



Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2019

The Human Relations Commission convened for its regular monthly meeting at 6:00 p.m. on the above date in the Melvin Municipal Office Building Plaza Level Conference Room with Interim Chair Issifou presiding.

Present: Interim Chair Issifou, Commissioners Lowe, Coleman, Murphy, Hamlin

Absent: Black

Excused: Bryant

HRC Council Liaison: Marikay Abuzuaiter

Legal Presence: Rosetta Davis

Human Relations Department Staff: Jodie Stanley

Visitors: Raleigh Stout

I. Call to Order

Interim Chair Issifou called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

II. Moment of Silent Meditation

Chair Issifou called for a moment of silent meditation.

III. Introduction of Visitors and Speakers

Visitors introduced themselves.

V. Committee Reports

Chair Report:

Chair Issifou attended a PlanIT community meeting that was in the process of collecting information about how they defined the identity of Greensboro. There were about 7 different committees with different focus areas that were gathering information.

Education Committee:

Commissioner Coleman attended a town hall meeting at Hemphill Branch Library, at Stephanie's with CM Kennedy, and the PB Campaign, which was over now, but she heard D5's needs. Commissioner Coleman also spoke with law enforcement to address safety concerns on W Vandalia regarding pedestrians that were crossing the road wearing dark clothing, and there had been at least one fatality. She also attended the Fair Housing Month Luncheon at Revolution Mill Events Center. She suggested that the commissioners might be willing to support the YWCA by donating food.

She also spoke with Siddiga Ahmed, who was concerned about students who had missed several days because of Ramadan and other holidays. A call was placed to the superintendent, who decided not to penalize the students for not attending on those days. In addition, an Arabic interpreter was needed for students who attend Guilford County Schools. Coleman spoke with Mayra Hayes who addressed the issue.

Some residents were talking to Coleman about Hampton School being rebuilt. The students were placed in another school that was far away and causing inconveniences for families. According to Byron Gladden, GCS did not plan to rebuild Hampton at this time; however, GCS would work with the families to ensure that the students were placed in schools that were closer.

She shared that some of the immigrants were struggling with knowing their rights as far as housing. She suggested that the HRC could host an event to reach out to the immigrant population. Director Love Jones shared her intent that staff was in process of developing an outreach plan for the immigrant population and that they would welcome the input of HRC as soon as that plan was in place, as their input was valued.

Employment Committee:

Commissioner Bryant

Human Services and Social Equity Committee:

Commissioner Lowe

Montgomery-Wells Housing Committee:

Interim Chair Issifou shared that he did not have any updates at this time.

IAC Committee:

Mustapha Laidi shared that he had lived in Greensboro since 2008, helping out in the school system with language needs and DSS with language and service provision.

VI. Staff Report:

Dr. Jones introduced Joann Holder, the new part time roster who would be responsible for commissioner support. Jones shared that Holder would cover meetings, support administratively, and be the initial point person for program development where Jodie Stanley would continue to provide event support and outreach work. Jones invited Holder to introduce herself.

Holder shared that she was a Masters student at UNCG, originally from Guyana, who was very passionate about becoming engaged in public service. Jones stated that she would be working closely with Holder to ensure that everything was solidified.

Jones also thanked Stanley for covering commission support work as a volunteer, as commission support was historically covered by two full time positions and over time both positions were lost. She covered the work with excellence and a good attitude and her work was appreciated.

Jones shared a presentation on potential programming for the next year, including potential dates for the Thrive series, including September 4, December 4, March 4 and June 3. These programs were usually designed as day programs and lunch and learns but could be flexible. Jones stated that Holder and Stanley would be sending out information to gather information about program development. She noted that information gathering would be a critical part of the process, and that at the second half of June, staff would send out more information. Even those who were not a part of a subcommittee could get plugged in to a program if something piqued their interest.

Overview of Community Engagement Efforts

Jones noted that there was concern about how to engage the community and there had been a request to set up a calendar. Jones did ask commissioners to share what groups they were interested in getting information from, and Holder would then research distribution lists and groups that they could get connected to. She also offered that because consistent, significant engagement was critical to success, they might want to focus on their top three organizations. This process also allowed commissioners to control which agencies they wanted to hear from. Holder would send an email requesting their preferences.

