

State of North Carolina – Office of Administrative Hearings

North Carolina Human Relations Commission

**Meeting Minutes
July 30, 2020**

The Human Relations Commission met on Thursday, July 30, 2020 via Video and Phone. Commissioners present were Toussaint Romain, Matthew Hughes, Linda Jackson Barnes, Nicholas Byrne, Edith Chance, Henry Eddleman III, Jameesha Harris, Lauren Haigler Henderson, T. Vonta Leach, Angelo Mathay, Paul Norman, Phillip Sheridan, Reginald Speight, Ralph Stevenson III, Amelia Stinson-Wesley.

OAH Staff members present were Lamont Goins, Richard Boulden, Gene Troy, Elouise Williams, Jacques Chappell, Judge Julian Mann.

CALL TO ORDER, PRAYER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, WELCOMING REMARKS

The meeting was called to order at 11:15 a.m. with Chairman Toussaint Romain presiding. Opening Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance, and Welcoming Remarks led by Chair Romain.

ROLL CALL AND ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Commissioners present and phoned in were noted. Quorum was met.
The Roll was taken. The Commissioners present via video and phone were noted. Quorum was met.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes from the May 28, 2020 meeting were motioned to be approved by Commissioner Nicholas Byrne. The Commissioners unanimously seconded and accepted the minutes to be approved.

INTRODUCTION BY JUDGE MANN AND REMARKS BY CHIEF JUSTICE BEASLEY

Judge Julian Mann introduced Chief Justice Cheri Beasley.

Chief Justice Cheri Beasley is the first African American woman in the North Carolina Supreme Court's 200-year history to serve as Chief Justice. She has been on the state's highest Court since 2012 and was named Chief Justice in March of 2019. Justice Beasley also served four years as an Associate Judge on the North Carolina Court of Appeals, and was a District Court Judge for a decade in the 12th Judicial District in Cumberland County. She is an extraordinary person of faith.

Chief Justice Beasley thanked Judge Mann for introducing her. She also thanked the Commissioners for the invitation to speak and for their noble work that they do. She spoke on the COVID-19 pandemic, racial disparities, respective roles of judges, improving courts' technologies, substance abuse assessment and treatment. Go to ncfaithandjusticealliance.com for more information. Chief Justice Beasley is also working to engage educators/schools, law enforcement, clergy leaders, and other stakeholders in discussions about important community issues. Expungement will also be accessible for relief to citizens. She is implementing online services and increasing the number of specialty courts and working to make the judicial system more accessible to all North Carolinians. Go to ncfairchance.org for more information.

Chair Romain and Judge Mann gave brief remarks and thanked Chief Justice Beasley for speaking at the HRC meeting and for the work she is doing for our state.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMISSIONERS

Judge Julian Mann welcomed the new commissioners to the HRC. The newest commissioners are Lauren Haigler Henderson (present), Tony Durden (absent), and Phillip Sheridan (present).

UPDATES AND INFORMATION FROM OAH STAFF

Brief Overview on HRC Mission – Toussaint Romain

PowerPoint Presentation on the mission and purpose of the Human Relations Commission. He also discussed in depth 1. Statue; 2. Duties; 3. Goals – Affordable Housing, Re-Entry/Fair Chance Hiring, Diversity and Inclusion, Voting Rights, and Access to Basic Education. A link will be sent to the commissioners to review.

Chair Romain opened the floor for questions. Commissioner Philip Sheridan asked, “How many sub-committees are there?” Chair Romain answered there are about four or five sub-committees. The Fair Housing Committee is the only one that is presently functional. Commissioner Angelo Mathay asked Attorney Richard Boulden, “Is there a limit on sub-committee members?” Attorney Boulden answered, that there is no statutory provision at all, except we must have a panel that can review decisions by administrative courts pertaining to fair housing.

Report on Activities of Local HRCs – Gene Troy

Program Manager Gene Troy gave a report on changes in the state and local HRCs due to the COVID-19. There is a total of 24 commissions in the state. The regional state-wide meeting has been postponed due to the Governor’s statewide mandate of staying at home. There will possibly be virtual realms of upcoming meetings for local HRCs for late August or early September for the statewide meeting.

HUD Fair Housing Assistance Program Report – Gene Troy

Program Manager Gene Troy reported that the Fair Housing cases for this fiscal year. There were 76 processed cases turned in to HUD. That number is well above the HUD quota of 60 cases. Commissioner Angelo Mathay questioned about receiving the Fair Housing Report. The report will be sent to him.

Staff Vacancy Update – Lamont Goins

Director Lamont Goins reported that the Human Relations Specialist vacancy may possibly be filled by the HRC’s meeting in October. The interviews are being conducted by virtual meetings. The hiring process was explained by Director Goins.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no Public Comments.

OLD BUSINESS

Vice Chair Matthew Hughes presided over the Old Business.
Chair Romain checked the Virtual Message Inbox.

