

City of Lawrence
Lawrence Human Relations Commission
August 17, 2017 – 5:35 p.m.

Minutes

Members Present: Nicole Humphrey, Caleb Stephens, Katie Barnett, Mike Machell, Kait Perry, Carl Edwards

Members Absent (excused): Sarah Bloxsom, Martha Taylor

Staff Present: Scott Wagner, Elizabeth Hafoka, Danelle Dresslar, Brad Karr

Public Present: James Dunn

Commission Meeting Called to Order

The Lawrence Human Relations Commission (LHRC) Meeting was called to Order by its Chair – Kait Perry at 5:35 p.m. in the Carnegie Building, located at 200 West 9th Street, Lawrence, Kansas 66044. The meeting was held in the upper level East Gallery room. Commissioner Machell moved and Commissioner Stephens seconded the approval of the minutes for the June 22, 2017 meeting of the LHRC. The motion was unanimously approved. Commissioner Edwards moved and Commissioner Humphrey seconded the approval of the minutes for the special meeting of the LHRC held June 29, 2017 meeting of the LHRC. The motion was unanimously approved.

Receive Staff Report

Elizabeth Hafoka provided an update on pending human relations cases since the last LHRC meeting. There is one open case – a housing discrimination case based on national origin. The investigation for this case is completed and has been sent to the City Attorney's Office for review.

Commissioner Barnett asked about the pending litigation matter in Douglas County District Court. Scott Wagner provided an update from Assistant City Attorney Maria Garcia to the commission. The case is currently set for trial in December of 2017. However, the defendants have recently filed a motion of move the trial date to early 2018.

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 holding public meetings the past several weeks on the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) plan and process and taking public comments and answering questions. The first meeting was held Wednesday, July 26 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Carnegie Building. A second meeting was held at City Hall on Thursday, July 27 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The draft Assessment of Fair Housing plan has been posted on the City's website and will be available for public comment after September 1, 2017.

Update on Commission Outreach

Scott Wagner provided an update on recent outreach activities on the Fair Housing 50th anniversary Commemoration and recent events. On July 16, 2017, there was a free screening of the Kevin Willmott film, the Jayhawkers beginning at 2 p.m. at Abe and Jakes Landing. Scott Wagner passed out a program for the July 18, 2017 celebration held at Watkins Museum, which was the site of City Hall in 1967. The Lawrence City Commission held a portion of its meeting at Watkins Museum beginning at 5 p.m. After the ceremony, the new Fair Housing exhibit was on display as well as a new civil rights kiosk at Watkins Museum.

Scott Wagner then provided an update on the recent City Commission study session held on August 8 on the topic of advisory boards of the City. He provided some background on why the City Commission was looking at this issue and that it came from a recently concluded strategic planning process that the governing body went through. One of the strategic goals adopted by the commission was to:

Inventory and evaluate the role of existing advisory boards and commissions and identify opportunities to consolidate or sunset as appropriate, and adopt consistent operating guidelines.

An inventory was conducted by staff and various recommendations were made at the study session. One of the boards identified for possible consolidation was the Lawrence Alliance. Staff had recommended that the duties of this board could be merged with the LHRC. There was general commission discussion about the size of the LHRC. Scott Wagner noted that the original ordinance creating the LHRC adopted in 1961, created a board of nine members for the LHRC. He said the Governing Body of the City would have to adopt an ordinance to change that. Commissioner Machell said that creating a body too large would be unwieldy. However, he was open to the idea of merging the two boards. Commissioner Perry stated that perhaps a combined board should be no larger than 13 members. Commissioner Machell motioned that the LHRC make a recommendation to the Lawrence City Commission to approve the merger of the Lawrence Alliance with the LHRC with an expanded board of no more than 13 members. The expanded board should include the diversity of the Alliance and the LHRC and should continue the important work of the Alliance. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnett. The motion was unanimously approved.

Commission Items:

Chair Kait Perry asked if there were any commission discussion items. The Chair then stated that she wanted to discuss the recent events in Charlottesville, Virginia over the past weekend. A discussion then ensued about the City Commission proclamation and letter to the Mayor of Charlottesville, the challenges of holding quarterly meetings of the Human Relations commission, and whether there was interest in appointing a subcommittee of the commission. Commissioner Barnett asked about the possibility of forming a sub-committee that would meet monthly – a committee that could react to current events and make recommendations to the full LHRC? It was suggested it could be called a Current Issues subcommittee. Commissioner Machell asked what would this

committee do exactly? He stated that if the merger with the Alliance goes through, perhaps we would want to get their input on this? Commission Chair Perry said that she did not want to wait for City Commission action on the merger issue. She said the LHRC can reevaluate the need for this subcommittee after a merger. It was moved by Commissioner Humphrey and seconded by Commissioner Barnett to form a Current Issues subcommittee of the LHRC. Appointees of the subcommittee would be Commissioner Chair Perry, Commissioner Stephens and Vice-Chair Barnett. The motion was unanimously approved.

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