



## **Meeting Minutes & Business Notes**

**October 13, 2016**

**The Human Relations Commission (HRC)** convened for its regular monthly meeting at 6:03 p.m. on the above date in the Board Room at the YWCA of Greensboro. **Chair Zac Engle** presided over the meeting.

### **Commissioner Attendance**

**Present:** Zac Engle-Chair, Jacqueline King-Vice Chair, Samuel Hawkins, Jr., Moussa Issifou, Linda Perry-Garnette, David Wils, Tom Phillips, Lindsay Burkart, Ed Cobbler

**Absent:** Margaret Arbuckle, Chantale Wesley-Lamin, Freeman Murphy

### **Human Relations Department Staff:**

**Dr. Love Crossling, Director**

**Allen Hunt, Supervisor** ✓

**Jodie Stanley, Education & Outreach Coordinator**

### **I. Call to Order**

**Chair Engle** called the meeting to order at 6:03pm. In the interest of time, Chair Engle directed that the public comment be given enough time, the committee reports directly followed the moment of silence.

### **II. Moment of Silent Meditation**

**Chair Engle** called for a moment of silent meditation.

### **III. Chair's Instruction**

Chair Engle advised that no speakers were scheduled to speak to the Commission. Chair Engle proceeded to recognize guests visiting the Commission for the purpose of public comment and to have committee reports follow thereafter.

## **IV. Committee Reports**

### **Education**

Commissioner Wils commented on recent efforts of the Committee to build community partnerships with the Guilford Education Alliance and Say Yes. He commented that community participants at their last meeting expressed concerns that the City was high jacking the process. Commissioner Wils detailed that the Equity and Education Group that they have been working with has been doing some education about systems of inequity and racism. The goal of the group is to develop a history of racism and desegregation, not integration, because they are not the same thing. The role of the Committee is still to be defined. Commissioner Wils advised that he has worked Commissioner Arbuckle exploring different programming options for the Committee.

### **Employment Committee**

Commissioner Burkart commented that they held a meeting and Commissioner King joined them and community member, Winnie Robinson, and two other community members. Burkart reached out to Chair Goddard from the Commission on the Status of Women to create a partnership. She promised to elaborate in more detail at an upcoming meeting.

### **Human Services Committee**

Commissioner Jackie King stated that they have secured a speaker for the MLK Breakfast and a diverse group of ministers from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faith. She encouraged members to share the event with friends and sponsors. They need to finalize some of the entertainment elements. They have secured the Top Teens to usher and a volunteer coordinator for the event. Ms. King provided a brief overview of sponsorship options. King highlighted the Mental Health Series finale, Mental Health and Housing at the Greensboro Historical Museum and 5:30pm.

### **Montgomery/Wells Housing Committee**

Chair Engle inquired if staff had a report concerning the last fair housing outreach series event that occurred the night before. Hunt advised that a report has not been finalized, but would be forthcoming. Chair Engle relayed comments about the housing forum and stated that Commissioner Trapp from Guilford County was present and that the forum was well attended and well received.

### **International Advisory Committee**

IAC Vice Chair, Yacine Kout, commented on recent efforts of the IAC; which include; voter awareness efforts; including partnership efforts with Church World Service and other community service organizations. Kout commented on recent threats of violence at local schools that have impacted the safety of Latino and other minority students. Kout commented about a recent concern impacting the Somali Community over a death of a Somali born resident in Greensboro during a robbery of a local business owned by a member of that Community. Kout further advised that Somali Community Members advised him and the IAC that the individual suspected of killing the Somali Community Member entered the same business/store and threatened those present and telling them that he would kill anyone who would talk to the police about him. GPD has been called to the scene when the individual arrived, but all they did was order the individual to leave. They did not arrest the person, and as a result, Kout advised that

members of the Somali Community feel that the response by GPD that day was adequate and that they are not being adequately informed concerning the investigation process of the Greensboro Police Department (GPD) and they are uncertain about how the investigation is being handled. Ed Cobbler advised that the Somali Community Members contact the investigating Detectives' supervisor concerning receiving timely updates. Members of the Commission expressed empathy over the situation.

