

State of North Carolina – Office of Administrative Hearings

North Carolina Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

October 29, 2020

The Human Relations Commission met on Thursday, October 29, 2020 via Video and Phone. Commissioners present were Toussaint Romain (Chair), Matthew Hughes (Vice Chair), Amelia Stinson-Wesley, Phillip Sheridan, Steve Stevenson, TR Nunley, Paul Norman, Nick Byrne, Linda Jackson Barnes, Jameesha Harris, Angelo Mathay, Lauren Haigler Henderson, Richard Huffman, Paul Norman.

OAH Staff members present were Lamont Goins, Gene Troy, Richard Boulden, Arthur Harrell, Elouise Williams, Linda Worth.

Presenters present were Justin Edge, Ben Many, Rodger Lentz

Public present were Shon Smith, Robert McGlothlin

Call to Order, Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance, Welcoming Remarks

The virtual meeting began at 11:02 a.m. and was led by Vice Chair Matthew Hughes. Prayer given by Commissioner Phillip Sheridan. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice Chair Matthew Hughes. He also gave the welcoming remarks.

Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum

The Roll was called by Ms. Elouise Williams, Administrative Specialist. The quorum for the meeting was met.

Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting

The last meeting minutes (July 30, 2020) were motioned by Chair Toussaint Romain and seconded by Commissioner Amelia Stinson-Wesley to approve and accept as written. All commissioners were in favor.

Introduction of new Commissioner (s)

Director Lamont Goins reported there are no new commissioners at this time. He checked with the Governor's office and anticipates that they will be filling some of the vacancies that we currently have.

UPDATES AND INFORMATION FROM OAH STAFF

Local HRC Virtual Meeting Report

Program Manager Gene Troy reported on the local HRC virtual meeting on September 20, 2020. It was a state-wide meeting with the local commissions held and sponsored by the Greensboro Human Relations Department and Commission. There were a total of 79 people participating and representing 16 different commissions throughout the state. There was a PowerPoint presentation conducted by Dr. Love Jones, director of the Greensboro Relations Department and Jody Stanley, Education and Outreach Coordinator. The topic of discussion was about social justice and the pandemic a response to human relations. They both discussed what their department did and is still doing concerning our responses to the pandemic, as well as, to the social injustice issues that are occurring in Greensboro. Also, at the meeting, Program Manager Gene Troy gave a report indicating that there are two areas

that are interested in establishing Human Relations Commissions, Pitt County and Town of Winterville. He also gave an update on the removal of Confederate monuments throughout the state. They also reported on updates on the hate crimes and biases in North Carolina as of September 28, 2020. Another meeting will be held in December for more updates before the end of the year. The upcoming meeting's agenda will be forthcoming soon.

Chair Toussaint Romain asked how can we be involved in assisting with that, either from a resource perspective or even an expertise perspective? Also, with our commission having the ability to lobby and to suggest litigation or legislation to the general legislature, and how as a general assembly with regard to the removal of Confederate monuments, what involvement should this commission have or can have in relation to that?

Program Manager Gene Troy responded that the counties are in the beginning stages and are trying to decide what type of relations commission they want to be. He will do a presentation about the orientation of local commissions. As far as the commission members themselves, the closest commission members can reach out to them. There are safety issues about removing the Confederate monuments. Local areas are figuring out ways to handle this. Vice Chair Matthew Hughes added he has read the legislation and he thinks it was the historic preservation act or historic monument act. This is a temporary solution. We need a more permanent solution, as working with the Historic Preservation Commission, etc. Commissioner Steve Stevenson recommended that the commission to not get involved until legislative changes are made for various reasons. He suggested that our attention should focus on fair housing issues and fair housing act.

Commissioner Lauren Haigler Henderson questioned about how to get in contact with the Pitt County people. Commissioner Angelo Mathay informed her to contact Program Manager Gene Troy, he is the point of contact. For now, their decision is to table it until further notice. Director Lamont Goins added we are still early in the process in working with them. Chair Toussaint Romain suggested that Program Manager Gene Troy would extend our support to them and we would be available to make some connections for them so that we can be intentional and strategic in what we're doing. We must make sure that we, as commissioners are getting more in touch and aligned with those in the local community as a way of supporting and strengthening the bonds that we all have in relation to human relations.

HRC Human Relations Specialist Vacancy Update

Director Lamont Goins commented on the Human Relations Specialist position update. The positions were declined by the candidate and is now open and posted again. Two positions are available for potential candidates. The interviewing process will begin as soon as possible. Commissioner Jameesha Harris asked about going back to the previous candidates that filled out applications. Director Lamont Goins answered only two of them met our needs and highly qualified referred by HR. Vice Chair Matthew Hughes questioned about the screening process. Director Lamont Goins informed him of the screening process and other information. Chair Toussaint Romain suggested that since we have presenters that this discussion be tabled for later discussion.

