

City of Lawrence  
Lawrence Human Relations Commission  
June 22, 2017 – 5:35 p.m.

**Minutes**

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

**Members Absent** (excused): Carl Edwards, Jackie Becks

**Staff Present:** Scott Wagner, Danelle Dresslar, Brad Karr

**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 lower level conference room. Commissioner Machell moved and Commissioner Perry seconded the approval of the minutes for the February 16, 2017 meeting of the LHRC. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Receive Staff Report**

Elizabeth Hafoka provided an update via email on pending and closed human relations cases since the last LHRC meeting. Four cases have been closed. One case was a public accommodations case based on disability and there was a finding of probable cause. This case has been successfully conciliated. Two housing discrimination cases based on disability have been closed and both were successfully conciliated. There was also a housing discrimination case based on race. No probable cause was found in that case and it has been closed.

There is one open case – a housing discrimination case based on national origin. The investigation is still on-going.

Commissioner Barnett asked about the pending litigation matter in Douglas County District Court. Scott Wagner noted a recent Lawrence Journal World article that stated the case was recently set for trial in December of 2017.

**Presentation on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing**

Scott Wagner introduced City staff members from the Community Development Division of Planning and Neighborhood Resources – Danelle Dresslar and Brad Karr. Scott noted that staff from this department have been working hard on the AFFH plan in the past few months in conjunction with staff from the Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority who is partnering with the City on developing an AFFH plan.

Staff went through a Power Point presentation that had been developed by HUD on AFFH which had been updated to include local Lawrence and Douglas County data to show some of the elements of what the plan will contain. Staff noted that with the change in administration in Washington, there had not been as much communication from HUD on AFFH and its implementation. However, staff is continuing to meet deadlines for submission of the plan with the assumption that requirements of the final rule will still have to be met. Commissioner Perry asked if the City would still comply with the AFFH rules if HUD priorities changed? Brad Karr noted that the City would still have to complete an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice which the AFFH plan was designed to replace.

Brad Karr explained some of the local data charts in the presentation. He noted they were based on census data from the last 2010 census and the information was based on census tracts. The first chart presented shows that there are not concentrated areas of segregation in Lawrence by race. Lawrence does not have any racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty as defined by HUD. However, that does not mean that there are not elements that need to be addressed by the AFFH plan. Survey data that staff has been collecting in the past year, show concerns in the areas of affordable housing. The plan will address what the community is planning in this area and must contain measurable goals. Brad noted that the AFFH plan is good for a five-year period and must be updated every five years.

Commissioner Stephens asked about the voucher program and what could be done about waiting lists for persons seeking affordable housing?

Brad Karr noted that if more landlords accepted vouchers, that would help with waiting lists. He also said that there could be more community education about the program and that would help too.

Commissioner Taylor stated that she is a Section 8 landlord and wondered why more landlords did not accept the vouchers? Brad Karr said that again, lack of education about the program might be a factor.

Commissioner Barnett asked if the Human Relations Commission could hold seminars on this topic? She also asked if the City could adopt an ordinance requiring landlords to accept vouchers? Brad Karr discussed a measure that was passed during the 2016 Kansas legislative session that may preempt City action on this issue.

Staff noted that the AFFH plan must be presented for comment at a public meeting and that is scheduled for Thursday, July 27, 2017 in the City Commission Room, City Hall. A draft of the plan will also be presented to the next meeting of the LHRC scheduled for August 17, 2017.

### **Elections of Officers**

Staff noted that May is when the LHRC normally conducts its election of officers for the year. However, there was no quorum present at the May 18, 2017 meeting and the meeting was rescheduled to this evening.

Commission Chair Bloxsom opened the floor to receive nominations for chair after stating she did not want to serve another term as chair. The Chair then nominated Commissioner Kait Perry to serve as Chair. Commissioner Perry accepted the nomination. Martha Taylor nominated Commissioner Stephens to serve as Chair. After discussion, he declined the nomination. Commissioner Nicole Humphrey was also nominated, but declined. Commissioner Katie Barnett was nominated to serve as Vice-Chair which she accepted. Commissioner Mike Machell asked if there were any other nominations? There were no other nominations. It was moved that Commissioner Kait Perry serve as Chair and Commissioner Katie Barnett serve as Vice-Chair for the 2017-18 term of the LHRC. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Update on Commission Outreach**

Scott Wagner provided an update on recent outreach activities.