### **Police Community Review Board**

Ed Cobbler spoke about the success of the last PCRFB meeting. He advised that about 40-50 community members attended and good information was shared between the Board and the Community. He stated that no cases were reviewed. He hoped that people there understand more about what the Board does. Chair Engle advised that he has heard great things about the outreach plan and process of the PCRFB and that the next outreach meeting is December 7.

### **Commission General Comments and Inquiries**

Chair Engle inquired about progress on the Thrive GSO meetings. Allen Hunt advised Chair Engle that he is not on the planning committee concerning their programming, but that to his knowledge, Thrive GSO planning committee members did meet earlier in the day. Allen Hunt further advised that Dr. Love Crossling asked him to relay to the Commission that Department programmatic updates would be forthcoming shortly, separately from the Commission meeting staff report. Chair Engle announced thanked Jean Brown for her service to the Commission. King advised that she and Wesley-Lamin went to a regional commissions retreat and that both commissioners would like the HRC to host the next quarterly meeting. On behalf of Commissioner Wesley-Lamin, Commissioner King inquired on the status of the Social Equity Committee and sought feedback from Commissioner Hawkins in this regard. Hawkins advised that they were going to meet in September, but that they had to push back the meeting because there was a question regarding the format and program efforts, particularly Thrive GSO. Chari Engel advised that Hawkins make sure that the Thrive GSO meeting is labeled as a social equity meeting.

### **V. Chair Report**

Chair Engel requested that Allen Hunt request Jodie Stanley to send out links to the Doing Our Work Sessions to HRC. Chair Engle advised members about the nature of the group and encouraged attendance.

### **VI. Review of Meeting Minutes**

September HRC Minutes were reviewed and approved as amended. Motion be Commissioner Wils and second by Commissioner Cobbler. The Minutes were approved by unanimous vote of the Commission. Amendments were written by Commissioner Wils and Chair Engle.

## **VII. Recognition of Visitors and Public Comments**

Audience member inquired about the details of the Somalis Community incident that was the subject of IAC Vice Chair comments. He asked if the responding officers were on duty. Kout advised that the officers responded to the 911 call from the store owner. Kout advised that a plain clothes officer was the first responder.

Mr. Louis Pitts and Rev. Nelson Johnson greeted the Commission and spoke about the Yourse incident on June 17<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Pitts commented that anyone would know that the officer did wrong and that the same officer cost the City \$50,000.00 and that anyone would recognize that there was a problem with the particular officer. Mr. Pitt's stated that the officer was allowed to stay on active duty until July 17<sup>th</sup>, almost two months, and so the issue is that how thorough, competent and independent was the police review, because we learned today from one briefing that the first line supervisor was a corporal, and then to a sergeant and then to a lieutenant, none of them seem to have a reaction, like the community had and it appears that a full majority of City Council had, which is, you look at the video and you know something is wrong, so we got, and we could ask a million questions, but we feel it is more of a procedural question that we wish to be addressed by a resolution. We have at least one council woman, Sharon Hightower, at two different council meetings, has asked publically of the City Attorney, to receive the internal raw data that was generated in that process from Internal Review. So, that, she and her colleagues, can look independently to see if it was handled through the lenses of proper policing and if it trustworthy.

