



## **Meeting Minutes**

**June 7, 2018**

**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:** Moussa Issifou, Cynthia Coleman, Zac Engle, Margaret Arbuckle, David Craft

**Commissioners Absent:** Irving Allen, David Sevier, Hilary Goldberg, Samuel Hawkins, Tom Phillips, Lindy Perry-Garnette

**Human Relations Department Staff:** Love Crossling, Jodie Stanley

**Legal Department Staff:** Rosetta Davidson

**Council Liaison:** Marikay Abuzuaiter

**City Manager's Office:**

**Visitors:** Elizabeth

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

Vice Chair Issifou started the meeting without quorum at 6:19 pm.

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

Vice Chair Issifou called for a moment of silent meditation.

### **III. Introduction of Visitors and Speakers**

Vice Chair Issifou acknowledged visitors and invited them to introduce themselves. He mentioned that Franca Jalloh, IAC chair, would provide an update.

## **Chair Report**

Vice Chair Issifou read Chair Hawkins' letter, which included a mention of the recent fire at Summit Ave fire and the loss of the lives of five children. He noted that although the event was horrific it united the community. Issifou noted that IAC Chair Jalloh would provide updated information on this incident when she arrived.

## **Police Community Review Board**

Chair not present.

## **Education Committee**

Commissioner Arbuckle stated that there was nothing to report.

## **Montgomery-Wells Housing Committee**

Commissioner Issifou reported that work was still in progress for the 2018-19 series.

## **Human Services**

Chair position vacant.

## **Staff Report**

Dr. Love Crossling provided a brief reminder that reports were important to submit each month, that the reports served not only to keep commissioners abreast of progress and activity, but that staff used the information in the reports to highlight and feature the work of the commission. Work included generating program but also supporting the work of other agencies in the City.

Dr. Crossling noted that work was in progress for the 2018-19 programming calendar. She noted that the HRC had a strong history of doing meaningful and engaging programming, and that if there was a need for any type of support for programming, staff was available to assist. Crossling added that if direction about developing a program was helpful or needed, that staff was available to assist with that as well. She noted that for committee chairs, especially, it was important to think about programming for the coming year and what they would need.

Arbuckle asked if with Wils resigning, the education committee needed to be reconfigured and asked Coleman if she would be interested in serving on the education committee. Crossling noted that she had met with the new Diversity and Inclusion representative Barry Brinkley adding that he was very supportive about the potential for partnering with the HRC.

Crossling provided a 2017-2018 progress report on the Thrive GSO initiative, giving first a brief background on the goal of the hub. She noted that there were now over 190 members on the

distribution list of reentry agencies, that programming had impacted 455 attendees. She shared about the most recent reentry event, Reentry Employment Fair, sharing that the panel included all people with criminal records and that one was a City employee. She shared that upcoming programming included plans for an HR Business Training to address business concerns about hiring people with criminal records. Crossling noted again that the department was in a season of forecasting programming and encouraged commissioners to consider programming they felt was important and to share that information with staff.

Jodie Stanley provided a brief review of the MLK Planning committee, their process, including a timeline, scheduled meetings and topics, sponsorships and potential speakers. Questions were asked about online payments, staff advised that it was not logistically possible to provide that option to everyone. Craft suggested that perhaps the committee could consider someone with the type of background that had not been considered before. Stanley encouraged speaker suggestions. Commissioners offered Bishop Michael Curry and Dennis Quaintance Weaver as possible speakers. Future meetings would be held at the end of June, in August and October.

### **International Advisory Committee**

Chair Franca Jalloh thanked all for coming and for the opportunity to speak. She expressed gratitude for the support from the HRC and City Council in the past month, as events surrounding the recent tragedy where five children were killed in a fire. She shared that the IAC had been instrumental in bringing the international community together and surrounding the family with support and comfort. She pointed out that the condition of the apartment complex was inexcusable, and she was asking people in leadership if they themselves would be willing to live in those conditions. She shared that people in the immigrant community, along with City officials, were working closely with the residents to ensure that conditions improved, and that the IAC wanted to write a letter to the editor about the issue. She also mentioned that there was an event in the coming weekend to raise awareness about advocacy and their rights as tenants.

She shared that the funeral was extremely well planned, that she saw everyone come together to grieve with the mother and father who had lost their five children. Many people provided clothing and food and moral support for the family, showing they cared about the family's loss.

Going forward, the IAC was watching to see how things would play out and how they could help. They planned to discuss this issue in the IAC executive meeting tomorrow with staff and the executive team was wanting to do more – people needed a lot of help and didn't know where to turn.

