



Meeting Minutes

August 4, 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 Wils, Arbuckle, Cobbler, Issifou, Hawkins, Welsey-Lamin, Perry-Garnette, Engle, Burkart

City Staff: Jodie Stanley

Council Liaison:

Visitors: Adamou Mohamed, Sarah Gates, Paul Siceloff, Yacine Kout, Raleigh Stout, William Southerland

Absent: Commissioners King, Brown, Phillips, Murphy, Bhardwaj

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Engle called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

I. MOMENT OF SILENT MEDITATION

II. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS AND SPEAKERS

Sarah Gates, UNCG lecturer, heard Commissioner Hawkins speak at the Bethel Community event and was impressed. Gates expressed a desire to volunteer with and support the work of the Commission. Paul Siceloff introduced himself briefly as a board member with the Triad Pride Men's Chorus. Raleigh Stout with the Historic Preservation Society explained that he came to simply observe the HRC meeting.

Commissioner Wils informed other commissioners that he was unable to stay past 7 pm, and asked for an adjustment to the agenda to move all voting to the beginning of the meeting.

Motion:

To Adjust the Order of the Meeting

- **Commissioner Perry-Garnette** moved.
- Seconded by **Commissioner Hawkins**.
- The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Chair Engle asked for a motion to approve the June minutes, which were not voted on in July due to a lack of quorum.

Motion:

To Approve the June Minutes

- **Commissioner Burkart** moved.
- Seconded by **Commissioner Cobbler**.
- The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Chair Engle asked for a motion to approve the July minutes. Commissioner Wils noted a correction in his attendance, which was not listed in the July minutes.

Motion:

To Approve the July Minutes, With Noted Corrections

- **Commissioner Wils** moved.
- Seconded by **Commissioner Hawkins**.
- The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Chair Engle mentioned that he had two others items for commissioners to vote on during the meeting. The first had to do with elections, which were normally done in August, but he wanted to ask Commissioners to vote to delay until September. He explained that the lack of quorum in July meant that they could not effectively hold elections in August. Chair Engle also called for nominations for the position of Chair and Vice Chair, expressing that he was willing to serve another year but in the spirit of democracy wanted to open it up to other nominees. Acceptable nominations included self-nominations as well as nominations of other commissioners.

Commissioner Wils asked why last year's election was done in December. Chair Engle explained that as matter of succession planning surrounding circumstances and current events, the desire was to sustain Chair Kevin Williams' leadership until matters were more resolved, which was through the month of December. Commissioner Wils nominated Chair Engle publicly.

Motion:

To Postpone Elections Until the September Meeting

- **Commissioner Hawkins** moved.
- Seconded by **Commissioner Wils**.
- The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Chair Engle continued with the second item to vote on, which was the selection of a permanent location for meeting space. Library policy limited the Commission to only three consecutive meetings, and all were in agreement that a permanent meeting space was needed. Engle suggested the Cone Building at 1001 Fourth St as a meeting space, adding that the Melvin Municipal Office Building at 300 W Washington St. was an alternative meeting space, although possibly intimidating to some and not as neutral as some other spaces might be.

Commissioners shared additional clarity about the location and description and accessibility of the Cone Building, adding that it was on the east side of Greensboro, a good location, and right across from the Maple St. SubStation. Commissioner Perry-Garnette asked if meetings had to be held in a City facility. Chair Engle responded that no, the concern was primarily around accessibility and neutrality. Perry-Garnette suggested that the YWCA would be open to hosting the meetings. Chair Engle thanked her for her generosity and several Commissioners expressed agreement that the YWCA would be a good location. Chair Engle called for a motion to vote on the YWCA as a meeting location.

Motion:

To Utilize the YWCA at 1807 E Wendover Ave. as a Permanent HRC Meeting Space

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

Chair Engle asked Commissioners to consider moving the October 6 meeting to October 13, as he had a conflict in his schedule. He expressed full confidence in the ability of the Vice Chair to run the meeting, should the change not be possible, adding that he wanted to be present if possible.

Motion:

To Move the October 6 Meeting to October 13

- **Commissioner Burkart** moved.
- Seconded by **Commissioner Wils**.
- The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Chair Engle asked that the website be updated with information about the October meeting date change as well as the address and meeting locations.