Stanley clarified that per their request in the last meeting she had created a Google calendar and shared it with them. She was following up with IT to ensure that the calendar could be archived in a way that was compliant with Public Information Laws. The calendar was designed for commissioners to add events to and check in with each other about who could represent the commission.

Retreat should be designed for strategic planning for the upcoming year. Staff wanted to be thoughtful about the information that was presented on a quarterly basis and present helpful, relevant information to the commissioners during a monthly meeting. This 20 minute presentation would include important information, policy updates, community concerns, or any information that impacted the work of the commission.

Jones suggested that they could also incorporate a meet and greet session. For the sake of simplicity and clear communication they could host these at monthly meetings.

She added that it was important to think about how to stay engaged with the State HRC meetings, which were typically a 4 hour session that took place across the State. If there were conferences to attend, the department could support their attendance. Commissioner Lowe asked if there was a meeting coming up. Jones and Stanley shared about the upcoming meeting on May 28 in Oxford, NC. Stanley stated that staff had shared information electronically two weeks prior. She also sent a calendar invitation to the commissioners present via email and encouraged them to review the email.

Orientation Manual

Jones shared that it was necessary to review and vote on the new orientation manual. Stanley promised to share the document electronically. Jones stated that they would receive a final copy that they could then sign at the next meeting.

New Boards and Commissions Guidance

Council reviewed the functions of boards and commissions, and came out with new guidance. In the introduction of the presentation, Jones covered the importance of ensuring that the conduct of commissioners should be held to the same high standard as the City as an organization.

1. Attendance and Punctuality

If commissioners were to arrive late or early they should make arrangements with the chair, 24 hours in advance as much as possible. Appointees were allowed no more than 3 unexcused absences in a rolling 12 month time period, after which an appointee would be subject to dismissal. She explained that subject to dismissal included consultation with the chair. Lowe asked if they could increase the number of absences. Jones responded no and explained that this was a set decision that came directly from Council. Jones also clarified that excused absences is defined as written medical justification signed by a Doctor or due to a family death, emergency or illness. Davis suggested that it was important to remember the intent behind the policy, that this was designed to address those with attendance issues. Davis also added that subject to dismissal would be a decision made by the appointing council member. Lowe shared that it sounded like it was also important to communicate with Council.

Jones encouraged them to always notify the chair as soon as was practical.

Chair Issifou wondered if this would deter some people from volunteering. Jones and Davis emphasized again that the point of the attendance policy was to ensure that commissions were functioning well.

2. Code of Conduct

Dress Code: business casual was the acceptable dress code of commissions.

Phone and Electronic Use: use of cell phones and electronic devices such as iPods and MP3 players for personal use was not permitted. If they had to make a call, they needed to step out of the room. Electronic devices could be used for business during the meeting if necessary. The goal of this policy was to ensure that commissioners were engaged. Davis added they had received PIRT requests asking for the records of Council phone use during meetings when there was a question about whether they were communicating with each other during the meeting.

Teamwork: they were encouraged to work together, refrain from using profane or derogatory language, recognize and accept each other's skills and abilities, and work together to achieve goals. Jones stated that if there was a lack of harmony, it impacted the effectiveness of the commission; a moment of frustration was just that. Commissioners should be mindful about the way that they talk about the work of the commission and how they represented the work of the group.

Rights and Discipline: conduct that interferes with the work of the commission as defined by the chair would be subject to disciplinary action, which would depend on the seriousness of the action, the member's record, the member's ability to correct their conduct, action taken with respect to similar conduct by other members, and any other circumstances. Jones added that situations would be considered on a case by case basis. She encouraged those with any questions to check with the chair or staff before action was taken.

Positive Work Environment, Diversity and Equity: environment should be free of discrimination, bias, and bullying. Jones offered some nontraditional examples of bullying to include back door conversations designed to change or influence, and the use of one's power to control another in the group. The environment should remain respectful at all times.

Communication: mutual respect and feedback that are constructive and beneficial to job improvement as well as to all related parties.

Personal Data: commissioners were encouraged to keep staff, chair, and City Clerk apprised of any changes to contact information.

Thank You: the City appreciated the work of the commissions and what they contributed to the community.

VII. Items for Discussion

Stanley shared about the May 22 Thrive International Planning meeting, invited commissioners to attend the June 5 Thrive Event, and gave a brief update on the MLK Breakfast debrief meeting.

VIII. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Meeting was adjourned at 7:28 pm.

Chairperson
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Approved: _____
Date: _____