



Meeting Minutes

October 5, 2017

The Human Relations Commission (HRC) convened for their monthly meeting at 6:00 p.m. on the above date in the Board Room at the YWCA of Greensboro. **Chair Samuel Hawkins** presided over the meeting.

Commissioners Present: Chair Samuel Hawkins, Zac Engle, Lindy Perry-Garnette, Margaret Arbuckle, Michelle Kennedy, Tom Phillips, David Sevier, David Wils

Commissioners Absent: Vice Chair Moussa Issifou, Lindsay Burkart, Kumar Bhardwaj, Irving Allen, Ed Cobbler

Human Relations Department Staff: Love Crossling

Legal Department Staff: Rosetta Davidson

Council Liaison:

City Manager's Office:

Visitors: Franca Jalloh (IAC Chair), Raleigh Stout, Saroj Patnaik, Zaynah Afada

I. Call to Order

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

II. Moment of Silent Meditation

Chair Hawkins called for a moment of silent meditation.

III. Introduction of Visitors and Speakers

Chair Hawkins welcomed all present.

Chair Report

Chair Hawkins expressed that he recently met with Tawanna Robinson, an executive member of Fellowship Hall, the first accredited hospital in the State of NC. They cared for patients struggling with addiction and Chair Hawkins stated that he would update the commission on their activity and the potential of a future partnership.

Police Community Review Board

In Commissioner Cobbler's absence, Commissioner Phillips shared that he had attended a National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) conference in Spokane, WA within the last month. Rosetta Davidson and four other City staff were present. Much information was shared, connections were made, and he was struck that Greensboro was in a better position than so many other cities, who were struggling with more serious issues. He stated that some cities were still discussing the viability and desirability of body worn cameras. He affirmed that the PCRБ assessment committee was committed to continuing to research and reporting back to the HRC.

Phillips stated that the night before, they had met very briefly to review a case. Chair Hawkins asked when the case originated. Phillips responded that it originated in March and that the PCRБ was still within the timeframe.

Hawkins asked for the NACOLE website. Phillips advised that it would be best to google the site.

Commissioner Arbuckle asked for an update on the report to City Council and the status of that. Sevier advised that the report would come in the next several moments.

Education Committee

Commissioner Arbuckle stated that a formal meeting had not been planned yet, but she wanted to make the commissioners aware of larger community meetings with the school board that she was invited to be part of. Arbuckle stated that there was tension between various districts and how they were interacting with the Superintendent.

Commissioner Phillips asked what happened with the equity summit. Dr. Crossling responded that Commissioner Wils had been in communication with Ivan Canada, who shared that there were already initiatives happening to train teachers. In an effort to not duplicate efforts, it was decided to pause the effort. Engle stated that he recalled an initiative planned for the fall. Crossling affirmed that it was in the original plan, but after conversations with Canada and others doing the work, all agreed it was best to delay the actual event in the hopes of creating something that was better designed to meet needs.

Human Services

Chair Hawkins stated that this committee was in need of a chair and he encouraged commissioners to consider serving in this capacity.

Montgomery-Wells Housing Committee

Commissioner Issifou stated that the series was underway.

International Advisory Committee

Zaynah Afada, IAC Executive Member, reported that the IAC Lunch and Learn on August 16 was a success, and that the next meeting on September 15 would address DACA concerns as they related to education equity.

IAC Chair Franca Jalloh briefly mentioned the upcoming event hosted by the India Association of the Triad on November 4. She invited IAC Vice Chair and IAT President Saroj Patnaik to share. He invited all present to their Diwali celebration. He also noted that someone had recently contacted him from the Deep Roots about a multicultural celebration the following week. He noted that the recent sanctuary event was very touching, and he acknowledged Chair Jalloh for her attendance at so many events.

Jalloh praised former IAC Vice Chair Jose Oliva for being sworn in as a member of Governor Roy Cooper's Advisory Council on Hispanic Latino Affairs.