Commissioner Hawkins asked to add an observation about the City website, pointing out that HRC meetings were not listed on the City calendar. Staff member Jodie Stanley promised to look into it.

Chair Engle turned attention back to visiting speaker Paul Siceloff, asking him to share. Siceloff started by asking how many were familiar with the Triad Pride Men's Chorus, several raised their hands. He added that he was a "non-singing" board member, recently joined in December, explaining that the local

group's performances were held mostly in the Triad. One of the topics that frequently came up in board meetings was the desire to conduct outreach on behalf of the Chorus as far as anti-bullying efforts within schools. Siceloff's former experience on the High Point Human Relations Commission let him know that the Greensboro Human Relations Commission was the place to start.

Chair Engle suggested Win Win, a freestanding nonprofit combining counselors and anti bullying programs with school age children that came under the YWCA about two years ago. Engle also referred him to the education Committee Chair, Commissioner Wils, and to Commissioner Arbuckle.

Siceloff thanked the Commissioners for their feedback and introduced his friend, William Southerland.

William Southerland, also with Triad Pride Men's Chorus, gave a brief look into his background as artistic director with a masters in the field of arts. A member of the Chorus for 3 years, he expressed the group's goal to move back into a community outreach roles, stressing that positive interaction with youth was important to the Chorus. He pointed out that while LGBT was becoming more mainstream, there were still members on the fringes that did not fit within a neat category of LGBT who were still sometimes discriminated against. The Chorus was committed to harm reduction and anti-bullying, and using art and music to send these positive messages, and wanted to partner with the HRC in this endeavor.

Siceloff asked if Commissioners had any additional suggestions. Commissioner Perry-Garnette commented that she was familiar with the DC Men's Chorus as well as the Triad Pride Men's Chorus, affirming their good name in the area for their service to seniors and their community focus.k

Chair Engle proposed that Commissioner Wils and Arbuckle partner and coordinate as much as possible, in addition to collaboration with Commissioner Perry-Garnette as well as Human Relations Department staff.

Siceloff thanked the Commissioners for their time and attention and promised to follow up with them.

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Police Community Review Board

Commissioner and PCRB Chair Cobbler gave a brief update, starting with their meeting the night before at Hemphill Library, where 7 out of 9 members were in attendance so they had quorum. They reviewed one case in detail and after a lengthy discussion, made the unanimous decision to agree with the findings of professional standards but added an element that the officer needed sensitivity training.

Commissioner Wesley-Lamin asked if anyone was coming to the meetings to present their concerns. Cobbler responded that they had not yet had anyone come to a meeting to express a concern.

Chair Engle asked staff to provide more information about the goals for the PCRB outreach plan. Jodie Stanley explained that a draft of a six month outreach plan was in process, still lacking input from the PCRB about topics. Chair Engle added that the PCRB training was now complete, it was important to now move forward with the outreach piece, and asked to receive a copy of the outreach plan when it was ready to distribute.

IAC Chair Mohamed asked Commissioner Cobbler what type of sensitivity training was requested by the PCRB, adding that sometimes, different cultures will interpret motions or words differently. Cobbler clarified that both parties were African American and that the requested training was general in nature.

Education Committee

Nothing new to report.

Employment Committee

Commissioner Burkart announced that she was now the new Chair for the employment committee and that she had nothing new to report.

Human Services Committee

Chair Engle referred commissioners to Vice Chair King's report.

Montgomery/Wells Housing Committee

Not currently chaired.

International Advisory Committee

IAC Chair Mohamed introduced the newest member of the IAC leadership team, Yacine Kout, who was selected to replace Boukari Saidou who left the country. Saidou's absence left an opening on the IAC and they felt it was important to fill the role before elections in December. Mohamed explained that they received two nominations and unanimously selected Kout to fill the position. He asked if Kout would like to introduce himself.

Kout started by saying that he was a proud immigrant, and the son of immigrants. He was born and raised in Algeria and then moved to France. His wife was a refugee from Nicaragua. He described himself as a staunch supporter of the IAC and was glad to see an opening on the leadership team. He felt honored to serve his community and was committed to voicing the concerns of the immigrant community.

