



City of Topeka
Human Relations Commission
Annual Report

2011

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.

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	Lorean Williams Term Exp: 05/31/10 – 05/31/12
Vice Chair Commissioner	Margo Rangel Term Exp: 02/28/12 – 02/28/14
Commissioner	Bill Beachy Term Exp: 12/01/09 – 11/30/12
Commissioner	Anthony Fadale Term Exp: 09/01/11 – 08/31/13
Commissioner	Joyce Grigsby Term Exp: 12/16/11 – 12/31/13
Commissioner	Sharon Joseph Term Exp: 09/01/11 – 08/31/13
Commissioner	Ezell Monts, Jr. Term Exp: 02/01/11 – 01/31/13
Commissioner	Renee Wiggins Term Exp: 09/14/11 – 12/31/13
Commissioner	Darcella Goodman Term Exp: 11/23/12 – 01/31/14

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**

▪ **What's New to ADA** – July 21, 2011

A presentation was provided by Renee Wohlenhaus, Deputy Chief for the U.S. Department of Justice, Disability Rights Section located in Washington, D.C.

The Commission was extremely pleased to learn that Ms. Wohlenhaus' would be a speaker at the Town Hall Meeting which was to focus on ADA. The Commission does not currently have a budget for their mission which is to provide community outreach programs or training so when the U.S. Department of Justice volunteered to cover the cost of her travel to Topeka for this Town Hall Meeting, we were more than pleased on their generosity. However, it didn't stop there, not only did Ms. Wohlenhaus arrive, but the U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom arrived with other key staff. Mr. Grissom's support to the topic and to Topeka was special to the participants and to the Commissioners. It is not every day top government officials make special trips for information/outreach meetings.

▪ **Diversity Balance** – October 20, 2011

A presentation focusing on the balance between work and life was held at the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site. The program involved a panel of speakers which included:

- Barry Grissom, U.S. Attorney, District of Kansas, U.S. Department of Justice
- Marsha Carrasco Cooper, Assistant Director, Leadership Institute at Washburn University
- Jacque Russell, Human Resources Director, City of Topeka
- Marie Carter, Manager of Certified Personnel, Topeka Public School USD 501

Speakers discussed the challenges in their workplace and what they attempt to do to assist their employees in doing more with less

the stress that comes from the pressures and demands at both work and at home. All of them expressed sincere concern and appreciation for their employees and co-workers and the programs and support that their employers provide to make sure that the workforce is being productive and healthy lives.

❖ **Speaking Engagements**

Commissioner Anthony Fadale was a presenter at the FEMA Conference in Washington, D.C.

❖ **Training Attended by HRC Commissioners**

Brown vs. Board Future Interpretation – February, Topeka, Kansas

2011 Civil Rights Symposium, June 10 – Kansas City, Kansas

Thomas Perez, Assistant U.S. Attorney General, was the featured speaker at the Civil Rights Symposium. Perez appeared before the U.S. House Judiciary Subcommittee in Washington, D.C., to report on his efforts to restore and transform the Civil Rights Division.

The agenda for the all-day Civil Rights Symposium includes:

A presentation by Sheriff David O'Malley of Laramie, Wyoming, who will talk about his experiences during the Matthew Shepard murder investigation. Shepard was tortured and murdered in 1998 by attackers who perceived he was gay. The case helped give rise to the Matthew Shepard and James J. Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

A panel discussion on fostering cooperation between civil rights groups and law enforcement agencies.

A presentation on human trafficking investigations prepared by federal prosecutors from the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Western District of Missouri.

A presentation on the Americans With Disabilities Act. A presentation by the federal Community Relations Service.

HUD Annual Regional VII Conference

FHAP/FHIP Training Conference, August 16-17, Kansas City, Missouri

The National Fair Housing Assistance Program is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under HUD's

Training topics:

- FHAP Updates
- Design and construction, Testing, Damages and Timeliness
- Partnerships – testing methodologies

FEMA | Federal Emergency Management Agency

Welcome to "Getting Real II - Promising Practices in Inclusive Emergency Management for the Whole Community" - September 12-14, 2011 in Arlington, VA

The Office of Disability Integration and Coordination ODIC at the Federal Emergency Management Agency and our co-sponsors, the National Council on Disability NCD and the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research NIDRR and our partners the Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness and People with Disabilities ICC and the Emergency Management Institute EMI hosted the conference.

The conference, delegates were equipped with new tools to further educate communities on how to effectively collaborate on emergency preparedness and disaster response and recovery with the disability community. It was undoubtedly a major success!

GETTING REAL II:

Building partnerships and sharing promising practices. A promising practice can be identified as a practice, approach or method that's proven to have gained a positive outcome. Promising practices in emergency management include methods that have shown favorable

results as they've been tested or applied in emergency situations. The objective of the conference is to identify promising practices that strengthen the whole community's capacity to prepare for, respond to, recover from and mitigate the impact of disasters. These practices must also emphasize inclusion, integration, dignity, independence, accessibility and self-determination for individuals with disabilities before, during and after a disaster.

Commissioner Anthony Fadale was a presenter at the conference.

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

NAACP Annual Freedom Fund Banquet
Living the Dream Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Banquet
Whose Dream Is It? Celebration
National Park Service – Brown v Board of Education National Historic Site

❖ **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
- Joyce Grigsby
 - Law Enforcement Partnership Panel (LEPP)
 - Topeka NAACP, First VP
 - Heartland Sertoma
 - Second Baptist Church, Secretary, Trustee Board member
- 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
 - Kansas State Conference NAACP, 3rd Vice President
 - Kansas State Conference NAACP Civic Engagement Coordinator

- Received the Clementine "Prim" Martin Community Service Award from Living The Dream, Inc.
 - Women Empowerment, Inc. Board Member
 - 2012 Leadership Topeka Planning Committee Member
 - Ward 306 Precinct Person
- Lorean Williams
 - Law Enforcement Partnership Panel (LEPP)
 - African-American Democratic Caucus

❖ **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 2011 Recipients:

Outstanding Public Entity Achievement

CASA of Shawnee County

Outstanding Youth Achievement

Demarus Kelley

Outstanding Individual Achievement

Brian Peters

Recommendations

In keeping with the charge to the Topeka Human Relations Commission in City Code Section 2.55.040 to "propose any modifications to this chapter that would improve the effectiveness of the commission and better fulfill the antidiscrimination policies of the city," we make the following recommendations:

The commission recommends that the City Council consider reestablishing a Human Relations Commission Department in Topeka. The Commission believes that the Department will ensure that the rights of Topeka residents will be enforced by an effective and professional Topeka Human Relations Department.

We continue to recommend that the Council consider adding the protected classes of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender persons to the Topeka Municipal Code.

The Topeka Human Relations Commission is committed to continue working and supporting efforts to eliminate prejudice and further goodwill among all people of the city and to promote positive relations among our citizens and guests through community outreach.

TOPEKA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

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