



Meeting Minutes

June 9, 2016

The Human Relations Commission (HRC) convened for its regular monthly meeting at 6:00 p.m. on the above date at the Central Branch Library, with **Chair Zac Engle** presiding.

Present: Commissioners Engle, Burkart, Hawkins, Issifou, Phillips, Cobbler, Wils, Arbuckle

City Staff: Dr. Love Crossling, Human Relations Director; Jodie Stanley, Human Relations Education & Outreach Coordinator, Tom Carruthers, City Attorney

Council Liaison: Marikay Abuzuaiter

Absent: Commissioners King, Brown, Murphy, Perry-Garnette, Wesley-Lamin

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS AND SPEAKERS

Chair Engle called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Chair Engle welcomed visitors and asked them to introduce themselves. Maseta Dorley stated that she was with Turning Point 180 and here to seek the support of the HRC. Alex described himself as a resident of Greensboro and a concerned citizen. Timothy (Luther) Falls with St. Stephens announced a community police forum that was scheduled for Thursday August 18. Chair Engle advised Jodie Stanley to follow up with Mr. Falls to request event specifics for the purpose of circulation. Tom Carruthers introduced himself as the City Attorney, with the Greensboro Legal Department, and described himself as a long time resident of Greensboro, passionate about matters relating to human relations.

Maseta Dorley with Turning Point 180 was invited to speak. She gave a brief description of services provided by Turning Point 180 and shared the office location, 1606 Phillips Ave across from the News 2 station. She also described herself as a long time resident of Greensboro, a local college graduate and a believer in the resources available here, but stated that someone would be dropped off at her office tomorrow morning because they had nowhere to go. Her agency had tried to work with shelters but to no avail. Instead of having the residents dropped off at the depot or another public space, she offered her

office, not knowing what the next steps would be for this resident. She described the dramatic decrease in Federal funding, and direct, dramatic effects that she was witnessing firsthand because of it. She stated that 15,000 people were unemployed in Guilford County, a number far too large for any one agency to handle on their own, but perhaps by partnering, we could bring the number down. Dorley described her Ready to Rent curriculum, a six week training course designed to prevent evictions based on a successful model in Portland. The goal was to equip residents to maximize their resources, and give them financial management skills, teach prioritization, and budgeting. She pointed out that couch-surfers could not receive benefits because they didn't qualify as homeless under Federal standards. Commissioner Arbuckle mentioned the high numbers of homeless people struggling with mental health and asked Dorley if she saw the same in her line of work. Dorley responded by saying that mental illness is common for those who are already homeless, but that her target audience for the program would be those who are not yet homeless, but high risk. Her goal was to prevent homeless and eviction. Commissioner Phillips observed that Dorley had a long list of collaborating partners, but asked what she wanted from the City, specifically. Dorley stated that her primary focus was to have a City-sponsored program that would offer trainings for clients of GHA and other local nonprofits, pointing out that there was not currently a City-endorsed eviction prevention program. Love Crossling asked if there were specific resources needed to make the initiative successful, and Dorley thanked her for the question. She stated that they would be required to follow the model already functioning in Portland, OR, would need to have at least 25 students per class, and would need funds to cover the cost of a 6 week start-up course. She added that she didn't want to see another Heritage House happen, that the goal was to equip and prepare residents to succeed. She committed to meeting requested needs, offering facilitators for as many courses as were in demand.

Commissioner Cobbler asked about Turning Point 180's process and procedure as far as background checks when someone showed up at their office requesting service. Dorley emphasized that they were very cautious about background checks and screening before offering services. Some of the required documents she listed: a copy of their lease, number of household members, bills, letters from their landlord, and employment verification, and verification and follow up with family. Dorley assured commissioners that it was important to verify that resources were going where they were most needed, and agreed that proper vetting was critical.

Crossling asked if she understood the requests accurately, reflecting that Dorley was asking that the HRC demonstrate support for her initiative, and if the HRC saw fit, to recommend to City Council that they also support the program.

Dorley affirmed Crossling's statement, adding that as a young organization, it helped to have the support of a credible, longstanding establishment. She also pointed out that the Ready to Rent courses had the potential to also benefit new immigrants and refugees, that she had already started conversations with FaithAction International and other agencies working to house refugees.

