

North Carolina Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

July 29, 2021

The Human Relations Commission met on Thursday, July 29, 2021, via Video and Phone. Commissioner's present were Toussaint Romain (Chair), Matthew Hughes (Vice Chair), Linda Jackson Barnes, ZaKiya Bell-Rogers, Nicholas Byrne, Edith Chance, Sheila Cuffee, Tony Durden, Matthew Hughes, Angelo Mathay, Howard Morgan, Paul Norman, Philip Sheridan, Reginald Speight, Ralph Stevenson, Amelia Stinson-Wesley, and Charlotte Williams.

OAH staff members present were Lamont Goins, Gene Troy, Richard Boulden, Elouise Williams, and Arthur Harrell.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. with Chair Romain presiding. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Ms. Elouise Williams. The prayer and opening remarks were given by Chair Toussaint Romain.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners virtually present were noted as well as those who phoned in. A quorum was established for business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the May 27, 2021 and June 3, 2021 meetings were unanimously approved and accepted as written by majority vote. Motion on minutes was made by Commissioner Nicholas Byrne and second by Commissioner Linda Jackson Barnes.

HRC STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS

Director Lamont Goins reported that the HUD contract was successfully completed and that many new inquiries for fair housing have come in. Program Manager Gene Troy provided a comprehensive Hate Crimes and Hate Bias Report on incidents across North Carolina as of January 29, 2021. Mr. Troy gave the procedures/actions taken in order to receive this information and to verify the incidences. He also included what the HRC commissioners and staff could do to assist in this area. Chair Romain called on Commissioner Amelia Stinson-Wesley to report on her follow-up on the information she obtained in this area. She gave a brief summary of her findings.

INTRODUCTION OF GUEST SPEAKER

No guest speaker at this meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The meeting was opened to the public, however there were no public comments.

OLD BUSINESS

HRC RESOLUTION ON HOUSING ACCESS AND HUMAN RELATIONS IN NC

Commissioners Nicholas Byrne and Angelo Mathay reported on the update and follow-up of the HRC resolution. The resolution was sent to the Governor's office, local commissions, General

Assembly, and local HRCs. Mr. Troy also reported on this agenda item and stated there was positive response from the Governor's office. Director Goins gave a brief summary of the follow-up with the local HRCs. He will be in contact with the HUD director. Commissioner Mathay stated there may be line edits and additions to the resolution and then a revote may be needed. Commissioner Sheila Cuffee added that a deadline should be added for feedback. Mr. Troy added that the different assemblies meet at different times during the month. Chair Romain suggested that a deadline of late August or early September be given. Attorney Richard Boulden stated what the commissioners could do to get the resolution to the legislation. Commissioner Mathay asked if the public in general could be informed of this resolution. Director Goins answered it is not available at this time. Chair Romain gave remarks on this agenda item.

UPDATE ON NC LEGISLATIVE BILLS ON HOUSING

Attorney Richard Boulden reported that the House of Representatives' Bill #H854. The provisions of this bill will be forwarded to HUD for reconciling in federal law and to bring the provisions into law. For future purposes, if the legislation is going to make changes to the HUD law, they should consult with HUD their concerns about it being in compliance to make amendments.

UPDATE ON REPORT ON ELIZABETH CITY MEETING

Program Manager Gene Troy reported that he was in contact with City Manager Montre' Freeman. He scheduled a meeting with him to discuss the possibility of the city establishing a local human relations commission in Elizabeth City. He is also planning to meet with Pasquotank County Manager Hammett. Commissioner Linda Jackson Barnes wanted to know about how the commissioners can be present at this meeting. Mr. Troy will send out a WebEx invite to the commissioners to join him in this joint virtual meeting.

UPDATE ON POTENTIAL SPEAKERS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Commissioner Nicholas Byrne reported on some potential speakers that will cover topics like bias school mascots and race relations.

UPDATE ON COMMISSIONER BADGES

Director Lamont Goins reported that all of the commissioners have received their badges, except for Commissioner Sheridan and the arrival time is on a pending status.

UPDATE ON FEDERAL MORATORIUM ON HOUSING

Director Goins reported on the totals of evictions, missed rent payments, and rental properties sold due to a lack of funds during the pandemic. There is a need for housing assistance and Section-8. When low-income renters cannot find a decent, affordable apartment, they are more likely to be evicted and risk becoming homeless. Chair Romain asked what the HRC can do to impact this situation. Mr. Goins responded this is a two-headed coin situation that will continue to exist. Commissioner Angelo Mathay added this is why the resolution is needed, when the moratorium is lifted. Commissioner Zakiya Bell-Rogers commented that it is a cycle of putting people in debt when they cannot pay. It is indeed two-sided. Commissioner Charlotte Williams also commented that on the local level some Covid funds were used to offset the cost. Vice Chair Matthew Hughes responded that affordable housing is market based. People don't have the jobs to afford it. It's a situation that cannot be fixed overnight. Commissioner Sheila Cuffee commented that it is an on-going battle. She also mentioned about issues with Section-8 being that property owners no longer want to receive the vouchers and are selling their property. Chair Romain remarked on how

the commissioners could bring this to the legislation's attention and to make housing affordable. He thanked the commissioners for their comments.

NEW BUSINESS

SUPPORT FOR ELIZABETH CITY HRC

Program Manager Gene Troy reported that he will follow-up with information on the link for the virtual meeting he will have with the city manager to the commissioners.

WELCOME NEW ALJ

Chair Romain reported this will happen at the next in-person meeting.

UPDATES FROM COMMISSIONERS ON LOCAL WORK

Chair Romain asked the commissioners for their updates on their local work. Chair Romain reported on the work that Vice Chair Hughes is doing in the community. He encouraged the commissioners to have reports for future meetings.

CLOSING REMARKS AND Q & A

Chair Toussaint Romain opened the floor for questions. Attorney Richard Boulden reminded the commissioners of the deadline to complete their State Ethics Review. Chair Romain gave closing remarks. He thanked the HRC staff for their work and thanked the HRC commissioners for their work and time.

The next HRC meeting is on October 28, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.

ADJOURN

Chair Romain adjourned the Human Relations Commission meeting at 12:17 p.m.