Hawkins thanked Jalloh for her report and welcomed Commissioner Wils, who had just arrived. He asked if Wils had anything to add to the Education Report. Wils noted that he had spoken at the IAC's recent Education Equity forum and thanked the IAC for the opportunity to speak. Patnaik commented that it was good to see several candidates running for Council in attendance.

Hawkins commended the other commissioners that were in attendance at the event at that meeting, including himself and Irving Allen, and Council Member Abuzuaiter.

Committee for Social Equity

Chair Hawkins shared about his upcoming Thrive GSO event at NC Works Career Center on October 12 from 11:30 to 1. The following week was a partnership with Jeremy Rinker and the counter stories project. UNCG students were hoping to present.

Commissioner Perry-Garnette commented that she had heard through the grapevine that Mark Walker was invited to speak at the upcoming MLK Breakfast. She asked if that was true, and if so, what the thought process was behind the invitation. Perry-Garnette noted that Mark Walker had recently made incredibly derogatory comments about women and was not particularly supportive of any underserved population. She noted that this was out of character for this particular event. Hawkins shared that Congressman Walker and his field representative Rudy Walker had attended many Thrive GSO events. Mark Walker expressed a desire to be part of the MLK Breakfast. After discussion, it was decided that there would be two speakers to do the call to action, one representing the Democratic party, and one representing the Republican party, so as to balance the perspective and portray a unified front.

Commissioner Kennedy agreed with the concerns expressed by Perry-Garnette, adding that if an offer had been extended, it should be rescinded. The MLK Breakfast was an event that had to do with equity. Kennedy stated that she would refuse to attend if he spoke, and Perry-Garnette agreed.

Commissioner Arbuckle noted that it had never been the practice to invite elected officials to speak at the event and agreed that it was an inappropriate venue.

Chair Hawkins noted that the keynote speaker was Dr. T. Anthony Spearman. Kennedy asked who the other person was doing the call to action. Hawkins responded that the second call to action speaker would be Amos Quick, pastor and member of the General Assembly. Arbuckle asked, for clarity, if the invitation was prompted by Mark Walker's staff. Dr. Crossling explained that the way the process played out was that Congressman Walker had participated on a regular basis in Thrive efforts, supported the international community, and she noted that he had been engaged actively in Human Relations events and activities and was supportive. The invitation for Mark Walker to speak was extended before his recent comments about women. If the Commission should choose to vote or make a different decision that evening, it was something they would need to decide. In response to the question about other elected officials speaking, the Mayor had always been a part of the program.

She added that there would be a required planning meeting for all program participants this year as an effort to address the goals and vision of the program. Commissioner Engle offered that there was a committee that planned this event, that perhaps it was best to allow the planning committee to handle the issue. If the HRC wasn't happy with what the committee decided, then the commission would take action. Kennedy countered that it was unnecessary to defer to the committee, as there was clear direction on the part of the commission that it was appropriate to take action and rescind the invitation. The sentiments of the Commission were clear, and it was important to acknowledge that. Perry-Garnette asked why the HRC couldn't just make the decision, instead of letting the committee handle it and then let the committee come back and tell them what to do. She noted that perhaps it was difficult to understand how distasteful his comments were, and how they were received by women. She stated that it would be irresponsible for the body to sit on this issue and not address it. She reminded them of the seriousness and gravity and meaning of the breakfast.

Hawkins noted again that the invitation had been extended before the remarks were made, pointing out that statements had been made even within their HRC meetings that had been found disagreeable by others. He acknowledged their sentiments but pointed out that the opportunity to join the committee was always open.

Perry-Garnette passed a motion to vote to rescind the invitation to Mark Walker to participate in the MLK Breakfast based on his recent remarks. Kennedy seconded the motion.

Arbuckle expressed displeasure in the fact that the invitation was extended in the first place, adding that it was inappropriate that any elected officials speak at the event with the exception of the Mayor. Commissioner Phillips asked if the motion only applied to Walker. Arbuckle suggested an amendment that would extend to all invited elected officials. Perry-Garnette asked if it was open to discussion.

Dr. Crossling offered that a more sweeping decision would also impact the involvement of Council members at other programming. Kennedy agreed that it was important to differentiate between the two motions and suggested that these two should be separate and individual motions.

