

Bloomington Human Relations Commission
June 2014 Minutes

August 13, 2014

Bloomington Human Relations Commission Meeting
Main Level – Council Chambers
109 E. Olive Street
Bloomington, IL 61701

Call to Order

Rhonda Smith, Chair
John Elliott, Vice Chair
Commissioner Krishna
Commissioner Latson
Commissioner Lancaster
Commissioner Hoover

Staff: Ernestine Jackson
Equal Opportunity Associate

The Bloomington Human Relations Commission regular scheduled meeting was called to order by Rhonda Smith, Chair at 6:02 pm. Commissioners present: Elliott, Lancaster, Hoover, Latson, and Smith. Chair Smith stated that Commissioner Kirshna would not be present for the meeting. He will be taking a youth group to Costa Rica.

Approval of Minutes

The May, 2014, minutes were approved with the suggested corrections. Corrections: Smith – 2nd page, “Commissioner Lancaster stated “find a way”, “The can “use”, “Every two years.” Last page, “good time to acknowledge all those that serve on the Commission.”

Hoover – “bid package”

Moved for approval with suggested corrections by Elliott, seconded by Lancaster. Minutes approved.

Audience Participation

Patricia Martin addressed the Commission regarding senior issues. She was interested in knowing the role of the Commission.

Case Summary

Case # 009YTD9-14 – Requested that the case be dismissed. Jackson stated that the complexes are not taken care of. Renters are usually minorities and poor whites. The complex owners do not require credit

checks nor do they conduct extensive background checks. Jackson stated that this complaint is not a case of discrimination but an issue of poorly run apartments. The PACE department was contacted and they are well aware of the nuisance violations and other problems with these particular rental units. The apartments are infested with roaches. The complainant did not allow the owners to come in to spray the apartment because there was a young child in the apartment. The Landlord is known for not taking care of his complexes.

Chair Smith stated that the Commissioners were looking for a better way to assist landlords and to give them information regarding Landlord/Tenants Rights.

Commissioner Lancaster stated that this particular Landlord was the one landlord that did not come to any of the Landlord/Tenant meetings in the past. She stated that PACE will have to stay on the Landlord because that would be the only time he would correct the violations.

Jackson asked for a “no probable cause finding.”

On Case Number 008YTD8-14, Jackson recommended a “probable cause finding.” This case is a sexual harassment/hostile work environment case. She stated that it meets all of the standards of sexual harassment/hostile work environment. A fact finding was held and additional information was requested. The information was never received.

Jackson requested that Commissioners enter into the third phase of the Ordinance by conducting a Settlement meeting with all of the individuals involved in the case.

Commissioner Lancaster asked for clarification of the Settlement process.

Jackson stated that two Commissioners are assigned to the case and a hopefully settlement is reached between the parties. Jackson also said that she would have all of the information needed by the Commissioners for the procedure. If agreement is not reached the case then is scheduled for Public Hearing.

Chair Smith and Commissioner Lancaster will conduct the Settlement Conference.

Commissioner Hoover wanted to know what would occur if there is a disagreement after the Public Hearing.

Jackson stated that it would then end up in Circuit Court. She stated that all of the hearing she knew of that ended in Circuit Court, the judges usually agrees with the Commission’s findings.

Contract Compliance

Updates being conducted. Intern will be working on the Minority Directory

Commissioner Elliott asked if there are problems getting the necessary information from Contractors and Vendors.

Jackson stated that the problem is not getting the information; the problem is getting contractors to hire minorities and females. Jackson said that if companies can show they are making a “good faith” effort, there is not much that can be done. She stated that one of the problems is working with Stark. She stated that they have not had minorities and females in their workforce. She indicated that Stark consistently has bids with the City.

Old Business

- Dr. King Luncheon – Jackson stated that the joint meetings with Normal need to begin. Bishop Vashti McKenzie will be the speaker for the 2015 Luncheon. The first African American female to be appointed Bishop of the AME Church.

Commissioner Latson asked about the history of the Dr. King Luncheon.

Jackson stated that the Dr. King Luncheon was started by Tm Walker, the Human Relations Director for Bloomington, shortly after Dr. King was assassinated. She said it was stated before the King Holiday was made official. The program started out as a free event for the community. The program grew to the point that over 700 people would attend the event. The program was held at larger venues. It has been very successful until about three year ago. Last year the numbers increased.

Chair Smith indicated that there is a need to understand that the event is not a fund raiser. It is an event for the community which shares another light on it.

Jackson stated that there is a line item for the speaker. In the past \$12,000 was earmarked for the speaker. Last year and this year the cost for the speakers is around \$7,500. She stated that a joint meeting needs to be scheduled.

Jackson stated that under Old Business she would like to know if the Commission wanted to continue doing the school supplies for Cultural Fest. Juneteenth will be held on June 21, 2014. Chair Smith stated that she would be gone. Commissioner Elliott will be attending Juneteenth. Commissioner Lancaster will be available. It will be held at Forest Park.

Chair Smith stated that Juneteenth is a celebration to commemorate the time when slaves were first notified that they were free. There will be free food and activities. It is open to the community.

Smith stated that there will be a discussion in August for Cultural Fest. August will be the joint meeting.

Commissioner Latson asked if the Commission will be setting a date tonight.

It was decided to meet on August 5, 2014. Jackson will talk to Sally on Thursday to finalize the meeting date and time. Everyone will be available on August 5. Jackson will send an email to clarify the date and time.

Smith asked if a goal planning meeting could be held in July. She stated that she really wanted to get the goal planning done.

Lancaster stated that afternoon on Saturday's would be best.

Smith stated that the Commission would converse on this issue and come up with a date for goal setting. Smith also stated that everyone should look at where their skills are so that the Luncheon Committees can best suit the skills and abilities

Jackson stated that that would work, she just needed to know the date and time so that notice could be given to the public.

New Business

Jackson stated that under new business Not In Our Town was being revived. She stated that Barbara Adkins started the NIOT. She stated at some point the interest died and the dollars in the budget was used by the remaining individuals for use in the schools. After the money was depleted, and the City was going through a financial crisis, that line item was cut out of the budget. There is now a move to revive the NIOT. She stated that there is a convention in Billings, Mt. Commissioner Latson and Commissioner Krishna will be going. Jackson stated that if it is to come under the Commission, she want to make sure that the Chair was included in all of the conversations regarding NIOT.

Jackson stated that the Police Department was very active in NIOT.

Chair Smith stated asked the number of positions available for the Commission.

There is one vacancy.

Chair Smith stated there was a meeting on June 28 regarding NIOT.

Adjournment