Commissioner Arbuckle asked if Dorley was currently offering this type of preventive training. Dorley responded that while she had done this type of work through other agencies in the past, she was not currently conducting training with Turning Point 180. Chair Engle asked if the parent agency could provide statistics showing how successful the program was, and Dorley assured him that they could be provided. Chair Engle emphasized the importance of sharing these statistics and the need for specific information about the amount of needed financial support, and suggested that the Wells Montgomery Housing Subcommittee may be a fitting partner in her efforts to garner support and raise awareness. Commissioner Arbuckle stressed the importance of knowing more about the collaborating agencies. Love Crossling mentioned that once the 'who' and 'what' were determined, the commission might be able to offer support in awareness raising while finances were being gathered. She thanked Dorley for her work and the commissioners for their support of Dorley's efforts.

Chair Engle noted that another commissioner arrived, thus creating quorum. He called for a moment of silent meditation.

III. MOMENT OF SILENT MEDITATION

Chair Engle invited guest and City Attorney Tom Carruthers to introduce himself. Carruthers started by saying that Becky Jo Peterson Buie used to attend HRC meetings regularly under Skip Warren, and he wanted to offer the Legal Department's resources to the Commission. If Council Members had a special project, Legal staff was on hand to offer guidance and counsel, and the offer was the same for commissioners. Carruthers mentioned body-worn cameras, which he knew was an ongoing conversation for the Commission, as an example of one of the many critical issues nationwide that commissioners were asked by the community to reflect on and address, saying that like many around the State we were all struggling to find the right balance. Commissioner Arbuckle thanked Carruthers and said that his offer was helpful. Carruthers praised Greensboro, stating that in many ways, we were on the front lines of the conversation. Chair Engle thanked Carruthers for his kind offer of support and invited him to attend future HRC meetings. Carruthers accepted the offer.

Love Crossling suggested a point of value, saying that sometimes the work of the Commission could be lost in translation if there was not clear understanding of the role of the Commission. Having additional City staff on hand to provide advice and counsel would provide another piece to the bridge that was built between Council, the Commissions and community members, and would only lend to enhance understanding and trust.

IV. CHAIR REPORT

Chair Engle highlighted that the planned Commission retreat date was Saturday, August 13, 2016. Commissioner Arbuckle stated that she was traveling and unable to attend. She asked if the date was negotiable, and if commissioner's feedback was solicited when choosing a date. Love Crossling explained that the choice of date was made by leadership at the leadership retreat, and that it was selected because it did not conflict with community events such as the Folk Festival. Crossling offered that if directed, staff could send a list of dates to choose from. Chair Engle emphasized again that the date was chosen around Rosh Hashana, Wyndham, and other events, and asked Crossling if there was any way that an HRC commission retreat could be arranged, as it would simplify scheduling. Crossling advised that it was important to have a cross-commission retreat. Commissioner Arbuckle said that she was thankful that we would provide options; she would love to attend the retreat.

Chair Engle continued with his report, stating that because of the commission's restructuring to 18 members and the fact that district representatives must now choose commissioners from their district, it was important to stay in constant communication with him and stay on top of appointments and re-appointments.

Engle clarified the new, simplified reporting system, encouraging all commissioners to send in reports by simply responding to the email. He also explained that the programming paperwork was simplified and asked all commissioners to bring their ideas to the commission retreat, that the success of the commission was dependent on the work of the individuals. He also reminded commissioners about the June 12 Community City Working Group Town Hall Meeting at Lindley Recreation Center.