Draft Bylaws Presentation – Richard Boulden

Attorney Richard Boulden reported on the Draft Bylaws. Each commissioner received a copy of the Draft Bylaws before this meeting. He explained each bylaw. Commissioner Paul Norman motioned that the Draft Bylaws be accepted as written, Commissioner Reginald Speight seconded the motion. All commissioners were in agreement to receive the Draft Bylaws to become the official HRC Bylaws as presented.

HRC Commissioner ID Badges Update – Arthur Harrell

Mr. Arthur Harrell reported that the ID badges should be arriving soon. As soon as the badges are received they will be mailed to the commissioners.

Update on Potential Speakers for Future Meetings

Commissioner Angelo Mathay spoke on the proposed one or two speakers that will address the commissioners on various Housing and HRC topics. Commissioner Reginald Speight also spoke on this matter. Commissioner Nicholas Byrne suggested a few local speakers to address HRC.

Commissioners Fair Housing Training Update

Director Lamont Goins reported that the training sponsored by HUD has been placed on hold due to COVID-19. The budget for this year for training will be rolled over to next year's budget.

Technology for Virtual HRC Meeting – Arthur Harrell

Mr. Arthur Harrell spoke on the teleconferencing and videoconferencing. WebEx is the chosen conference technology for the HRC meetings.

COVID-19 Impact on Housing and Services – Gene Troy

Program Manager Gene Troy reported that there have not been any cases reported due to the cause of COVID-19 issues. Investigator/Staff Liaison Jacques Chappell had a question about how COVID-19 affect the eight-month requirement of HUD. Director Lamont Goins answered her question about the requirement and included information on fair housing training.

NEW BUSINESS

Chair Toussaint Romain presided over the New Business.

New Local Commissions

Program Manager Gene Troy reported that there has been a renewed interest to reestablish or enhance local commissions. He was in contact with Mr. Scott Elliott, Pitt County Manager, who is inquiring about establishing the Greenville-Pitt County Joint Commission. Lincoln County is also interested in a local commission. Commissioner Linda Jackson Barnes commented on the governor and a few others being suggested speakers. Commissioner Jameesha Harris questioned if these new commissions would do the work then report back to us or just be a part of what we do? Program Manager Gene Troy responded that the local commissions would be established by their own city or county. They will be going by their own ordinances. We give them technical assistance and help them get started and established.

Black Lives Matter Protest

Staff Liaison Jacques Chappell reported the details on the 35 individual protests across the state. Program Manager Gene Troy also reported that the City of Raleigh Human Relations Division added Racial Equity Inclusion Office due to the George Floyd's death on May 25, 2020 incident, hate crimes, and racial bias. Commissioner Amelia Stinson-Wesley stated it was a helpful and wonderful report.

Removal of Confederate Monuments

Staff Liaison Jacques Chappell reported the details on the 16 Confederate Monuments that were removed around the state.

Renaming of Public Buildings and Facilities

Program Manager Gene Troy reported that since the death of George Floyd the following colleges and universities has removed or voted to be removed or rename buildings named after people tied to the confederacy or white supremacy from their public buildings: Western Carolina auditorium, NC State University resident hall, and UNC Chapel Hill buildings. Other universities are in the process of deciding on renaming its buildings.

Defunding of Police Departments

Program Manager Gene Troy reported that there have been protests across the state to defund the police departments. Defunding meaning to reallocate funds from the police to community service agencies and organizations such as mental health and affordable housing. This is still in the initial stages at this time.

Governor's Executive Order on COVID-19

Director Lamont Goins reported that this a reminder that we are still in Phase II of the Governor's Executive Order on Covid-19. State offices are working in limited mandates.

Closing Remarks and Q & A – Chair Toussaint Romain

Closing Remarks were made by Chair Toussaint Romain. Chair Romain read the comments by Commissioner Ralph Stevenson from the WebEx chat about the update on Supreme Court portrait advisory committee. Commissioner Amelia Stinson-Wesley asked can commissioners get involved in making statements on behalf of HRC on the current topics of our state and nation. Chair Romain said yes, as long as it doesn't fall outside of our mission and objectives and that it will be stated in the sub-committee and then voted upon in the HRC meeting. Attorney Boulden stated a caution that unless the commission as a whole has approved a particular statement on an issue the individual commissioner should not imply that their personal opinion is the HRC group's opinion. As an individual, you have freedom of speech.

Commissioner Jameesha Harris recommended a moment of silence in memory of The Honorable John Lewis who passed on July 17, 2020. He was a civil rights leader and politician. We then honored his memory and legacy with a moment of silence.

The next HRC meeting will be October 29, 2020.

Chair Romain gave his closing remarks. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for the work that is done by the staff for the success of the HRC meetings.

ADJOURN

The HRC Meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

Submitted by,
Elouise Williams, Civil Rights Division Administrative Specialist

Minutes approved by,
The Human Relations Commission
Toussaint Romain, Commissioner (Presiding Chair)