

City of Lawrence  
Lawrence Human Relations Commission  
August 25, 2016 – 5:30 PM

## **Minutes**

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

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

**Public Present:** Stuart Boley, Lisa Larsen, 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 East Gallery room.

Chairman Edwards welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Lawrence City Commissioners Stuart Boley and Lisa Larsen, and introduced himself and provided background about the Lawrence Human Relations Commission.

### **Introductions**

Commissioners and staff introduced themselves as a new commissioner; Kait Perry was present for her first meeting.

### **Commission Minutes**

Commissioner Machell motioned and Commissioner Taylor seconded the approval of the minutes for the February 18, 2016 meeting of the Human Relations Commission. The motion was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Perry motioned and Commissioner Barnett seconded the approval of the minutes for the May 19, 2016 meeting of the Human Relations Commission. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Elections**

Chairman Edwards noted that the next item on the agenda was elections for officers. These usually happen at the May meeting. However, a quorum of the commission was not present, so elections will take place this evening. Chairman Edwards opened the discussion to accept nominations for chair of the commission. Commissioner Taylor nominated Commissioner Bloxsom for chair. Commissioner Bloxsom accepted the nomination. Commissioner Bloxsom nominated Chairman Edwards who also accepted the nomination. Nominations were then closed. Discussion took place as to the method of election. Commissioner Machell suggested that the person receiving the highest number of votes be elected chair, and the person with the second highest number of votes be elected vice-chair. Commissioner Machell's motion was unanimously approved. Voting then took place for chair by a show of hands. Commissioner Bloxsom received five votes, a majority of the commission. Commissioner Bloxsom was elected chair. Commissioner Edwards will become vice-chair. Commissioner Edwards then turned over the meeting to the new chair - Commissioner Bloxsom.

### **Receive Staff Report**

Elizabeth Hafoka provided an update on pending and closed and current human relations cases.

**Case Report Update** – 3 cases have been closed since the last meeting - two were housing and were related to disability. One case involved employment discrimination on the basis of race. 1 case was probable cause and is in the prehearing/conciliation stage.

One case is currently open that Steven Lehwald is investigating.

Commissioner Stephens asked about the staff training that Elizabeth Hafoka mentioned. Ms. Hafoka noted the kinds of training that staff investigators attend. They are usually sponsored by HUD or the National Fair Housing Alliance. They focus on different topics related to the investigation of fair housing cases and are required training as part of the City's HUD grant.

Commissioner Stephens also asked about the diversity of the investigative staff. Elizabeth Hafoka noted that she investigates cases and is a woman. Steven Lehwald is a male of mixed race. Elizabeth Hafoka thought that staff did a good job of relating to all persons regardless of their race, age, ethnicity, etc.

### **Outreach Activities**

Scott Wagner provided an update on recent outreach activities.

Scott Wagner provided an update on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lawrence's Fair Housing ordinance planning. Thomas Arnold, a graduate student in history and a volunteer researcher with Watkins Community Museum has completed his oral history project plan. He noted that Mr. Arnold had identified about 25 individuals to complete oral histories on. Initial letters were sent to potential participants in late July and the response so far has been good. Scott said that Mr. Arnold will begin conducting the interviews this fall and hopes to be complete by the end of the year.

Scott reported on the subcommittee of the commission that was formed to help plan other community events consisting of Commissioner Machell and Commissioner Stephens. The subcommittee first met in May to start discussing other possible events. Several other community partners have been added to the group. They include: Will Hickox from the Watkins Community Museum, Melissa Fisher Issacs from the Lawrence Public Library, Professor Shawn Alexander of the University of Kansas, Hall Alexander from the University of Kansas, and Shegufta Huma, an undergraduate from the University of Kansas. The subcommittee has met about three times over the summer and has come up with an initial list of events.

Scott Wagner passed out copies of the draft event calendar for discussion. He highlighted two upcoming activities that will introduce the fair housing law anniversary project to the community. The first event will be Friday, September 30, 2016 at Watkins Community Museum. Watkins has partnered with the Lawrence Arts Center to host a series of talks this year called the Art of Conversation. The first event will be held on a Final Fridays night from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The evening will include a panel of local historians moderating discussion with participants from the Lawrence civil rights era. The second half of the evening will include Tom Arnold discussing his oral history project. The second event will be held the following Monday evening, October 3 at the Lawrence Public Library. Professor Shawn Alexander last year started a series

called Diverse Dialogues in partnership with the library. The October 3 evening will have a theme of Fair Housing: Then and Now. Retired Supreme Court justice Fred Six, who authored the 1967 Lawrence Fair Housing ordinance, will speak along with a panel of historians and a current fair housing law practitioner.

The event calendar also included other possible 2017 calendar items that will be further defined by the work of the sub-committee. The sub-committee next meets on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and all are welcome to attend.

Scott Wagner also reported on a HUD grant that was received with some special fair housing partnership funds that were made available. The City received a grant of \$15,000 and those funds can be used to support commemoration activities. A sheet was passed out of planned uses of the funds that were submitted with the HUD grant application.

Scott Wagner noted that the Festival of Cultures is slated for Sunday, September 18 from noon to 5 at South Park. He stated that for the past several years, the commission has staffed a table at this event. Commissioner Machell motioned and Commissioner Becks seconded a motion to support having a table at the event again and to provide a small stipend to the Lawrence Alliance in support of the festival. The motion was unanimously approved. Director Wheeler noted that staff will get the commission registered for a booth and will send out a sign-up sheet for the event. The commission unanimously approved financial support for the event as well.

### **Commission Items**

Chairwoman Bloxson noted that in the last meeting minutes, a subcommittee had formed to plan a seminar. She asked for updates. Commissioner Barnett provided an update on the work of her subcommittee formed to offer training for the community. They were looking at a one day seminar focused on Animals and the Law. A date of October 28, 2016 has been set. Katie Barnett would present as that is her practice area. Jill Reese is a speaker who will focus on the Science of Animals from a behavioral health standpoint. Kristi McTigh of the HUD Region VII office will present an update on Fair Housing Law. Audrey Snyder will present on landlord-tenant issues. A draft brochure was passed out. The event will be held at the Cider Gallery in the Lawrence Arts District. The Lawrence Humane Society has agreed to be a sponsor of the event.

Director Wheeler thanked the commission for bringing this idea forward and for organizing the speakers. She noted that this is exactly the type of activity that the commission can bring forth to the community and will serve the Lawrence public well.

Commissioner Edwards moved and Commissioner Taylor seconded a motion to approve the program and brochure as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Open Meetings Act Training**

Director Wheeler provided training on the Kansas Open Records Act. A copy of a PowerPoint presentation on the topic was provided to the commission.

**Public Comment**

James Dunn asked about the planned training and if it address who responsibility it is to protect the interests of animals – especially those that may be neglected by renters or tenants. Commissioner Barnett mentioned that the first speaker of the conference will address that issue. There was general discussion about agencies that could provide care for service and emotional support animals for owners that could not afford that cost. It was generally noted that Lawrence lacks some of those types of agencies, and that the Humane Society is working on that.

City Commissioner Larsen recommended inviting companies to the Animals and the Law seminar that also train service animals. She recommended a company to contact. There was general discussion among the Human Relations Commission about having some of those companies present and where they might be able to have some of their service animals. City staff noted that the Cider Gallery would need to be contacted as well to see if that would be possible. The day of the event is also a Final Friday venue and staff would need to make sure it would work with the seminar schedule to have service animal companies after the seminar ends.

**Adjournment**

The commission adjourned at 6:55 P.M.