Mr. Pitts stated that the City Council has already acknowledged in two different resolutions that this incident and its handling and its timeline has generated considerable distrust in the Community and the City. Mr. Pitts advised that he asked the City Attorney if the general documents could be handed over to Councilwoman Hightower and still not once has she been given it; even though they have been briefed. They were briefed with the final conclusions and nor allowed to make their own decisions. He stated that Mr. Carruthers' answer was less than accurate, I'm not saying it was disingenuous and that City Council as a whole can make such request. Mr. Pitts advised that he concurs that City Council can do that. But, he does not think that there has to be a majority vote to see this information. She should have an opportunity to view the data and come back to her colleagues and make a pitch to them concerning the matter. We are seeking from you that you form a brief resolution; not with findings of fact, though I would be glad if you did. He asked that the HRC join with/stand with Councilwoman Hightower and any other Council Member that wants to see the raw data, so that the record be preserved and not destroyed or altered and provided to them. Now there is more that I could ask, but Rev. Johnson feel that there should an Independent Citizens' Commission impaneled to review the documents, but at least I think this a half step for you and communicate it to the City on behalf of the Council Member that there be no delay. Let them look at everything and maintain public confidence.

Rev. Johnson stated he was pastor of Faith Community Church and Co-Founder of the Beloved Community Center. He stated that he would probably not be here if not for the treatment to Brother Yourse. He stated that he joins with Attorney Pitts to ask for an independent commission to review every email and scrap of paper concerning (the event) and to provide context here. Rev. Johnson recalled events related to an incident involving the Scales Brothers. Rev. Johnson stated that the agreement signed by the Scales Brothers was contrary to decent law enforcement and so unsatisfactory. Rev. Johnson advised that half of the people of Greensboro have never met him, but that they agree with him. We thought it was reasonable to establish a mechanism. I listened to the

Chief of Police and what they said and I can tell you that it is going to go nowhere in the community ladies and gentlemen, especially in a community that has been historically abused. We do not have to keep doing this, until the city reaches a boiling point in the community. The HRC is an important part of taking a stand with a Councilwoman. The Police Union and DA Office have taken a stand. The Police Department needs your help. Rev. Nelson asked the HRC to join with them to stand for justice. If you do not do this, this will come up over and over again and won't stop. We don't need to cover up this. Rev. Johnson briefly commented on the Bennett College party incident and about five GPD officers that were fired because they were whistle blowers and for no lawful reason. Rev. Nelson is calling to train members from various churches to build social capital in the community through community oversight and building economic stimulus. He requested that the HRC support Sister Hightower and get her the information necessary, and prevent this law, if it is the law, so I ask you to prevent this wrong and make Greensboro a much better city.

Commissioner Cobbler commented that it was the PCRB (CRC) that handled the Scales case and were responsible for the outcome. Rev. Johnson retorted that he and the Scales brothers received a letter dismissing their concern. He and his colleagues met with members of City Government and were the ones who actually got the charges dropped against the Scales Brothers. Rev. Nelson thanked the PCRB (CRC) for what they did. Mr. Pitts commented that the Chief overruled the CRC. Commissioner Cobbler responded stating that it was the CRC who got it back and sent it to the City Manager. And, the City Manager was the one who made the decision. A back and forth ensued, between Mr. Pitts and Commissioner Cobbler and paused when Chair Engle injected himself. Mr. Pitts came back once more and stated that none of that would have happened if not for the letter writing and the protests and again, but for the people it would have not ended that way.

Chair Engle commented that from his perspective that we have gone through this as a City and the procedure has changed involving more participation from the Board. He advised that the PCRB is underutilized, very diverse and he took a lot of time screening them and interviewing them. The idea is that there is an accountability mechanism in place. Chair Engle proposed that we ask the PCRB and or City Council, though it is not within the realm of the complaint process, that they be tasked with the review of this, so that they can communicate back their finding that to me is so that it is not just one person communicating back findings.

Lindy Perry-Garnett thanked Rev. Johnson and Rev. Cardes Brown because of their work the community has been kept safe, in her opinion they have kept the community safer than the police department has, because of their work with the youth. Commissioner Perry Garnett commented on the confidentiality standards that bind the PCRB. She believes that the release of the video did not put the community at ease or increase the public confidence and falls far short, it has created more problems than it solved, it does the exact opposite. It is irresponsible. And, to do nothing after, has decreased the confidence. Commissioner Perry Garnett stated that Councilwoman Hightower told her that she intends to file a complaint with the PCRB and force it through and that Perry-Garnett agrees it should come through the PCRB. The Commissioner stated that even if PCRB finds the materials egregious there is nothing that they can do and that it should be released to City Council and if they deem it appropriate that it go to the PCRB.

