

Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

March 16, 2016

Members Present: Rev. John Clemons, Alice Lewis, John Hawthorne, and Jessica Embury.

Members Absent: Lynn Isaacson-Zolman (exc.), Sue Mure (exc.), Parrish Stahl (exc.), and Simon Foster.

Ex Officio Present: Val Cochran-Toops

Also Present: Jonathan Greene, Staff, Mayor Bill Jors, Councilmember Freddie Dancy, Vice Mayor Derek Dobies, John Willis, and Lt. Adam Williams, JPD.

- I. **Call to Order:** Chair Alice Lewis called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
- II. **Roll Call** without a quorum, the Human Relations Commission met as a Committee of the Whole.
- III. **Adoption of Agenda:** No quorum.
- IV. **Citizen Comments:** None.
- V. **Guest:** None.
- VI. **Approval of the Meeting Minutes for February 17, 2016:**
Due to a lack of a quorum no action was taken.
- VII. **Community Liaison Police Officer:** Lt. Adam Williams spoke to the Commission about two items: the Citizen's Police Academy, and the Police In-Service Training.

The deadline date has been extended in the hopes of getting more participation for the Citizen's Police Academy. The start day is Wednesday, April 13, 2016.

The focus of the Police In-Service training was Post Traumatic Distress Syndrome and how to de-escalate a potentially violent situation. Everyone made it through this training.

Lt. Williams addressed the recent shootings in Jackson. He reassured the Commission that these shootings were not random. Of the three shootings one suspect has been arrested, the police department is close to arresting a suspect for the second shooting, and they are working hard on the third. The department is trying to do a lot of suppression and prevention to try to keep the number of shootings down.
- VIII. **Community Update/Chairperson Correspondence:** Chair Lewis reported that she has corresponded with the Chamber of Commerce, and networking with them. Chair Lewis asked if it was ok with Commissioners if she forwarded their e-mail addresses to the Chamber of Commerce so the HRC will be included in the e-mail mailing list as a way to

network. She further reported that the next Challenge Day meeting will be March 24th at 8:00 a.m. at the Chamber of Commerce, 141 S. Jackson Street.

Chair Lewis reported that she has talked with the Mayor, and a meeting will be scheduled with the City Council in order to discuss some topics. One thing Chair Lewis would like to discuss with the City Council is the fact that there are no county representatives on the HRC, only City. She also welcomed City Councilmembers attending the HRC meeting. Ms. Lewis has been talking with City Councilmembers and has been inviting them to attend the HRC meetings. She welcomed the Mayor and Councilmembers in attendance, and expressed the hope that the HRC will have a good working relationship with the City Council going forward.

Also, Chair Lewis will be attending an event at the Jackson Country Club for the Center for Family Health.

IX. Staff Report:

- a. HRC Complaint Report: Jonathan Greene reported that no complaints were received this past month.
- b. Finance Status Report: Staff reviewed the financial status report. Staff also reviewed the history of the budget for HRC. He reported that up until a couple of years ago the HRC had a dedicated line item in the City's budget. That is no longer included in the City's budget. The HRC funds are now taken from a general line item out of the City's General Fund. John Hawthorne asked if there was a value in having the report updated with actual expenses. John Clemons stated that as important as Human Relations are, he feels the HRC should have a separate dedicated line item in the budget to show the importance of the HRC to new people moving to the Jackson community. He feels this would reflect well on the City of Jackson. Discussion followed regarding getting the HRC as a line item in the next City budget.

- X. **Ex-Officio Report:** Valerie Cochran-Toops reported that Anthony Gittens would like to give a report at the April meeting about a 2nd Annual Gospel Music event to be held at the King Center.

XI. Committee Reports:

- a. Complaint Committee: No report.
- b. Public Relations and Information: No report.
- c. Policy Committee:
Rev. John Clemons reported that this will be discussed under Old Business.
- d. Nominating Committee: No report.

e. Events Committee:

Jessica Embury reported that the committee met in March. She reported that there is interest on the Commission to have a table at Kidsfest. This will be discussed at the April meeting.

- i. Picnic Committee – Alice Lewis reported a committee meeting will be planned for April. The picnic is planned for the second Saturday in July. Discussion followed regarding the need to solicit for funds and donations.

f. Emergency Needs Coalition: No report.

XII. Old Business:

a. **HRC/City Council Study Groups**

John Hawthorne reported that this will be brought to the City Council and he would like to have it brought back on the agenda.

b. **Policy Committee**

John Clemons reported that the committee met and had some questions to present to the HRC body. John Hawthorne reported that in reviewing the HRC ordinance there were several points of discussion. In summary there may be good value in rethinking the language of the HRC ordinance. Maybe that could be done collaboratively between the City Council and the HRC. Chair Lewis reported to the Commission that the last written HRC Annual Report was completed in 2008. It has historically been up to the Chairman to do the annual report and present it to City Council. She plans to do an annual report this year. Staff suggested that Commissioner Hawthorne give his presentation again next month when all Commissioners are at the meeting. John Hawthorne requested a copy of the HRC by-laws also.

c. **Other:**

Chair Lewis asked if anyone had completed their sign-up sheet to attend City Council meetings, or if anyone had attended the City Council meetings. Chair Lewis stated that she will attend the next City Council meeting on March 29th. John Hawthorne stated that he would be able to attend also. Chair Lewis encouraged Commissioners to attend City Council meetings as a way of showing interest and networking with the City Council.

Chair Lewis handed out a flyer regarding Crime Victim's Rights event. She encouraged commissioners to attend.

XIII. New Business:

Councilmember Dobies offered to answer any questions Commissioners may have.

Chair Lewis asked why there are no Jackson County residents allowed to serve on the HRC. Councilmember Dobies answered that the Council at the time was concerned that County residents were making decisions on how to spend City funds, when there a lot of qualified who live and work in the City that can serve. Council felt that City residents should be

engaged first since these are City funds to be spent. A discussion took place regarding residency and membership on the HRC.

John Clemons reported in a past meeting he had requested the status of ordering police cameras. Since then some of the townships have equipped their officers with cameras, however, the City police have yet to get any. He would like to know why. Councilmember Dobies stated that he agrees with it, however, it is his understanding that the HRC participated in this, and this is a perfect example where HRC should feel empowered to own this and ask the Police Liaison this question.

XIV. Commissioner Comments:

Chair Lewis thanked the Mayor and Councilmembers for attending, and encouraged the Commissioners to work hard on their committees and have reports ready for each meeting. She would like to see the Commission grow and be strong. She further encouraged Commissioners to use the correct name for the HRC, which is the City of Jackson Human Relations Commission.

XV. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn was made by John Clemons and seconded by Jessica Embury. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Greene
Staff