

City of Lawrence  
Lawrence Human Relations Commission  
November 16, 2017 – 5:35 p.m.

**Minutes**

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

**Members Absent** (excused): Nicole Humphrey, Joseph Falls

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

**Public Present:** (1)

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**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 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Lawrence, Kansas 66044. The meeting was held in the upper level East Gallery room. Commissioner Barnett moved and Commissioner Stephens seconded the approval of the minutes for the August 17, 2017 meeting of the LHRC. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Receive Staff Report**

Elizabeth Hafoka provided an update via email on pending human relations cases since the last LHRC meeting. There is one case closed since the last meeting – a housing discrimination case based on national origin. The investigation for this case is completed and there was a finding of No Probable Cause. There are no open cases currently.

Commissioner Barnett asked about the pending litigation matter in Douglas County District Court. Toni Wheeler provided an update. The case is not set for trial in December 2018 as the defendants have recently filed a motion to move the trial date to early 2018. Further updates should be available by the February 2018 meeting.

**Update on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Plan**

Scott Wagner noted that staff presented the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) plan to the Governing Body of the City of Lawrence on September 19, 2017. The plan was well received. The draft Assessment of Fair Housing plan was posted on the City's website and was available for public comment after September 1, 2017. On October 26, 2017, City staff submitted the AFFH plan electronically to HUD. Scott Wagner noted that HUD will either accept or reject the plan and staff should have an update by the February 2018 meeting.

**Update on Commission Outreach**

Scott Wagner provided an update on recent outreach activities. Staff have been working with Watkins Museum to provide an educational brochure that will go along with the mobile fair housing display. It was noted that on November 14, 2017, 27 students from

Free State High School visited Watkins Museum to explore and use the fair housing exhibit with their government class. Steve Nowak, Director of Watkins, reported via email that the interaction was one of the best educational experiences he had witnessed in over 30 years of museum work. The students were highly engaged with the exhibits and their teacher had really prepared them in advance to use the materials.

Commissioner Taylor asked if the commission would be able to review the educational brochure for feedback prior to it being printed? Scott Wagner stated that once staff reviews the draft, it should be possible to send it to the commission for comments as well.

Scott Wagner provided an update on the community/USD 497 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day activities. The awards ceremony will be on the evening of Thursday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at the Free State High School Auditorium. He noted that in the past, commissioners had attended and had passed out programs and been involved in presenting awards. Plans call for displays to be set up in the common area prior to the evening program. This would be an opportunity to set up the fair housing display and staff would take care of that. Scott Wagner asked that if any commissioners were interested in helping that evening, to please contact him directly.

Scott Wagner briefly mentioned that in 2018, the federal Fair Housing Act will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> year of passage. Staff recently participated in a conference call from HUD in which HUD staff was including funding to commemorate this, but that a federal budget had not yet been passed, so no plans were being made at this time. Scott noted that staff had not prepared any plans either at this time. Commissioner Barnett asked if the existing training sub-committee might be utilized to plan for activities in 2018? Commissioner Bloxson is also serving on the committee and Commissioner Machel also agreed to serve. Staff thought this would be appropriate and asked that staff be copied on any communication to schedule a time for the sub-committee to get together.

Toni Wheeler then provided an update on the recent City Commission study session held on August 8 on the topic of advisory boards of the City. She 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.*

Toni Wheeler indicated that one of the recommendations was to consolidate the Lawrence Alliance with the Lawrence Human Relations Commission. She noted that City Attorney's Office staff had surveyed both the Lawrence Alliance members and the Lawrence Human Relations Commission members to gauge their continued involvement on a merged board. Toni reviewed the information gathered with the commission and noted that staff was reviewing the City Code to determine what if any ordinance changes would need to be made to proceed with this recommendation.

**Commission Items:**

Chair Kait Perry reviewed the proposed 2018 meeting dates of the Lawrence Human Relations Commission. The proposed dates were presented as follows:

- Thursday, February 15, 2018 – 5:30 p.m.
- Thursday, May 17, 2018 – 5:30 p.m.
- Thursday, August 16, 2018 – 5:30 p.m.
- Thursday, November 15, 2018 – 5:30 p.m.

The meetings will continue to be held at the Carnegie Building. Commissioner Barnett moved to adopt the proposed 2018 meeting dates. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Machel. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chair Kait Perry asked if there were any commission discussion items. The Chair noted that the Current Issues subcommittee had not met since being formed at the August 27 meeting.

Commissioner Barnett provided an update on an item she discussed at the August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting regarding fair housing and the voucher program. She had been provided a copy of Senate Bill 366 from the 2016 Kansas Legislative Session. She also met with Toni Wheeler to discuss possible LHRC action. After meeting with staff, it seemed that affordable housing was certainly a topic peripheral to the work of the LHRC, but was not the commission's primary focus. Several other boards are working on the issue of affordable housing, including the Affordable Housing Advisory Board (AHAB). Toni Wheeler noted that the sales tax referendum ballot measure had passed on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and that the AHAB would be making recommendations to the governing body as to how best utilize this stream of funds. Chair Kait Perry thought that it may make sense for a member of the LHRC to attend the AHAB meetings or to review their minutes to see if LHRC support for any of their issues made sense. Commissioner Taylor also commented that the Justice Matters group also had an affordable housing subcommittee and that anyone could attend their meetings if they had an interest.

Commissioner Stephens invited LHRC members to attend an event to be held on Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup> at Abe and Jakes Landing. The Colonial Resistance Day will be held from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and free childcare will be available.

**Public Comment:**

One member of the public was present, and he thanked the commission for their service. He had questions regarding the housing choice voucher program and his own personal situation and stated that he was homeless. Commissioner Taylor offered to meet with him after the conclusion of the meeting.

**Adjournment:**

It was moved by Commissioner Barnett and seconded by Commissioner Stephens to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.