



Meeting Minutes

August 9, 2018

The Human Relations Commission (HRC) convened for their monthly meeting at 6:00 p.m. on the above date at Lindley Recreation Center. **Chair Samuel Hawkins** presided over the meeting.

Commissioners Present: Chair Samuel Hawkins, Moussa Issifou, Tom Phillips, Cynthia Coleman, Amy Murphy, David Craft, Irving Allen

Commissioners Absent: David Sevier, Hilary Goldberg, Margaret Arbuckle, Zac Engle

Human Relations Department Staff: Love Crossling, Jodie Stanley

Legal Department Staff: Rosetta Davidson

Council Liaison:

City Manager's Office:

Visitors: Jason Yow, Marcus Hyde, Franca Jalloh (IAC Chair)

I. Call to Order

Chair Hawkins called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

II. Moment of Silent Meditation

Chair Hawkins called for a moment of silent meditation.

III. Introduction of Visitors and Speakers

Chair Hawkins acknowledged visitors and invited Jason Yow to speak. Jason Yow explained that he had recently spoken to City Council about an idea he had to remove guns off the street. He knew that guns were prevalent, and many young people had access to guns. There were three murders within 9 hours about 8 weeks previous, and this occurrence got him thinking about gun drives so he started doing research on what different states, counties and cities had done. People were offered \$100 – 200 for turning in an old gun, something that didn't seem effective. While you couldn't change poverty overnight, perhaps there was a way to address part of the issue. He was recently speaking to a friend

of his who had been incarcerated when he was 15. This friend was an excellent communicator, in with the wrong crowd, but was a mentor to Yow when he was younger. It was this friend that suggested that perhaps reducing pending charges would incentivize people to turn in their weapons. Because Yow didn't have legal expertise, he reached out to his friend Michael Schlosser to get his opinion on the idea. Schlosser agreed it was a practical idea that had potential to be successful. While poverty was an issue, the more guns they could get off the street, the better.

After Yow spoke at the Council meeting, he was approached by Love Crossling who expressed interest in his story. Yow also stated that he had also spoken with Chief Hinson, who promised to call and did not.

He continued by stating that he was impacted by a picture of a young girl who was paralyzed for life due to a shooting. This one photo should drive people in authority to try to get guns off the street. He once received a 'failure to appear' for a traffic charge, and if he'd had a weapon to turn in for reducing charges, he would have done that in a heartbeat.

The former DA for Guilford County stated support. Crossling was the only person who spoke to him at the Council meeting. There were two heartbreaking stories that night – one of the Summit Ave fire that killed the five children, and his own. He sat and waited to hear any response from Council, and he eventually left very angry because there was none. No one responded except to say 'next.' The issues at hand had to do with human lives being taken and the Mayor of this town didn't even want to acknowledge the tragedy. It was his opinion that this should be discussed, that the little girl's name should be brought up. Why spend time talking about the positive aspects of the town, we should talk about things that we need to work to improve. He clarified that he wasn't against Nancy Vaughan, he may have even voted for her, but there were important issues at hand and they weren't being acknowledged at all.

Part of the reason his idea would work was because it was economical. Someone would get out of jail a little earlier, saving money. He added that he hoped that someone would respond to his idea and provide guidance about next steps. He mentioned the 18 year old that got shot in High Point, there were 20 casings in the street. There was another shooting in Winston Salem that day. Anything that could be done to get a gun off the street would be awesome. Schlosser said that this idea wouldn't work in the prisons, but that it would be beneficial for people with pending charges.

Phillips asked if he had spoken with the County Commissioners. Yow said no, Phillips explained that it was their jurisdiction. Yow asked if it would be the DA or the Commissioners. Varying responses indicated the DA and the Commissioners. Chair Hawkins thanked Yow for speaking, acknowledging his concerns. Yow admitted he didn't have a specific plan, just a broad idea. He believed that if attorneys got together they would be able to work out the specifics.

