

City of Lawrence
Lawrence Human Relations Commission
February 21, 2019 – 5:35 p.m.

Minutes

Members Present: Caleb Stephens, Joseph Falls, Sarah Bloxsom, Patricia Dahl, Jay Pryor

Members Absent (excused): Katie Barnett, Dustin Stumblingbear, Martha Taylor

Staff Present: Toni Wheeler, Scott Wagner

Public Present: None

Commission Meeting Called to Order

The Lawrence Human Relations Commission (LHRC) Meeting was called to Order by its Vice-Chair – Joseph Falls at 5:35 p.m. in the Carnegie Building, located at 200 West 9th Street, Lawrence, Kansas 66044. The meeting was held in the lower level conference room.

New Human Relations Commission members Patricia Dahl and Jay Pryor introduced themselves to the group. Current members and staff introduced themselves and welcomed the two new members.

Staff reported that commissioner Kait Perry has resigned.

Receive Staff Report

Elizabeth Hafoka provided an update on pending human relations cases since the last LHRC meeting via email. Ms. Hafoka noted there are currently two open cases – one is housing related - protected class is familial status. The other open case is employment based and the protected class is sex. Ms. Hafoka also reported that two housing cases have been closed since the last meeting. One case was closed for lack of jurisdiction and the other case was closed when the complainant withdrew the complaint.

Ms. Hafoka reported that she attended HUD sponsored fair housing training in Washington, D.C. in late November. Director Toni Wheeler provided an update on the pending case in Douglas County District Court.

Commission Outreach

Scott Wagner provided an update on recent fair housing outreach activities. On Thursday, January 31, the Lawrence Human Relations Commission hosted a talk entitled “Know Your Rights” along with a resource fair. Local immigration law attorney David Trevino presented. Several local organizations also set up tables in the library auditorium with resources that they provide. The Lawrence Human Relations

Commission hosted a table, along with the Lawrence branch of the NAACP, the Willow Domestic Violence Center had a table as did the KU Office of Multicultural Affairs.

The event was promoted with the distribution of flyers, city postings on its Facebook page along with a City press release about the event. The Lawrence-Journal World also ran a story about the talk prior to the event.

Director Wheeler commented that the event was planned by a sub-committee of Human Relations Commissioners. However, no commissioners - except for Katie Barnett, were present at the event. She noted that staff helped to promote the event as best as they were able to. If future events are going to be successful, they need the support of the commission. She commended Chair Katie Barnett for all her hard work and efforts in planning the Immigration Law fair.

Scott Wagner noted that an initial date in September was penciled in for the 2019 Festival of Cultures. Martha Taylor had been trying to get a subcommittee together for planning the event before some health-related issues prevented her from continuing. Scott expected Martha to be available again in the coming weeks and requested additional help from the commission. Commissioner Dahl also volunteered to be on the planning committee.

Director Wheeler noted that a final presentation was held on January 26 at the Lawrence Public Library on the Community Conversations on Race. The final session focused on what elements could be acted on that came up in prior discussions in the series.

Scott Wagner provided an update on recent fair housing outreach activities. The mobile history display project created as part of the City's 50th anniversary of our local fair housing law has been making the rounds at various locations this winter and spring in the community. Watkins Museum also sets it up for local school groups to use. Beginning in April, the exhibit will be on display in the first-floor lobby of City Hall, right outside of the City Commission chambers. April will be proclaimed as Fair Housing Month by the Lawrence City Commission. Vice-Chair Joseph Falls volunteered to be at the commission meeting to receive the proclamation. Scott also noted that the April utility billing insert will also have information about fair housing and about the new location of the Human Relations Office in the former Riverfront Mall.

Toni Wheeler provided an update on the move of Municipal Court and the Prosecutors and Human Relations Office to the former Riverfront Mall building located next to City Hall. The first day of operations in the new space will be Monday, February 25th. New signage is being installed along with signage for Human Relations. Commissioner Falls noted that the information sign located in the Law Enforcement Center with information on municipal court will also need to be updated.

Commission Items:

Commissioner Stephens noted that there was an upcoming meeting at Lawrence High School that would focus on public safety issues. Commissioner Pryor is serving on the board of Heartland Health. They have adopted a new mission of welcoming all who need care and have recently hired a new CEO.

Commissioner Stephen moved, and Commissioner Pryor seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:20 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.