

City of Lawrence  
Lawrence Human Relations Commission  
November 17, 2016 – 5:35 p.m.

**Minutes**

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

**Members Absent:** Jackie Becks, Caleb Stephens (excused)

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

**Public Present:** None

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**Commission Meeting Called to Order**

The Lawrence Human Relations Commission (LHRC) Meeting was called to Order by its Chair - Sarah Bloxsom 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. Commissioner Barnett moved and Commissioner Machell seconded the approval of the minutes for the August 25, 2016 meeting of the LHRC. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Receive Staff Report**

Elizabeth Hafoka provided an update on pending and closed human relations cases since the last LHRC meeting. Two cases have been closed, both were housing disability cases. No probable cause was found in each. Ms. Hafoka noted there are currently three open cases – one employment and the other two are housing related. She also noted that she has conducted two recent intakes.

Chair Sarah Bloxsom asked if any of the recent cases involved pets? Ms. Hafoka noted that one case did.

Elizabeth Hafoka noted that Steven Lehwald is leaving is leaving her staff at Municipal Court. They will be searching for a replacement.

Scott Wagner provided an update on the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) project. He noted that an agreement between the City and the Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority will be on a December City Commission agenda. He anticipates a subcommittee will be formed to work on the plan itself. Chair Sarah Bloxsom asked if it will be necessary to appoint representatives from the Human Relations Commission to be on that committee? Scott indicated that input from the commission will be needed and representatives to work on the AFFH plan would be needed. Commissioner Perry, Commissioner Humphrey and Commissioner Taylor all volunteered to serve on the committee. It was moved by Chair Sarah Bloxsom, and

seconded by Commissioner Taylor to appoint said persons to the AFFH planning committee. The motion passed unanimously.

There was an update on the Festival of Cultures event held on September 18, 2016. There was general commission consensus that this was a good event for the LHRC to participate in. There was discussion about appointing a subcommittee to work on LHRC participation in the event for 2017. Commissioner Machel and Commissioner Edwards volunteered. It was moved and seconded to appoint said persons to work with staff on this event for 2017. The motion passed unanimously.

Scott Wagner provided an update on the Animals and the Law seminar held October 28, 2016 at the Cider Gallery in the Lawrence Arts District. He thanked Commissioner Barnett who worked with staff, especially Aliza Caldwell, to plan and organize the event. Staff, including the City Attorney Toni Wheeler, was very pleased with turnout which was around 75 registered participants. Commissioner Barnett thought we reached the persons targeted. Commissioner Machel asked if we can do it again in the future? Commissioner Barnett noted she would like to do it annually, and it could be viewed as community resource based. Her only suggestion would be to charge a small fee - \$10-\$20. Chair Sarah Bloxom suggested that maybe we just charge for those individuals seeking CLE credit. She also wants to find out how to get Licensed Social Work credit if appropriate. Commissioner Barnett – would like to see the subcommittee continue. Commissioner Perry noted that it would be worthwhile to have a wider variety of topics presented in the future. The commission decided to form an Outreach & Training Subcommittee consisting of Commissioner Edwards, Commissioner Barnett and Chair Sarah Bloxom. The motion was approved unanimously.

Scott Wagner provided an update on the Fair Housing 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Commemoration Committee and recent events. Two lectures were held over the weekend of September 30, 2016. The first event was held on Friday, September 30<sup>th</sup> in partnership with Watkins Community Museum. The second event was held on Monday, October 3 at the Lawrence Public Library in partnership with the KU African-African American studies department and the library. Commissioner Machel discussed both evenings. He was moved by the eyewitness accounts of racism and discrimination that were shared at the Watkins event. He noted that the event at the library raised a discussion of current issues of affordable housing. Scott Wagner noted that both events were very well attended. The library event was videotaped and is available on the City's You Tube channel.

Scott Wagner provided a brief update on the oral history project being coordinated by Tom Arnold. Tom has finished most of his interviews. He will be traveling to Pennsylvania over the Thanksgiving break to interview Homer Floyd. A transcriptionist is working on transcribing the audio from the interviews and Tom Arnold and Scott Wagner proof the transcripts as they come in. The committee is currently planning events for 2017.

Scott Wagner provided the date of the USD 497 community Martin Luther King awards – January 19<sup>th</sup> at South Jr. High. They have asked for a small contribution if funding is available from the LHRC to help support the event. Chair Sarah Bloxsom noted that USD 497 has supported our poster competition, especially Danica Moore, which has become a very popular event. The commission discussed a contribution of \$500 if funding was available in the budget. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Commission Items**

Commissioner Perry discussed the community health assessment that the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department is working on and requested that staff email out the link to the LHRC.

Commissioner Barnett wanted to discuss a couple of items: one was the recent elections, and the other was the Black Lives Matter issue. What is the role of the LHRC here? Commissioner Machell indicated the LHRC must stay out of elections. Commissioner Barnett stated that maybe a statement, not a specific letter, opposing discrimination would be appropriate.

Chair Sarah Bloxsom thanked Commissioner Barnett for bringing these issues up. She also mentioned the recent incident of discrimination at USD 497 involving the teacher at South Jr. High. She indicated that there are areas untouched by the LHRC, such as informing the public of reasonable accommodations law, employment law issues, etc. and perhaps making a larger presence of what we (the LHRC) can do is needed. She asked: Can the LHRC have a special study session?

Commissioner Edwards also thanked these commissioners for bringing these issues forth. He asked for 2017 – what is our issue(s)? He suggested that perhaps a listening session for the community would be helpful. Commissioner Barnett and Commissioner Machell volunteered to work on the organization of a special session with the City Attorney's office. The motion passed unanimously.

It was moved by Commissioner Edwards and seconded by Commissioner Perry to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m.. The motion passed unanimously.