

City of Lawrence  
Lawrence Human Relations Commission  
February 18, 2016 – 5:30 PM  
**Minutes**

**Members Present:** Carl Edwards, Sarah Bloxsom, Katie Barnett, Martha Taylor, Jacqueline Becks, Mike Machell, Caleb Stephens

**Staff Present:** Scott Wagner, Toni Wheeler, Elizabeth Hafoka

**Public Present:** James Dunn

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### **Commission Meeting Called to Order**

The Lawrence Human Relations Commission (LHRC) Meeting was called to order by Chairman Carl Edwards, at 5:35 p.m. in the Carnegie Building, located at 200 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Lawrence, Kansas 66044. The meeting was held in the lower level conference room.

Chairman Edwards welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself and provided background about the Lawrence Human Relations. Caleb Stephens introduced himself and stated his occupation as a therapist and counselor. He also included information about his participation in Rock Chalk Invisible Hawk. Mike Machell introduced himself and stated his occupation in Human Resources for United Health Group. Martha Taylor gave her background as working at HUD and she had previously served as a member of the Human Relations Commission. Toni Wheeler gave her background as City Attorney, staff liaison for the Human Relations Commission, and Human Relations Director. Scott Wagner noted that he assists in the outreach work of the Human Relations Commission and supports the monitoring and compliance with the City's Fair Housing HUD grant. Jacqueline Becks works as a paralegal. Elizabeth Hafoka provided background information as a Human Relations Investigator and a supervising City Prosecutor. James Dunn a member of the public was a former human relations commissioner.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Edwards asked the commissioners if there were any additions or changes on the minutes from the December 3, 2015 meeting. There were none. Commissioner Taylor motioned that the minutes be approved, it was seconded by Commissioner Beck, and all voted in favor.

### **Commission Updates**

Chairman Edwards notified the commission that Commissioner Katrina McClure had submitted a letter of resignation from the board.

### **Receive Staff Report**

Elizabeth Hafoka provided an update on pending human relations cases.

**Case Report Update** – 4 cases have been closed since the last meeting - all were housing. Two cases are currently open - both are housing related.

## **Outreach Activities**

Scott Wagner provided an update on recent outreach activities. Area agencies that stock our outreach brochure were contacted in early 2016. Additional copies were distributed to those entities that requested more copies of the brochure.

Updates were provided regarding community Martin Luther King Day celebrations. Commissioner Machell attended the MLK Day breakfast at Macelis held on Monday, January 18 sponsored in part by the Jayhawk Breakfast Rotary Club. Commissioner Machell brought copies of our Human Relations brochure to the event. He noted the event was well attended and had outstanding speakers.

Scott Wagner reported on the community MLK awards held on Thursday, January 21 at South Middle School. Commissioners Humphrey and McClure assisted with the event. Scott Wagner set up a table with commission brochures and outreach items and our Human Relations banner was on display. The event also had displays of other area human rights agencies and displays of USD 497 students on various civil rights issues. The awards ceremony recognized the winners in the various categories and was very well attended. Scott Wagner recommended that the commission continue to play a role in the planning of this event, especially next year as we look to celebrate passage of the Lawrence Fair Housing ordinance of 1967.

Scott Wagner reported on planned activities to recognize April as Fair Housing Month. On April 5, 2016 – the Lawrence City Commission will proclaim April to be Fair Housing Month in Lawrence. Chairman Edwards will be there to receive the proclamation and other commissioners are invited to attend. The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Fair Housing Month poster competition will be held this year. A new community partner – Housing and Credit Counseling, Inc. has signed up to help sponsor the event this year in addition to USD 497 and the Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority. Finalists will be on display at the library from April 1<sup>st</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup>. The winners will be recognized before the Lawrence City Commission on April 26<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Bloxson suggested that preschoolers be added to the competition this year. Other Fair Housing month activities included an educational lunch to be held in partnership with Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority. A topic for the lunch was not yet decided. Commissioner Taylor has been in communication with Milton Scott at the housing authority on possible speakers and programs.

Scott Wagner provided an update on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lawrence's Fair Housing ordinance planning. He met with Thomas Arnold, a graduate student in history and a volunteer researcher with Watkins Community Museum in December. Mr. Arnold is taking a class this spring on Oral History and is interested in using this project for his class. As part of the class, he will be required to submit an oral history project plan. Scott Wagner indicated that this document will provide a plan, a budget and a project description for the oral history part of this commemoration. Scott also noted that he had been in contact with Steve Nowak, Director of Watkins Community Museum. The museum was in the process of applying for grant funds for a new interactive kiosk display on the civil rights era in Lawrence. The exhibit will include videos, audio clips, photos and documents that tell stories of civil rights issues in Lawrence beginning in the 1960s. Information about the Fair Housing ordinance will certainly be included in the display.

Scott asked that a subcommittee of the commission be formed to help plan other community events. Commissioner Machell and Commissioner Stephens volunteered to serve on this

subcommittee which will be tasked with making recommendations to the full commission regarding this celebration.

### **Commission Items**

Martha Taylor stated that she would like to receive some training regarding service animals and Fair Housing modifications as well as reasonable modifications. It was suggested that a meeting of this type could also be open to the public for attendance. She suggested that perhaps Alphonso Eason of HUD could provide such training. Commissioner Barnett stated that we could offer it to the community. Commissioner Carl Edwards suggested a landlords meeting. Toni Wheeler stated that we used to do a lot of training, such as a full day training and CLE credits were available, and it was something we haven't done in a while. It is something that we could do. Commissioner Machell asked what the past response to such a meeting was. Toni Wheeler stated that it was initially high but then dwindled, since 2006. Commissioner Bloxsom suggested picking certain areas, having speakers attend who have been affected and allowing for panel discussion. Commissioner Stephens added to the discussion by suggesting sharing narratives of people that aren't easily served. Commissioner Bloxsom suggested looking back on the types of cases we have investigated for direction on what training should be offered. Toni Wheeler responded that staff will put this on the next meeting agenda for further discussion.

### **Public Comment**

James Dunn asked about the nature of the cases that have been investigated. Elizabeth Hafoka discussed generally the fair housing cases investigated. One recent case involved an emotional support animal and reasonable accommodations. Commissioner Taylor noted that she would like to have some training in this area. Toni Wheeler noted that service animals are different from emotional support animals. Commissioner Barnett offered that she has coordinated a service animal – ABA panel discussion. A subcommittee of Commissioner Taylor and Commissioner Barnett was formed to recommend a future training on this topic.

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Taylor motioned and Commissioner Machell seconded for adjournment, all voted in favor to adjourn at 6:35 P.M.