Chair Mohamed continued with the IAC report, sharing about the World Refugee Day 2016 celebration at Hester Park, in partnership with the Human Relations Department and many community partners. He also attended the Elimu Summer Camp Graduation, led by Esther Idassi, who held a 3 week summer camp for refugee youth. Kout shared about the dancing and other performers, music and celebration, adding that most attendees were from Africa. The kids really seemed to enjoy performing and celebrating. Mohamed also shared that at their last meeting, they invited members from the Partnership for Community Care to share about healthcare options for members of the immigrant community.

Mohamed went on to talk about their partnership with National Folk Festival staff, who agreed to feature local artists, including a South Korean player, Rwandan dance group, and an African cooking demo. The IAC was to have a local stage showcasing the diversity from Greensboro as well as a tent with informational vendors and partner agencies there to share about the services that they had to offer.

Mohamed also shared about the housing and refugees training program with New Arrivals institute, which was an opportunity for people to learn more about their rights and how to advocate for themselves.

Commissioner Hawkins commented that regarding the upcoming event with housing, he had spent time earlier that day speaking to a fair housing investigator currently serving with the state's Human Relations Commission, and offered to make the connection should he be needed to speak to the group.

I. CHAIR REPORT

Chair Engle reminded commissioners about the Greensboro Commission Retreat on August 13 and asked them to confirm attendance with staff. The location was clarified as HQ Greensboro at 111 W Lewis St.

Engle announced that Vice Chair King would be graduating from the Police Citizen's Academy on August 17 and encouraged commissioners to attend the ceremony in support of her efforts. He went on to encourage all commissioners to attend both Citizens Academy and City Academy.

Engle praised the most recent session in the Mental Health Awareness Series, Mental Health, Police and Public Safety, stating that it was a wonderful event, well attended, topics were very good, and that there may be a need to host another session around the same topic. Thanked staff member Jodie Stanley and Vice Chair King for their work in organizing the series. There was one complaint about the difficulty of parking, suggested that staff clarify that next time.

Engle reported a few things that happened in the month of July. After meeting with the Guilford Native American Association, it was discovered that somewhere in the timeline with Chair Williams and Mr. Oxendine's conversations, adding the change in HRC leadership, something was lost in translation and it seemed that we were moving into a relationship too quickly. At this point, in Engle's opinion, the GNAA was more interested in maintaining an autonomous presence in this community. Engle asked staff if they had sent out the dates for the Pow Wow, Stanley directed commissioner's attention to the list on the back of the newsletter which included the dates for the Pow Wow. Engle asked Stanley to follow up with the Pow Wow coordinators about having a table at the event or if they needed volunteers.

Engle continued, sharing that many things happened in July to further nationwide discussions around police community relations. From recent conversations in Council meeting, other commissioners and with community members, it seemed like by the time HRC was invited to the conversation, it was too late (ie, the incident already happened and emotions were heightened). It was tough to slow down momentum once it picked up. Engle shared that he had asked Commissioner Hawkins to work with a newly created Committee on Social Equity. The committee would have the charge of investigating questions like the following:

What are we doing in our prison system?

How are we supporting ex-offenders?

What are we doing about disparities in education?

What are we doing for members of the community that don't have access to insurance?

Engle added they were looking at different ways of doing this work, that many hands were needed, but there were things that the Human Relations Commission needed to try to do that can have an impact on police community relations in a more proactive way.

Commissioner Arbuckle asked a clarifying question, if this committee would be tasked with looking at the root causes of social inequity. Engle confirmed.

Commissioner Perry-Garnette asked to share a story about a young man that had lived at the YWCA for 9 months. He received his GED very quickly, received necessary certifications to work with Honda Jet, and received an offer for \$15 an hour from Honda Jet. The day before he was supposed to start work with them, he received a certified letter saying they had retracted their offer. He had two misdemeanors on his record, some very old. Now, he was extremely dejected. He had spent the last four months trying to figure out what to do. The YWCA hired him because he could not get a job. Watching what happened to him and his family gave Commissioner Perry-Garnette and her staff perspective about the impact of criminal records. She ended by saying that she could almost see what would drive someone to not care anymore.

