

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

North Carolina Human Relations Commission

**Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2022**

The Human Relations Commission met on Thursday, January 27, 2022, via In Person, Video, and Phone. Commissioners present in person were Toussaint Romain (Chair) and Ralph “Steve” Stephenson. Commissioners virtually present were Matthew Hughes (Vice Chair), Linda Jackson Barnes, ZaKiya Bell-Rogers, Nicholas Byrne, Edith Chance, Pierre Crawford, Sheila Cuffee, Cedric Dickerson, Jameesha Harris, Lauren Haigler Henderson, Angelo Mathay, Howard Morgan, Paul Norman, Philip Sheridan, Reginald Speight, and Amelia Stinson-Wesley.

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 11:10 a.m. with Chair Romain presiding. The meeting opened with Prayer by Commissioner Amelia Stinson-Wesley, the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Ralph “Steve” Stephenson, and Welcoming Remarks given by Chair Toussaint Romain.

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 October 28, 2021 meeting was unanimously approved and accepted as written by majority vote. Motion on minutes was made by Commissioner Edith Chance and second by Commissioner Linda Jackson Barnes and Commissioner Ralph “Steve” Stephenson.

FAYETTEVILLE CUMBERLAND HRC MEETING

Chair Toussaint Romain reported that NCHRC was invited to a joint meeting with Fayetteville Cumberland County Human Relations Department to address the resolution as well as answer questions they may have, and to establish a relationship with them and support. Due to the winter storm, this meeting was postponed until next month in February. Chair Romain met with leadership from the Fayetteville Cumberland County Human Relations Department, as well as City Council and their spokeswomen to discuss the resolution. They are excited about supporting and working together with us on this resolution. The other commissioners are invited to attend the next meeting with them.

UPDATES AND INFORMATION FROM OAH STAFF

Director Lamont Goins reported on the employee promotions of Ashley Foster and Elouise Williams. There will be recruitment and interviews for other vacant positions. Chair Romain gave congratulations remarks to them on their promotions.

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 November 2021 through January 2022. He also gave information on leaflets solicited by KKK. Mr. Troy was thanked for his report.

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. The agenda item was moved forward in the meeting to the next agenda item.

DRIVER LICENSE RESTORATION WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Chair Toussaint Romain opened the meeting to the guest speaker. Commissioner Nicholas Byrne introduced the guest speaker, Ms. Jennifer Lechner, executive director of Equal Access of Justice Commission. She spoke on statistics and problems in the surrounding communities, the legal needs they assist with, driver license restoration, and NC Fair Chance. She can be reached at lechner@ncaccessstojustice.org. For more information go to the website: endcriminaljusticedebtnc.org, and ncfairchance.org. Commissioner Pierre Crawford made comments on two individuals that encountered these situations and on the helpful information she presented and wanted more information. She informed him on the faith and justice alliance for faith communities. Commissioner Ralph Stevenson asked a question about expungements process. Commissioner Lauren Haigler Henderson had questions on the function and process of the court. Commissioner Edith Chance asked about their website information. Commissioner Angelo Mathay asked about the efforts of policy and legislation. Ms. Lechner answered the commissioners' questions. Commissioner Byrne gave final comments for this agenda item. Commissioner Romain thanked Ms. Lechner on her presentation.

OLD BUSINESS

LOCAL HRC FEEDBACK ON RESOLUTIONS AND SUPPORT

Program Manager Gene Troy reported on the letters of support for the NCHRC's Housing Resolution. Letters were received from the other commissions to extend the deadline to March to respond on the resolution. Commissioners Byrne, Haigler-Henderson, Stevenson, Cuffee, and Romain also commented on this agenda item on landlords, other HRC commissions, and the HRC resolution. Mr. Troy will send out a housing PowerPoint presentation from the NC Housing Finance Agency meeting to the commissioners for more information. The commissioners were in favor of moving forward with the resolution to the General Assembly. Chair Romain thanked the committee for their work.

EMERGING ISSUE THE IMPACT OF VACCINATION AND THE WORKPLACE

Director Lamont Goins reported that currently at least seventy-six percent of the U.S. population has received at least one covid-19 vaccination shot and are moving forward to immunity. Some businesses have already started going back into the office. Federal government has worked from home for the past two years as of next month. Mr. Goins answered questions about this agenda item. He also informed the commissioners on the rapid testing kits that are available at no cost. Chair Romain thanked him for his report.

UPDATE ON POST MORATORIUM EVICTIONS AND HOUSING

Director Lamont Goins reported on the moratorium evictions and housing and funding. People are still being evicted. There is not a one solution fits all in this situation. Attorney Richard Boulden spoke on the Bill #HB854 on Housing. Chair Romain thanked them for their reports.

UPDATE REPORT ON ELIZABETH CITY MEETING

Program Manager Gene Troy gave an update on Elizabeth City meeting about the possibility of a new HRC or County Community Relations Commission. There will be a meeting with the Interim City Manager and County Manager. Dr. Williams, chairperson of the Community Relations Commission, would like to attend the meeting. Commissioner Stevenson gave comments on this agenda item. Chair Romain asked him to connect with the commissioners in Elizabeth City. Chair Romain asked questions, gave comments, and thanked him for his report.

NEW BUSINESS

Granville County Public Accommodation Complaint

Program Manager Gene Troy reported on a complaint about the lack of access to basketball goals/courts and that they are not stand alone like the other sport venues. The commission does not have enforcement power over this; however, this is in the purview and has fact finding on this situation. A discussion pursued about this agenda item. Commissioners Linda Barnes motioned to seek additional facts and positions presented by the complainant. It was seconded by Commissioners Crawford and Henderson. All were in agreement to get more information at the next meeting. Chair Romain, Director Goins, and Attorney Boulden also gave comments on this agenda item.

SUPREME COURT DECISION ON COVID-19 VACCINATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

Attorney Richard Boulden reported that the Supreme Court upheld a stay on Department of Labor OSHA temporary mandate that large employers (over 150 employees) require all their employees to be either vaccinated or frequently tested. The Circuit Court removed this mandate on this stay that was imposed, and it was reversed and stated it was not needed as proposed regulation. Chair Romain also commented on this agenda item. He was thanked for his report.

NC HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Director Lamont Goins reported that State and Federal provide homeowners fund assistance at the risk of foreclosure and fraud prevention, and provisions for those at risk of being evicted that are renting. Attorney Boulden added it also assists landlords. Commissioner Cuffee asked about the numbers on landlords rejecting the funds. Mr. Goins answered the question. Commissioner Crawford commented on this agenda item. Chair Romain also gave comments.

HRC COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chair Toussaint Romain reported that there are fourteen out of twenty-two commissioners that are consistent and present in attendance. He encouraged more participation to fulfill the requirements to complete the ethics training. Chair Romain opened the floor to Director Goins. He added that 100% participation would be a goal and other comments to encourage them to be more productive and proactive. Chair Romain gave more comments on this agenda item.

CLOSING REMARKS AND Q & A

Chair Toussaint Romain opened the floor for questions. Chair Romain 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 Linda Jackson Barnes and seconded by several Commissioners to adjourn the meeting. Chair Toussaint Romain adjourned the Human Relations Commission meeting at 1:22 p.m.