

**State of North Carolina
Office of Administrative Hearings**

North Carolina Human Relations Commission

**Meeting Minutes
May 26, 2022**

The Human Relations Commission met on Thursday, May 26, 2022, via In Person, Video, and Phone. Commissioner Pierre Crawford attended in person. Commissioners virtually present were Nicholas Byrne (presided), Linda Jackson Barnes, ZaKiya Bell-Rogers, Sheila Cuffee, Cedric Dickerson, Lauren Haigler Henderson, Matthew Hughes, Howard Morgan, Paul Norman, Philip Sheridan, and Ralph “Steve” Stevenson.

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

Announcement and Recognition were made by Director Lamont Goins.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 11:37 a.m. with Commissioner Nick Byrne presiding. The meeting opened with Prayer by Commissioner Pierre Crawford, the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Ralph “Steve” Stephenson, and Welcoming Remarks given by Commissioner Byrne.

ROLL CALL

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the January 27, 2022, meeting was unanimously approved and accepted as written by majority vote. Motion on minutes was made by Commissioner Linda Jackson Barnes and second by Commissioner Pierre Crawford.

UPDATES AND INFORMATION FROM OAH STAFF

Director Lamont Goins reported on the employee promotion of Ronya Bynum as a housing investigator. Mr. Goins introduced Yolanda Quick-Anderson as the Intake Specialist for housing complaints and Glenda Del Castillo as the Administrative Specialist. In which, Ms. Del Castillo will be taking the minutes and roll call in the future meetings. OAH also, has two Human Relations Specialist positions that are being announced and interviewed.

HATE CRIMES AND HATE BIAS REPORT

Program Manager Gene Troy provided a comprehensive Hate Crimes and Hate Bias Report on incidents across North Carolina as of April 30, 2022. Out of the six hate crime incidents reported a total of four incidents were consider either a threat, disruptions, or other harassments. The one bias hate crime was a derogatory expression of a confederate flag covering a Nazi swastika on a tree within a yard of a home across a high school. Commissioner Byrne asked Mr. Troy “What is the mechanism for reporting these incidents?” and “How we do we compile them?” Mr. Troy responded by saying that these incidents are reported to OAH by compiling them through a combination of items such as television stories, newspaper articles, individuals that know the office exist, as well as some law enforcement and the local Human Relations Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The meeting was opened to the public. There were no public comments. However, the floor was opened to allow the guest speaker to speak.

OLD BUSINESS

LOCAL HRC RESOLUTIONS UPDATE

Program Manager Gene Troy updated the commissioners on the letters of support concerning the NCHRC resolutions that were passed last year in June. The office has received a total of eight letters of support. We have received letters from the Salisbury Human Relations Council, Wilson Human Relations Department, Raleigh Human Relations Commission, Winston-Salem Human Relations Commission, New Hanover County City of Wilmington Community Relations Advisory Committee, Lexington Human Relations Commission, Greenville Human Relations Council, and the Fayetteville Cumberland County Human Relations Commission.

DRIVER LICENSE RESTORATION WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Director Lamont Goins reported that the local human relations commission had a statewide meeting on March 29, 2022, with the commissions. The North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission presented the Restoration of citizens Driver License challenges and opportunities. Mr. Gene Troy received feedback from the presentation from commissioners stating that it was great information and that they would be reaching out to the commissions to sponsor Driver License Restoration Clinics in their local areas.

UPDATE REPORT ON ELIZABETH CITY ESTABLISHING LOCAL HRC

Program Manager Gene Troy gave an update report on Elizabeth City establishing a local human relations commission. They sent Mr. Troy a proposal of bylaws to review and provided them with any type of revisions to make. Once those revisions are completed, the city council and the county board of commissioners will start to appoint persons on the commission, and then they will have to reach out to Mr. Troy to present and train the local human relations commission and Elizabeth City Pasquotank County. Mr. Troy thanked Commissioners Paul Norman, Linda Jackson Barnes, and former Chair Toussaint Romain for their support for aiding Mr. Troy to convince the government the need to establish or reestablish the commission there.

GRANVILLE COUNTY PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION COMPLAINT

Director Lamont Goins reported on the letter of complaint that Mr. Michael Mohammed sent in to investigate. After attending Granville County Commissioner's meeting and not getting an appropriate response from them on the issue about the inconvenience of using the basketball courts at the Granville County Athletic Park. While speaking with Attorney Richard Boulden, it was determined that it was a situation the staff could not undertake without some direction from the commissioners, since the staff does not have any statutory authority to do it. At the conclusion of that, it was determined that there was no violation of using the standards. Commissioners direct staff to send Mr. Mohammed a letter of their findings and to direct his concerns to future developments with the municipality. Commissioner Sheila Cuffee stated that Mr. Mohammed should be informed of the decision of the commissioners that "Mr. Mohammed provided no evidence or information to support his claim that the GAP designed or managed to control black male youth at this location." Motioned by Commissioner Pierre Crawford and second by Commissioner Sheila Cuffee.

NEW BUSINESS

OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION UNDER NCGS 7A-761

This agenda item was not discussed at this meeting.