She also announced that in two weeks' time two members of the IAC and Jodie Stanley would be attending the nationwide Welcoming Interactive in Louisville and they were excited about the trip. She promised to report back what they heard and how they could improve conditions for the immigrant community in Greensboro.

Arbuckle asked if the mother and father were receiving grief support. Jalloh stated that yes, they had been offered counseling, but that at the moment there were many community members had come around them and were currently supporting them. Jalloh noted that at the moment, they were staying with her parents and they needed a home. Arbuckle asked if the Housing Coalition was involved. Jalloh stated that they had met with Brett Byerly this past week and that they were

assisting with rent for the next few months, and that Habitat was also looking at offering housing assistance. Arbuckle shared that she couldn't fathom what the family was going through. Commissioner Coleman asked if the tenants reached out to the landlord before this issue occurred. Jalloh confirmed that issues with the stove were reported three times to the landlord. Jalloh noted that the Fire Department had concluded their findings and had not mentioned the issues with the stove. The family stated that no assistance was provided and the landlord didn't have any record of the issues being reported. Jalloh shared that it seemed that it was one person's word against another at this point. Arbuckle shared that if something could come out of this, and lead to the improvement of housing for immigrants, that would be good. Jalloh shared that in 2016, there was an order to demolish the property because of its condition, and the family moved in later that year. There were many concerns about the landlords and the property's history of negligence. Coleman asked if there was a smoke detector. Jalloh stated that according to the inspection, there were five detectors but when she went she couldn't see any evidence. Stanley and Crossling shared that the fire inspectors confirmed that smoke detectors were present with batteries, but they couldn't confirm if they were functioning. Engle stated that fire alarms were only good for about ten years, and that the fire department was always willing to assist with free fire alarm installation. Jalloh pointed out that the fire department was out at the apartment complex installing fire alarms – if the alarms were supposedly present during the inspection, why was the fire department having to install them.

Crossling noted that this issue would be addressed during the 2018-2019 housing series. Arbuckle noted that it was the landlord's responsibility to maintain the fire alarms once installed. Engle pointed out that it was important to empower the immigrant population with information, numbers and rights, so that they knew what to do in case of an emergency. Issifou asked who was responsible for handling this investigation, that he had heard that the landlord was a powerful one who couldn't or wouldn't be touched. It was important to approach the person handling this investigation if fault was found, that it was dealt with appropriately. Accidents happen but if they happen because of negligence, people should be held responsible.

Jalloh responded that the Fire Department had already generated their investigation and concluded that it was unsupervised cooking, although she didn't think children or their father would be cooking at 3:30 in the morning and the stove had already been reported as defective. Jalloh added that she wanted to see the full report.

Coleman asked what other resources were needed by the family at this time. Jalloh noted that they had opened a bank account and needed guidance on how to handle money, needed their jobs held for them while they grieved, clothing, food, housing, even marriage counseling. Crossling asked for specific details on how to donate tangible items. Jalloh noted that Emily Wright, a social worker from Rankin Elementary, had been very close to the family and able to share specifics on what was needed. Jalloh shared that donating online often cost money, and that they had recently gathered cash from community members and given it directly to the family. Jalloh shared that Emily could collect funds, and that up until this point clothing was being taken directly to the family but they couldn't take many donations at this time because they didn't have a place to live. Crossling offered to follow up with that and share information about donation processes.

Arbuckle asked that Jalloh share with the family that the HRC was very concerned, and ongoing concern. Jalloh thanked Arbuckle for this sentiment, and expressed gratitude for the council members that came to the meeting. Jalloh also stated that people wanted answers and a follow up

report, as the meeting was not conclusive. They would discuss in tomorrow's meeting how to deliver the requested follow up. Arbuckle asked when the next meeting was. Stanley shared July 18, as the June meeting would take place during the soccer tournament, but if the IAC executive team decided to host a special meeting, that information would be circulated

Engle pointed out that the HRC voted last year that they would not have a July meeting.

Raleigh Stout asked for them to announce the next Committee for Social Equity meeting. Crossling stated that it would be June 19 at Central Library at 6 pm.

Issifou announced that the international community was hosting a soccer tournament on June 30. He invited all to attend. Stanley stated that the deadline was Friday and only one team had signed up.

Meeting ended at 7:17 pm.

Minutes Approved by:

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

**Chairperson**

**Greensboro Human Relations Commission**

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**Date**