Commissioner Cobbler asked what the charges were, and Perry-Garnette responded that one had to do with a domestic violence situation almost seven years prior, while the other was a petty larceny charge. Commissioners made suggestions about various employers that might be willing to hire. Arbuckle suggested that she had worked with the City of High Point to be the leader in employment and set an example by hiring ex-offenders, and perhaps we could do the same in Greensboro.

Engle suggested that Council Member Jamal Fox would be a good person for Hawkins to speak with about the new Committee, especially about systemic issues with ex-offenders.

IAC Chair Mohamed added that while issues were systemic, looking at and modeling the employers that were hiring ex-offenders was critical.

Chair Engle expressed that he looked forward to the first meeting of the Committee on Social Equity. He thanked commissioners for their passionate willingness to serve, adding that there was not room to be territorial but to share the workload and work together towards common goals.

Commissioner Hawkins spoke up, adding to Chair Engle's comments that this movement was beyond necessary. The action of getting behind something after something has already taken place was not effective, and this time the Commission had the opportunity to address issues before a series of events took place. He noted that the Committee on Social Equity was something he felt community members would want to get behind, work with and support. Terms like systemic racism and institutional racism were becoming so embedded that most people were oblivious to it. The new committee planned to focus on three main areas of social inequity: education, socioeconomic, and youth/incarceration. The goal was to prevent a negative outcome. He urged his fellow commissioners to join him and get to work.

Commissioner Wils asked if the new committee would look at policy, or be working with local nonprofits. Hawkins responded that the committee would be operating on a number of different fronts, looking at policy, but also partnering with local grassroots and other partnerships that could extend to the State and national level. He added a desire to reach out to the international community, as Greensboro is considered a hub for refugees.

Chair Engle added that in creating a forum or a program, the end goal was to establish a plan of action to implement change. Hawkins shared that the overall sentiment of the committee would be, "No more barriers, only bridges."

II. STAFF REPORT

Staff member Jodie Stanley and Commissioner Hawkins shared their experience at the recent Triad Commission Retreat, hosted by Winston-Salem and attended by Greensboro and High Point commissioners and Human Relations staff members. Hawkins mentioned their ethics review policy that applied to all employees and commissioners, and their focus on fair housing, sharing that staff/departmental updates were given. He added that Gene Troy from the NC State Human Relations Commission gave insight as to the future plans of the State as far as fair housing.

Hawkins continued, sharing that a member of the NorthStar LGBT Center (Wooten Gough) spoke about the LGBTQ community, addressing concerns of trust between LGBTQ members and law enforcement. Gough shared events of prostitution within the LGBTQ community as it related to the police department. The Human Relations Commission and Department in Winston-Salem have now initiated "Truth Talks" that addressed various subjects and public concerns.

Jodie Stanley added that continued conversations with the Triad commissions are planned, and that Greensboro may host next year.

Chair Engle expressed interest in the ethics policy, asking staff to follow up with City Attorney Tom Carruthers. He went on to commend all commissioners, reminding them that they were appointed by a City Council Member and encouraging them to continue talking to their Council Members to keep them informed of the work of the Commission. He stressed that the role of the Commission was to listen to the community, assess concerns, and report to council, but that they also had the opportunity to build a bridge to council and enhance understanding, and maintaining relationships was important.

Jodie Stanley added that the Women's Equality Day Breakfast tickets were on sale for \$25 per ticket. She also encouraged commissioners to send in their monthly reports tracking their activity for the month, as the data would be used for the annual report which would be sent to Council. Chair Engle added that the

reporting process was simplified in an effort to minimize barriers, and emphasized the importance of reporting and tracking activity.

Engle shared that the recently discussed Racial Equity Institute training was still open to commissioners and he encouraged them to attend. He added that there was not any available City funding at this point in time to allot for training, although staff was committed to look for creative solutions to work it out. He was aware of limited scholarships available through the coordinators.

Discussion was held between Chair Engle and Commissioner Arbuckle about the possibility of a shortened version of an REI-inspired retreat for all commissioners.

Commissioner Burkart asked if Vice Chair King was interested in being nominated again for Vice Chair. Engle confirmed that yes, she was interested in serving in that role for another year.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

To Adjourn the Meeting

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

S/ _____

Chairperson

Approved: _____

Date

Greensboro Human Relations Commission