REPORT ON LOCAL HRC STATEWIDE MEETING

Director Lamont Goins reported that Former Chair Toussaint Romain facilitated the topic discussion “What human relation issues local commissioners are dealing with and what human relation issues can the board assist them with?” Chair Romain had approved to sponsor those type of clinics, as well as dealing with issues with mental health and other types of human relations issues that are relevant and current. Mr. Terry Bradley, who is the president of the NC Chapter of the National Association of Human Rights Workers announced that he would be sending a survey to see if they want to have a statewide human relations conference and requested that once the survey had been received, responses will be sent back to them as soon as possible. So that the organization can determine if the conference will be possible. As far as the second quarter, a statewide meeting will not be held. However, information and requests were received from the Greenville Human Relations Council to sponsor the statewide in person in Greenville, NC on September 27, 2022.

UPDATE ON NEW AND EXISTING HRC COMMISSION

Program Manager Gene Troy reported that after the meeting of January 1, 2022, he spoke with Commissioner Crawford to find out what is going on with Gaston County. If whether there was a commission established or reestablished there. In speaking with Ms. Dennis, who is the Housing and Neighborhood Director for the City of Gastonia. She provided information to see if the County Human Relations Commission was still involved or whether they had folded, in which it has folded. It was decommissioned in 2009, and it does not have a commission established for the county or the City of Gastonia. Mr. Troy and Commissioner Crawford will meet and speak with the people of Gastonia to see if they are interested in establishing a city commission. Also, Mr. Troy received information from Ms. Karina De Roche, the staff liaison from the Pike County Human Relations Commission. Who stated that the mayor from Whitaker to establish a Human Relations Commission there. Mr. Troy informed Ms. Roche to contact the mayor of Whitaker and have him contact Mr. Troy on steps on how to establish the local human relations. Mr. Troy was in a meeting two weeks ago, in which the chair of the Asheville Human Relations Commission and two staff leads from the commission. They stated that due to the city of Asheville, restructuring of their board and commissions that the city has considered decommissioning a lot of the commissions there and replacing them with human relations working action groups to complete the work on any human relations issues that affect the city of Asheville. Mr. Troy informed the Chair of the Asheville Human Relations Commission and the two staffs that OAH will still be in contact with them and provide them with any assistance they may need.

CONTESTED CASE HEARING FOR FAIR HOUSING CASE

Attorney Richard Boulden reported on the contested case that the commission had filed with the Office of Administrative Hearings. The case went into a mediation settlement conference, in which Senior Judge Morrison acted as the mediator. Parties came to an agreement, that was communicated to Judge Byrne who was presiding over the case. The complainant Shawnbach, refused to honor her agreement and the judge gave her several days to think that over. However, she still did not honor the agreement, which was legally binding. The judge dismissed the case. Mr. Boulden was disappointed with the result of the case, which there was a clear violation to the Fair Housing Act. In other contested cases, the commission has filed a Fair Housing lawsuit in superior court in Hoke County. That is a race-based case against Homeowner’s Association and its officers and managers, as well as filing a handicap and condition discrimination within the next week for refusal of reasonable accommodations in Buncombe County. So, there will be two court cases going on.

DEVELOPMENTS ON HRC RESOLUTION WITH THE GOVERNOR’S OFFICE

Program Manager Gene Troy reported that former Chair Romain prepared and sent an email to policy adviser, Governor Roy Cooper informing him and other staff that the commission had

drafted a resolution regarding housing and tenant rights. Chair Romain wanted to share this information to the commission on the resolution, in hopes that the governor would consider supporting it. Policy advisor responded to Chair Romain email requesting copies of the resolution to proceed for an internal review. On May 11, 2022, Mr. Troy received an email from former Chair Romain requesting to send resolution to the policy adviser and on May 12, 2022, Mr. Troy sent the email. As of now, the resolution is in the governor's office for them to review, but we have not heard any new developments concerning that.

CURRENT TRENDS ON HATE AND NATIONAL SHOOTINGS

Program Manager Gene Troy gave an extensive report on the violence and incidents that occurred across the nation over the last week. Mr. Troy found a recent article speaking about what has happen between May 13, 2022 through Monday, May 23, 2022. Mr. Troy stated that in his 30 years working in human relations, there are a lot of different factors right now that as human relations people and civil rights people need to be aware of that may call for more type of incidents to occur during the summer. One of the factors is that we are in a pandemic, in which that could escalate a person's emotions. The second factors are inflation that is on the rise and that can cause a lot of tension on families and in people particularly, and the third factor is the big key right now is that we are currently in a political election year. Political election triggers people's emotions to the point they get angry and upset and are not reasonable. Mr. Troy stated that they have alerted the Human Relations Commissions through email and phone to be alert on new incidents that may come in due to the factors he stated previously.

CLOSING REMARKS AND Q & A

Commissioner Nick Byrne opened the floor for questions. Commissioner Byrne gave closing remarks. He thanked the HRC staff for their work and thanked the HRC commissioners for their work and time.

ADJOURN

It was motioned by Commissioner Lauren Haigler Henderson and seconded by several Commissioners to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Nick Byrne adjourned the Human Relations Commission meeting at 1:22 p.m.