordination Committee, Chair
 - Concerned Citizens for Topeka, President
 - Topeka Center for Peace and Justice, Recently Retired Executive Director, and Consultant
 - Topeka HRC, Immediate past Chair

- o Joyce Grigsby
 - Law Enforcement Partnership Panel
 - Topeka NAACP, First VP
 - LEPP
 - Heartland Sertoma
 - Baptist Church, Secretary, Trustee Board member

- o Renee Wiggins
 - Topeka NAACP Executive Committee, Communications Chair
 - African American Democratic Caucus of Shawnee County, Secretary
 - Topeka Civil Service Commission, Board Member
 - Topeka SCORE, Vice President
 - Heavenly Visions Foundation, Board Secretary

- o Lorean Williams
 - Law Enforcement Partnership Panel

❖ **Troy Scroggins Award Presentations**

The City of Topeka's Human Relations Commission hosted the first Troy Scroggins Award Ceremony in 2008 and continues to be a quarterly award for four different categories. The **Troy Scroggins Award** recognizes individuals, public and private entities, and youth whose efforts at eliminating discrimination and prejudice and advancing diversity in Topeka are outstanding, singular and noteworthy.

The 2010 Recipients:

- Living the Dream - Outstanding Private Entity Achievement
- YWCA R.A.C.E. - Outstanding Public Entity Achievement
- Eric K. Johnson Jr. - Outstanding Youth Achievement
- Outstanding Individual Achievement

Recommendations

In keeping with the charge to the THRC in City Code Section 2.55.040 to include as part of the Annual Report the Commission may "propose any modifications to this chapter that would improve the effectiveness of the commission and better fulfill the antidiscrimination policies of the city."

The commission makes the following recommendation in light of the Governor's proposed reorganization of the Kansas Human Rights Commission during FY 2012, and because of our concern that this reorganization will threaten the independence of the KHRC's ability to provide meaningful civil rights' enforcement in Kansas and Topeka.

Therefore, the Commission requests that you consider reestablishing a Human Relations Commission Department in Topeka.

The Governor's proposal would move the current civil rights' enforcement in the State of Kansas from the state's separate, independent and autonomous Kansas Human Rights Commission to the state's Attorney General's Office. While we are asking the Governor to reconsider his proposal, we are asking you to make certain that the rights of Topeka residents will be enforced by an effective and professional Topeka Human Relations Commission Department.

We further recommend that you consider adding the protected classes of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender persons to the Topeka Municipal Code Section 2.55.040.

The Topeka Human Relations Commission is committed to continuing to work and support the efforts to eliminate prejudice and further goodwill among all people of the city and promotes positive relations among our citizens and guests through community outreach.

TOPEKA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

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