Commissioner Cobbler asked the Chair to clarify the difference between the Triad and commission retreats. After this was clarified, Commissioner Phillips asked if retreats could be held in the evening, over several days. Love Crossling shared that this had been attempted and attendance suffered, as people were often unavailable for one session or the other. It also presented challenges for those who work full time, as they could not always get off work. Saturday seemed to be the best time for most.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Police Community Review Board

Commissioner Cobbler said that their meeting the night before went very well, they had two absent members, good discussion around one case. The committee voted 7-0 in favor of Professional Standards' decision. Commissioner Cobbler continued by saying that he had met the Police Chief for lunch and they discussed the issue of mental illness and the possibility of additional training for officers. He also attended a valuable training Force Science, the study of science and human dynamics behind deadly force encounters. During their lunch meeting, the Police Chief asked Commissioner Cobbler if he felt that the Force Science training would be valuable for members of the PCRB. Commissioner Cobbler stated that yes, the training would be an excellent resource. Chair Engle commented that it would be a good thing to mention to Allen and incorporate as part of ongoing training. Commissioner Arbuckle asked about who did the training and their affiliation. Commissioner Cobbler responded that it was a private company, and the trainer worked as a patrol officer in Atlanta. The cost of the training was around \$15,000, but the Police Chief had mentioned the possibility of getting a grant to cover the cost.

Education Committee

Commissioner Wils stated that at this time, there was nothing to report.

Employment Committee

No report.

Human Services Committee

In Commissioner King's absence, all were asked to refer to the report she submitted which was in their folders.

Montgomery/Wells Housing Committee

Not currently chaired.

International Advisory Committee

Chair Engle asked all to refer to the report enclosed in their folders.

Native American Committee

Chair Engle and Jodie Stanley reported that the next goal was to meet with the Guilford Native American Association to discuss next steps.

Chair Engle invited Council Member Abuzuaiter to speak. She shared about her experience at the Commission on the Status of Women's 50+ Forum at the Senior Center, and asked if anyone had questions about the status of anything with Council.

VI. STAFF REPORT

Love Crossling shared about the commission leadership retreat, designed to equip leadership across various sectors (PCR, IAC, HRC and CSW) to make decisions about process. One of the topics of discussion was around what qualifies as programming. Crossling committed to roll out more information about this topic well in advance of the general retreat. Crossling discussed the importance of intentional communication with council and the possibility of inviting council members to a luncheon to give

commissioners the opportunity to share their vision and what change around a particular topic might look like.

Crossling also stated the importance of increasing awareness about the role of the Human Relations Commission, reminding commissioners that the Department of Justice had guidelines about their purpose and the work they should do. Increasing awareness about the role of the HRC would lend a better understanding of future goals and visioning.

Crossling added that staff would work with the commissions to develop topics of interest to cover during the retreat, and to email Jodie Stanley (and copy Zac Engle and herself) with suggestions. Crossling also announced that the Triad commission retreat that happened the year before and was attended by Allen Hunt, former chair Kevin Williams and herself, would take place again this year and all commissioners were invited and encouraged to attend. She stated that it was very beneficial to hear how other commissioners were navigating this space.

Crossling updated the HRC on recent conversations held with Folk Festival organizers, citing their international theme and their desire to partner with the International Advisory Committee. During the planning, Crossling and community members were able to advocate for a small gallery designed to feature local international populations and their art. Crossling also announced the IAC's recent partnership with UniverSoul Circus in creating a special opening pre-show celebration for their international themed circus, saying that to her, these were definitely symbols of progress.

Commissioner Arbuckle expressed her excitement about the Folk Festival, saying that it was extremely enjoyable. Commissioner Hawkins expressed his desire to attend the Triad retreat.

Motion:

To Approve the May Minutes

- **Commissioner Arbuckle** moved.
- Seconded by **Commissioner Phillips**.
- The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Chair Engle took a moment to recognize new visitor Randall Keaney.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Engle stated that the next meeting was scheduled for July 7, and that the HRC would sometimes vote to cancel the July meeting due to low attendance and summer plans. After general discussion, the commissioners agreed that the meeting would be held as scheduled.

Commissioner Cobbler mentioned that some commissioners had missed a few meetings. Chair Engle agreed that regular attendance was critical; decisions could not be made without quorum. All present agreed that they wanted to accomplish things together and as a team.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

To Adjourn the Meeting

- **Commissioner Phillips** motioned to adjourn.
- **Commissioner Cobbler** seconded.
- The Commission unanimously approved the motion at 6:59 pm.
- End of meeting.

S/ _____

Approved: _____

Chairperson

Date

Greensboro Human Relations Commission