Introduction of Guest Speakers

Commissioner Nick Byrne introduced the two presenters who are attorneys in Asheville, Attorney Justin Edge and Attorney Ben Many of Pisgah Legal Services. Attorney Ben Many, Homeless Prevention Program Director, discussed the Homeless Prevention Program. He discussed evictions, expungements, victims of pandemics, loss of income, good cause situations, etc. Attorney Justin Edge, Community Economic Development Program Director, discussed Community Economic Development and tools for profits, nonprofits, and local

governments in housing development. Also, he discussed restrictions on certain clients, grant cycle, community economic development program, affordable housing, jobs, and assets for low-income people and equitable development. He stated that Community Economic Development focuses on building collaborative, inclusive, and locally controlled economies.

Presenter, Mr. Rodger Lentz introduced by Commissioner Angelo Mathay. He is the Chief Planning and Development Officer for the City of Wilson. He discussed neighborhood challenges, revitalization efforts, policy recommendations, housing violations, 301 revitalization strategy, Wilson Academy of Technology funding, etc.

The presenters were thanked for their presentations.

Commissioner Steve Stevenson asked what is out there for people that are not going to qualify for what's already out there? Mr. Rodger Lentz answered that is more of a legal situation.

Vice Chair Matthew Hughes responded with information on affordability, land policies, poverty, and home ownership vs. renting. Mr. Rodger Lentz then further discussed building codes, cost of labor, zoning, private market reaction, etc. Commissioner Steve Stevenson discussed issues that come up in housing.

Chair Toussaint Romain asked where can we, as a commission align our efforts with their work? How do we get better at doing this work and implementing the policies that would fit within who we are as a commission? (Question was left open for discussion.) Commissioner Steve Stevenson discussed issues that come up in housing in general and in the Rocky Mount area, HUD and public housing. Attorney Justin Edge further discussed the housing policies, housing authority, etc.

Commissioners can follow-up with the presenters if they have further questions. The presenters' emails are: Rodger Lentz - rlentz@wilsonnc.org; Justin Edge - justin@pisgahlegal.org; Ben Many - ben@pisgahlegal.org.

Hate Crimes and Hate Bias Report

Program Manager Gene Troy reported that as of October 28, 2020, a total of 2,071 plus incidences have been reported. A total of 2033 plus incidences were hate biases and remaining 38 were hate crimes and 23 of those were vandalism. A case was heard in federal court on criminal and interference with the federal Fair Housing Act. Military militia activity and rallying points for violation were reported. Chair Toussaint Romain thanked Program Manager Gene Troy for his report. He also asked, how to get this information out to law enforcement. A High Alert is being set up to all HRCs and departments. Commissioner Jameesha Harris asked, how do we get access to this information that is provided in our agenda updates? Program Manager Gene Troy said he will send out a link and the report to the commissioners.

Public Comments

Chair Toussaint Romain stated that there are two groups that will be coming to ask for the commissioners' assistance and support for the community.

OLD BUSINESS

COVID-19 Impact on Housing and Services and Federal Moratorium on Housing

Attorney Richard Boulden reported on the impact of COVID 19 in the state. The Centers for Disease Control put a nationwide lock on stopping evictions for renters. Governor Roy Cooper issued an executive order providing protection for residential and commercial tenants. Chief Justice Cheri Beasley issued an order establishing how North Carolina courts would handle infections. He discussed the Federal Cares Act eviction moratorium, federal housing, National Council Estate, tenant arrears, foreclosures, etc.

Update on Potential Speakers for Future Meetings

No report on potential speakers for upcoming meetings. Commissioner Angelo Mathay excused himself earlier from the meeting and was unavailable to give the report.

Black Lives Matter Protest Update

Program Manager Gene Troy reported there are no new movements reported. There have been 21 Confederate monuments removed across the state.

Governor's Executive Order on COVID-19 Phase 3

Director Lamont Goins reported on the Governor's executive order on Phase 3. It will be in place for some time until the cases total come down. Commissioner Jameesha Harris stated about enforcing any type of policy to try to get these cases down. Director Lamont Goins responded that the secretary of Department of Health and Human Services will be setting the states policy.

Commissioner Eddleman's Resignation

Director Lamont Goins reported that Commissioner Henry Eddleman resigned from the commission. He has accepted a gubernational appointment.

Bond Referendum on Affordable Housing

Director Lamont Goins reported that the upcoming Raleigh election ballot will have a \$95M bond referendum for affordable housing. He also reported other bond referendums. Vice Chair Matthew Hughes further discussed the bonds. Chair Toussaint Romain also commented on the need of housing options.

Q & A

Director Lamont Goins reminded the commission that the schedule for the next year's meeting need to be in place. This will be tabled, and an email will be sent out to the commissioners with the information.

Commissioner Jameesha Harris asked about an update on the name badges. Mr. Arthur Harrell gave an update. The name badges will be ordered and mailed directly to the commissioners. The turn-around time depends on the manufacturer. By the close of business on Monday, the name badges will be ordered. A confirmation of the delivery date will be forwarded to the commissioners.

Vice Chair Matthew Hughes questioned about updating the commissioners' address directory. Director Lamont Goins stated that it would be helpful that the commissioners would send their updated information to Ms. Elouise Williams, Administrative Specialist, then we can go through and update the directory and send out a new listing. An update form will be sent to the commissioners.

Closing Remarks

Vice Chair Matthew Hughes gave closing remarks and then asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Jameesha Harris motioned that the meeting be adjourned, and it was seconded by the several commissioners.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:26 p.m.