Rosetta Davidson advised to start with the DA's office, as that is where the charge would originate. Doug Henderson, the current DA, was on the way out and Avery Crump would be the new DA. It was imperative to get the new DA on board with the plan. She suggested that with other gun drives, there were no questions asked. With this model, there would be digging, paperwork, and additional work required by an already overworked DA's office. Davidson expressed understanding of his reasoning for coming to City Council and the HRC, but suggested that he might be more successful if he took a group of citizens with him to advocate for this change.

Crossling suggested that what she offered to Mr. Yow was the opportunity to connect with Thrive GSO as well as other groups of people. Yow stated his opinion that he thought the Mayor or other people in power, that they might want to have a say in what should happen. He understood now that talking about guns was a touchy topic and some people didn't want to address it. Yow asked if there were any other ideas being discussed or groups that were tackling this issue. Hawkins shared about a group called Cure Violence that presented information earlier in the summer that was headed by CJ Brinson. The group's goal was to reduce criminal activity. Allen advised that the goal of that group was not to remove guns off the street, and he offered that he could provide names of community organizations that might be interested in presenting this information at the County level.

Commissioner Craft also offered that Sheriff Barnes might be a good connection. Vice Chair Issifou stated that he supported this idea, regardless of the legal hurdles, and expressed general support from the commission for his efforts. Hawkins added while modifications might be necessary, the core idea seemed to be a good one.

Davidson asked for clarity, as the idea provided did not necessarily have concrete steps or partners, that he was primarily looking for support for a concept with the hope of connecting. Crossling added that should a task force or another effort be created around this effort, perhaps they could return to the commission to seek a vote of support. She committed to stay connected to Yow, and as things continued to morph and change, as action steps developed, that they would be offered the opportunity to provide a vote of support should the opportunity arise. Hawkins asked Yow if their response to his presentation met his expectations. Yow said that yes, he was appreciative of the opportunity to speak on this heartbreaking issue. It was his perspective that these things didn't happen to people like City council and the Mayor. If it was hitting them, they would change it. But the little girl who was paralyzed was just as important as any other child. You wanted to get guns from active criminals, not from people who were digging old useless guns out of a closet. He was trying to be the voice for this issue, so that someone else could take this issue personally and run with it.

Hawkins noted that this was the first step to get the ball rolling. Yow thanked commissioners for the opportunity to speak.

Hawkins invited Marcus Hyde to speak. Hyde introduced himself as a member of the Homeless Union of Greensboro, a group of people that surrounded homeless persons and the issues that directly addressed them. The group was made of up advocates that were interested in meeting and speaking for the priorities of homeless folks. The two issues that kept coming up were the lack of safe, decent and affordable housing, and what happened to their bodies when they became homeless. They were currently tackling the issue of panhandling and had been in the news. He provided some relevant data on the history of housing, using several handouts to point out the lack of funding towards this issue. The current system had been operating on a series of band-aids for the last 30 years and it was time for that to change. He stated that 25 out of the 25 pandhandling cases that went to court, they were struck down because it was a violation of their rights.

Panhandling laws became popular right after the Civil War as a means of incarcerating newly freed slaves, and that this pattern of targeting impoverished people was a continued cycle throughout history.

Hyde stated that pandhandling was a Federal issue attached to one's rights. While no one wanted to see people begging for money on the street corner, it was important not to criminalize the behavior, but to address the source of the problem. They'd encouraged City Council to address the issues with a human rights perspective not a public safety one. They were also encouraging Council to come up with a viable plan to support affordable housing and address the shortage. One tangible way to deal with the eviction crisis was to stop the number of people that were being kicked out of their houses, that the City could support legal efforts to prevent eviction.