Scott Wagner provided an update on the Fair Housing 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Commemoration Committee and recent events. April is always celebrated as Fair Housing Month and on April 11, 2017, the City Commission issued a proclamation. Commission Chair Bloxsom was present to receive it. On April 14, the City in partnership with Watkins Museum, hosted a talk by Rusty Monhollon at the Carnegie Building. Rusty Monhollon is the author of the book "This is America? The Sixties in Lawrence, Kansas". Invited guests included participants from Tom Arnold's oral history project. Former Lawrence Mayor Dick Raney was in attendance as well as former Human Relations Secretary from 1967, retired Kansas Supreme Court Justice Fred Six. Tom Arnold also made a presentation of his findings from the oral history project. Prior to the talk, slides were running that projected the entries from the Fair Housing Month Poster competition. There was time after the presentation for questions and answers and participants from the era that helped pass Lawrence's fair housing law spoke.

The LHRC also sponsored a Fair Housing Month Poster competition again in partnership with the Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority, USD 497 and Housing and Credit Counseling, Inc. 86 entries were received this year and all were on display at the Lawrence Public Library during the month of April. Winners were recognized at the May 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Lawrence City Commission. They were also recognized at the USD 497 school board meeting held May 8, 2017.

Scott Wagner also provided an update on planned activities to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in July. He passed out a program for the July 18, 2017 celebration to be held at Watkins Museum, which was the site of City Hall in 1967. The Lawrence City Commission will hold a portion of its meeting at Watkins Museum beginning at 5 p.m. Members of the LHRC are invited to attend. After the ceremony, the new Fair Housing exhibit will be on display as well as a new civil rights kiosk at Watkins Museum.

On July 16, 2017, there will be a free screening of the Kevin Willmott film, the Jayhawkers beginning at 2 p.m. at Abe and Jakes Landing. The new Fair Housing exhibit will be on display at this event as well as it is a mobile exhibit that can be taken down and transported to different venues.

### **Commission Items:**

Scott Wagner passed out a staff memo that was prepared as follow-up to the discussion from the February 16, 2017 meeting. At that meeting, it was requested that staff work on a report of other City advisory boards on issues related to affordable housing and issues of discrimination. One of the items in the report, was action items from the March 7, 2017 meeting of the Lawrence City Commission. At that meeting, staff was directed to work with the University of Kansas to co-sponsor a community presentation on immigration law. Scott Wagner suggested that this could be a possible area of training for the LHRC and that a subcommittee of Commissioners Edwards, Barnett and Bloxsom was appointed at the November 17, 2016 meeting to be a training subcommittee. Commissioner Barnett said she would send out an email to this group to request a meeting before the next LHRC meeting in August.

### **Commission Items**

Chair Kait Perry asked if there were any commission discussion items. Commissioner Barnett said that she would convene the training sub-committee to discuss possible LHRC sponsored training for this year.

Commissioner Stephens mentioned the recent incidents that have again sparked social unrest. Specifically, he mentioned the acquittal of the officer charged in the shooting death of Philando Castile in St. Paul, Minnesota and the shooting death of Charleena Lyles in Seattle, Washington which occurred on Father's Day, June 18. He asked what can the LHRC do to honor the memory of these people?

General commission discussion followed. Questions of community training were discussed as a possible action. Commission Chair Perry asked if a letter to the editor of the Lawrence Journal World from the commission would be appropriate? There was discussion about the nature of the letter and if the commission could immediately take action. Staff noted that without a letter in place this evening, the commission would need to reconvene to discuss and vote on any proposed letter.

Commissioner Machell had questions about the intent of the letter and what the goal of the commission would be? He noted it was important to have a dialogue on this issue, but that he could not support action without seeing a draft of the letter in advance of a meeting.

It was moved that a subcommittee be appointed to draft a letter and that a special meeting of the LHRC commission be held on June 29, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. at the Carnegie Building to discuss further action. A subcommittee of Commissioner Machell, Commissioner Stephens and Commissioner Humphrey was nominated to draft a letter for full

commission review. The motion passed unanimously along with the request to hold a special meeting on June 29, 2017.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnett and seconded by Commissioner Humphrey to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.