Chair Engle commented on the nature of making such requests. He said that he feels comfortable tonight that this needs to go to the Review Board (PCRB).

Commissioner Phillips advised that this request is not unheard of; having been there, it has been done in the past when the whole City Council asks for such a request. Over the years, we have seen situations where council members have absolutely driven staff crazy by requesting all kinds of reports, have they followed that a hundred percent; no, but technically, yeah, should they get a request that is controversial, it should go to the whole Council and Sharon did say in the council meeting that they don't need a separate independent board, but that it could go to the Review Board. If a complaint is filed and the Council says we want the PCRБ to look at this, then they will have to follow all the standard rules, but if Council says hey we want you to look at this, then we are not under the law that governs the complaint review process. So, we may be able to do this, but I don't know. Chair Engel remarked that they would have to separate out the personnel files. Commissioner Cobbler added

Ed Cobbler echoed Commissioner Phillips comments. He stated that who better than the PCRБ to look at the material.

Commissioner Hawkins advised that doing this would be prudent and put the process in better standing with the community. To have the Council and possibly the PCRБ, it puts a different eye on it. There are some in the citizens of Greensboro feel that there has been a disguised eye, a covered eye, a blind eye to what has taken place; many of the citizens of Greensboro. The politicking so far has encouraged people to take actions that are not safe for the community. It is core to the HRC mission. It is incumbent on us to get ahead of this before Greensboro ends up on national television for being a city that does not protect its citizens.

Commissioner King advised that the PCRБ and HRC should push City Council to do this. She stated that she would rather do more than less and that the HRC should request it and the PCRБ should review it and request it, upon our findings. The more people we can get around this the better. We are here to make the community feel safe. This is what we are charged with by City Council. If find that it has not been handled right.

Commissioner Burkhart stated that this should be what the PCRБ is for and if we ask instead of the PCRБ we can get around the whole confidentiality thing.

Chair Engle stated that this is the purpose of the PCRБ. It has been published that this is their purpose.

Commissioner Phillips echoed Chair Engle and if City Council is asking us (PCRБ/HRC) to then refer it back to them for final review.

Commissioner King stated that you don't need a trained eye, you could be a child and see that at the Police disclosure meeting was a cover up.

Commissioner Wils inquired why the information has been held back by City Manager /Management from us.

Rev. Nelson responded that Councilwoman Hightower is an elected official and should have access. We the public can put them in and we can take them out. We can do that to City Council. They need a better relationship with the public...this is democratizing a closed system, that has been closed.

He stated that several expectations have been made and that there comes a time when the rules need to be adjusted for such a time as this and it should not be shielded by another layer of unelected government officials. He stated that he is proud of Sharon. Commissioner Wils asked again why the information has not been provided to her. Commissioner King advised that the majority of Council must make such a request. Allen Hunt and Tom Phillips stated that there are very limited exceptions/circumstances when City Council can make such disclosures by majority vote. Comments came from several members about the process and use of force issues.

Mr. Pitts stated that the internal review system (GPD) reeks, it simply reeks, and when she (Hightower) said I want to look for myself and it's a new day. Mr. Pitts stated that Mr. Carruthers advised that the Council has the power to act only when there is a majority vote of Council. The distinction there is that they are not acting as a public body. They are not acting until they take an action to condemn the chief, fire the City Manager or a staff member. They are concealing police misconduct, it butchers the concept that government operates at the consent of the governed. We are asking you to weigh in that the Councilwoman or all of them have a chance to say no and look at it.

Commissioner Wils stated that he witnessed several times for documentation from this department or another and that without majority vote, individual members have asked for information and it was given to them. So my follow question is, does the City Council work for the Police or do the Police work for City Council.