The last issue was in regards to code enforcement. He spoke about the Summit Ave community where there was still a broken pipe in the yard that had sewage coming out of it, and kids were playing around it. Council should use whatever legal means they had to get the owner to comply. One solution the City had not yet considered was to handle repairs on the front end and make Arco Realty pay for the repairs. Hyde shared his doubt that Greensboro, after 25 cases struck from court, would have the first panhandling ordinance. Hyde added that the advocacy group wanted to start an advisory board to address poverty, and shared his disappointment that no action had been taken to explore that. Hyde invited all to a program on August 29 at 6:30 pm with the Housing Coalition at Central Library they would be discussing eviction issues.

Crossling highlighted that the department was mandated to do outreach, and that one of the first events would be looking at creative and innovative solutions to address homelessness. Crossling stated that staff would be reaching out to discuss this program with them to ensure that their voice was part of the process. Hyde expressed thanks and suggested support for this effort. Commissioner Murphy shared that she herself was looking for solutions. For so long the mantra was affordable housing. But how many public housing units were there? What did they cost? How long was the wait list? Murphy sat down with Tina Akers Brown and learned a lot about the process. She mentioned the Housing First program with a 2 million dollar grant. Murphy was responsible for the training and helped them close the City's tent city. Murphy wanted to know, of the 87 people who were housed, how many of them were still housed. As she kept drilling down to get specific numbers, they stonewalled and said they don't share information outside the continuum of care. This agency was controlling much of the money that was coming in to Greensboro to address homelessness. It was necessary to have data and a good look at the landscape of what was needed. She didn't want to see more money wasted, at least one that was active with the union and she was previously housed in the Housing First program.

Craft suggested that several of the committees seemed inactive and could possibly take this issue on. He expressed appreciation for Hyde's passion on this issue and his own sentiment that he wanted to see a solution to this issue. He also agreed with Murphy that supportive services were necessary to successful housing.

Hyde shared that Housing First was a proven model nationwide, empirical data that showed that it was a successful model. Perhaps something that happened with the process here, but it was a process that only worked for the chronically homeless. Hyde stated that the average rent was 700 dollars a month, and that for every 100 families in Greensboro there were only 38 that met their needs. There were 13 evictions a day. UNCG was doing a pilot program with willing landlords, not legal defense, but it was a mediation program that required willingness. Hyde shared again that it was within the City's purview to identify funds for legal defense and fixing homes owned by landlords.

Murphy shared that she learned that 50 homes through the Housing Authority were given to families that were homeless. Hyde added that the waiting list was just closed, and the next families to move in would be those that signed up in 2015. He expressed concern that most of their units were set to move to the rental assistance model. Converting to this model meant, from trends tracked nationwide, that housing would be lost. While they couldn't stop GHA from converting to the rental assistance model, there were perhaps things that could be done on a local level because the Federal government wasn't coming in to help.

Allen thanked Hyde for coming and sharing what he felt was important information, and looked forward to another opportunity to challenge conflicting data. Phillips asked about the housing bond Council just voted on. Hyde shared that yes, it was passed, but that 0-30% AMI was not part of it. It was important to prioritize low income housing, which the current bond did not. Crossling added, from her experience on the Housing Task Force, there was little flexibility about how to use the funding, that it had been allocated. Phillips pointed out that if they wanted to change something, Council could do it. Hyde agreed. All expressed thanks for the information.

IAC Report

Chair Hawkins encouraged Franca Jalloh to go ahead with the report for the International Advisory Committee. Jalloh expressed that she heard from other community members that many were struggling for solutions and expressed her thanks for having heard other speakers address issues related to particular communities. She stated that the IAC was active for the month of July. Their July 18 meeting was focused on the Summit Ave Community and hearing concerns from the community. On July 28, IAC was asked to speak at the Liberian Independence Day. She noted that the community members wanted to see more action – now that concerns were heard, what was the next step? August 4, the IAC was invited to speak at the City Council initiated meeting at Pace of the Triad. There were Arabic and other non-English speakers there, and the IAC participated in that meeting to provide updates about their work as an advisory board. August 8, Jalloh attended a DACA event organize by the Latino Community Coalition at Central Library, raising awareness about the plight of DACA recipients. College tuition was cost prohibitive for many and even basic life processes were difficult for them, and although their lives and families were in this country, they were considered outsiders. Agencies considered starting a community fund for education and continuing to talk about change at the Federal level. Jalloh announced the August 22 IAC quarterly lunch and learn and all were invited to attend. She shared that when an issue in one community was addressed, it had a ripple effect in others.