There was general agreement that the first motion should stand. Wils stated that in light of the original motion, not only did Mark Walker make derogatory comments towards women, at other points he had stated that Democrats had tricked impoverished populations. It was Wils' opinion that people had a brain and could think for themselves. He also understood that Mark Walker was a Congressman that represented parts of Greensboro.

Engle stated that he would join in voting to rescind the invitation, pointing out that the volunteers on the planning committee weren't equipped with the information at the time they extended the invitation. Perry-Garnette confirmed that the motion was to rescind the invitation. Sevier agreed, noting that while Mark Walker was a nice man and a pastor, he did not agree with Walker's positions on legislation. If Walker spoke at the breakfast, he expressed concern that the HRC would be seen as supporting the legislation and positions of Mark Walker.

Arbuckle asked how Perry-Garnette found out. Perry-Garnette stated that the information had come from former HRC commissioner Jacqueline King.

Phillips stated that with Walker's recent comments aside, all you had to do was view the news each night to see how people were upset about politics. Phillips didn't want to see that impact the Breakfast. He didn't want politics at the Breakfast.

Hawkins stated that the original premise was to present a united front, from both political sides, that while they didn't agree, they could stand together on issues of unity and equity. They could put to action the changes that could be made within policy, culture and behavior. Hawkins noted that if the two politicians were in the same room, surely they would have much to share and discuss and that there would be agreed consensus to action and change. Hawkins asked if there were any additional comments.

Perry-Garnette stated that in years past, it was an energizing event that left people feeling hopeful and inspired. She noted that this was not the event to discuss differences or work things out publicly. This was an event to highlight speakers that were already doing the work in the right ways, not people that were just trying. Perry-Garnette noted that if he had made a comment about African Americans, this discussion would not even be happening. As a woman, she was offended that this decision was even being discussed.

Hawkins responded to Commissioner Arbuckle, noting that at no point was a political figure considered to be a keynote speaker for the breakfast and the Mayor was consistently the only political figure at this event. He addressed Perry-Garnette that the conversation was not in debate in an attempt to dissuade that feeling.

Arbuckle noted that she was tired of being lectured to by the chair. Hawkins responded that it was simply conversation.

Motion to Rescind the Invitation Extended to Congressman Mark Walker to Deliver a Call to Action at the 2018 MLK Breakfast

Moved by: Commissioner Perry-Garnette

Seconded by: Commissioner Kennedy

The motion passed unanimously.

Arbuckle passed a motion to remove the opportunity for any elected official to be part of the MLK program with the exception of the Mayor. She pointed out that January would be the start of an election year, and that it was important that we not allow elected officials to use the forum as a forum for their running.

Wils suggested that they instead make a strong recommendation to the committee about that. Should they rescind the invitation to Amos Quick as well, it was important to make the two rescinded invitations clearly separate so that there was no question about the intent of the first motion. Phillips pointed out that representative Quick was very active and engaged in community initiatives, boys and girls club, etc. and agreed that it was important to consider his participation separately. It was his personal opinion that politics should not play a part in the breakfast.

Perry-Garnette stated that she was reluctant to have the decision about Congressman Walker being uninvited be impacted by the timing of also uninviting Amos Quick. In past experience, the rule was no political figures for the simple fact that people would then consider that it was politically motivated. Perry-Garnette agreed with Wils, that it was critical to uninvite Mark Walker because of his recent comments and make that statement very clear. Perry-Garnette noted that it wasn't right to uninvite Quick for the simple reason that he was already invited and had not done anything.

Hawkins affirmed that he didn't condone misogynistic remarks of any kind.

VI. Review of Meeting Minutes

Chair Hawkins noted that they no longer had quorum and he asked staff for direction on how to approach the approval of minutes. Dr. Crossling advised that meeting minutes would have to be approved at the next monthly meeting.

IX. Adjournment

Meeting informally adjourned at 7:19 pm.

Minutes Approved by:

Signed: _____

Chairperson

Greensboro Human Relations Commission

_____/_____/_____

Date