Mr. Pitts stated that Commissioner Wils knows the answer. We the people have become passive bystanders. The Bill that we have put forth to change public records laws and shape the national conversation.

In the middle of the larger conversation and cross talk, Commissioner Wils moved and Perry Garnett seconded that City Council grant Sharon Hightower's request.

Chair Engle asked that the Commission wait until Commissioner Cobbler return to vote.

Commissioner Phillips advised that surely that it is the Mayor and City Council that should grant Sharon Hightower her request. Part of the problem over the years is that they don't follow the rules when it is not controversial, but when it is controversial then they pull the rules out. But, they really shouldn't do it at all, they follow Roberts Rules, but they usually have these general discussions and unless someone objects they go along with it.

Mr. Pitts in an elevated tone rebutted Commissioner Phillips by saying that this is exactly where we are starting from based on the incorrect advice from the City Attorney. It's her right to have that. Who has disempowered her and our right to have that?

Chair Engle commented that from a democratic point of view and they tell me that there is a review process; I don't expect that it is going to happen in a City Council meeting. It is a different situation. This is how meeting go until 2am in the morning, so it is not that I am not sympathetic to this motion, but I think it belongs with the PCRB. When an issue is picked up and it made to be the Council's thing to look at, when it is for other people/groups to look at.

Commissioner King stated that it should not just be for Sharon Hightower to look at it, but for the entire Council to look at it.

Chair Engle pointed out that this is not what the motion stated. It would have to be a friendly amendment.

Commissioner Wils advised that he accepted the friendly amendment.

Commissioner Issifou stated that Hightower alone should not just look at, the whole Council should.

Commissioner Wils and several members commented about the police process issues and use of force issues. Wils reflected that he heard a police representative say when a use of force is allowable. We have to say that there are circumstances that are so volatile that they rise to level of public confidence and people are asking some very real questions and they are very concerned and an elected official, who we as the people have the power to hire and fire, has requested this documentation from the people that have been hired and can be fired by the people we have control over. He stated it was a no brainer and we have to support the Councilwoman.

Chair Engle asked for clarification and requested a restatement of the motion.

Commissioner Phillips stated that the materials should be viewed in the entirety. It sounds like the process needs to be changed. If certain things happen, it should be elevated to a higher level.

Commissioner Perry-Garnett advised that the slowness of the process leaves an impression of a cover up. The decision should be able to be made in a reasonable time line. What is glaring in the time line is who what saw what when. Mrs. Hightower said that I want the name of that person. The Chief said that some lowly corporal just started and there was a delay.

Cross talk ensued. Chair Engel called for the motion to be restated and for a vote on the motion.

The motion as stated by Commissioner Wils with Amendments as seconded by Commissioner Perry-Garnette:

**Motion:**

**“I, David Wils, move that City Council and the PCRB, as uninterested bodies, be granted access to the materials in its entirety based on the extraordinary circumstances concerning the Yourse-Cole incident.”**

Moved by: Commissioner Wils  
Seconded by: Commissioner Perry Garnett  
Passed:  
Unanimous

A post motion conversation ensued between Commissioner Perry Garnett and Commissioner Cobbler concerning how early the Chief knew of the Cole-Yourse incident. Indefinable cross talk followed. Chair Engle advised that the next step is to have the motion reduced to paper. Rev. Johnson thanked everyone and advised that the officials; including the DA will have to answer.

An audience member stated that he has always been told that the media influences public perception of events and that trust needs to be bridged between several different communities to bring people together; not just between officer and civilian.

**VIII. Other Business**

None

**IX. Adjournment**

**Motion:**

**“Motion to adjourn.”**

Moved by: Commissioner Hawkins  
Seconded by: Commissioner Cobbler  
Passed:  
Unanimous

End of report. 7:21pm

Minutes Approved by:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson**

**Greensboro Human Relations Commission**

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**Date**