Commissioner Coleman asked how the couple was doing. Jalloh shared that the couple was struggling to get back on their feet, that discussion had been held with Habitat for Humanity about a permanent housing solution. All thanked Jalloh for presenting information.

Chair Report

Chair Hawkins read his report, including a congratulations to new commissioners Murphy, Craft and Lowe. He shared that he would be away the following week and would be available after 5pm daily. If anything else was needed in his absence, he encouraged commissioners to reach out to Vice Chair Issifou. He announced the next MLK planning meet August 21 and the CSW meeting August 21 at 7pm.

CSW would have their annual Women's Equality Day Breakfast. He encouraged commissioners to support this event, as CSW was historically always very supportive of their MLK event. He announced that this year's International Overdose Awareness Day would be held at the grasshoppers game.

Montgomery Well Housing Committee

Vice Chair Issifou shared that the series was still in process.

Police Community Review Board

Commissioner Phillips shared that the PCRB didn't exist at the moment. The change in state law, and on the 21st council would be making appointments to the new body. Hawkins asked if Phillips and Sevier would be added to the list. Phillips added that Chair Jalloh would also be on the committee. Crossling asked if there was still a rule that people could only belong to two boards/commissions. Phillips stated that this was perhaps a rule that Council was looking at changing their review of boards and commissions process. Phillips stated that perhaps their intent was to broaden the number of people that could be on boards and commissions.

Hawkins shared that he knew of people that were serving on multiple boards when people were left on the database untapped. Phillips stated that many people filled out forms to be added to the databank but if Council didn't pick you, you couldn't be on it. Council picked people they knew.

Phillips stated that there hadn't been any cases. Crossling responded that 4 inquiries have come in, but State legislature didn't allow the PCRB to review cases while the GCJAC was forming.

Education Committee

Chair not present.

Human Services

Chair position vacant.

Staff Report

Dr. Love Crossling provided a brief update on the MLK breakfast, sharing that the committee was exploring the possibility of Terrence Jenkins as a speaker. Staff had taken the steps to explore the financial viability of his speaking fee and had considered the focus of his potential speaking. Staff was continually speaking with the planning committee about plans for the speaker and assumed that they would make a final decision at the August 21 planning meeting.

Thrive meeting September 5 and Fair Housing Hiring Lunch and Learn on September 26. As far as the review of the Thrive series for 2018-19, they were considering creating a program for the Latino population, who were not currently receiving the same information due to the language barrier.

Voting eligibility was also being considered, as was education through an innovative way to reach college students. Partnerships with universities and colleges were critical to ensuring the success of this program. Thrive was also considering a housing effort looking at criminal infractions and how they impacted housing.

Crossling also shared that they would be happy to circulate highlights from the housing series.

Crossling shared an update on staffing updates, sharing that they were short-staffed but were working with interns to provide support for the commission.

Jodie Stanley shared that there was a new programming proposal that outlined all possibilities and options, and that there was a September 30 deadline. Crossling added that ideally programming would fall into a theme, connect to other programming in the calendar, and ensuring that it would draw the necessary audience. She also noted that being able to plan proactively about budgeting was important so that funds were available when programs came about.

Crossling offered that staff would update the location. Hawkins suggested a grammatical error on page 3, just after vote 61, quorum was achieved with a d on the end.

Motion to Approve May Minutes

Motion to Approve: Commissioner Phillips

Second: Commissioner Allen

Vote: Unanimous

Motion to Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn: Commissioner Phillips

Second: Commissioner Allen

Vote: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Minutes Approved by:

Signed: _____

Chairperson

Greensboro Human Relations Commission

_____/_____/_____

Date