

# HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

## Meeting Minutes

February 15, 2017

**Members Present:** Chair Alice Lewis, Rev. John Clemens, Jessica Embury, John Hawthorne, Melissa Morse, and Suzanne Mure.

**Members Absent:** Hassan Ahmad

**Ex Officio Present:** Valerie Cochran-Toops

**Also Present:** John Willis, Jonathan Greene, Lt. Adam Williams, and Mayor Bill Jors

- I. **Call to Order:** Chairwoman A. Lewis called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
- II. **Roll Call**
- III. **Adoption of Agenda:** Motion by Melissa Morse to adopt the agenda switch numbers five and seven. Supported by Rev. J. Clemons. Motion carried.
- IV. **Citizen Comment:** None.
- V. **Community Liaison Police Officer:** On January 21<sup>st</sup> the department partnered with Save Our Youth for the gun buyback program at Lane Memorial Church. J. Clemons was present.

Lt. Chris Simpson recently proctored a Black History Month quiz at Jackson College, J. Clemons was present.

Citizens Police Academy is accepting applications. The program begins April 12, Wednesdays, 6 p.m. -10 p.m. This program gives people a chance to see what goes on day to day in the Police Department.

The Department received a grant to introduce a new Teen Police Academy program to begin in the summer. This program will be for ages 13-16. The program is 4 weeks, 2 days/week, 3 hours/day for a total of 24 hours. The last day being a trip to a Detroit Tigers game. The program is meant to promote and build positive relations with community youth. J. Embury requested a copy of the flyer for the Facebook page.

The department is currently in a state of hiring. One open Cadet position, currently had 16 applicants. One Communications Specialist position, currently had 12 applicants. One Patrol Officer position, originally nine applicants, now down to six. Officer Rick Burkhardt was promoted to detective to replace Gary Schuette, who retired.

Law Enforcement and the school districts are starting a new collaborative program called Handle with Care. A program to help kids involved in a wide range of traumatic events

by notifying the school with a message that says ‘handle with care.’ Teachers are not allowed to ask the student what happened, but this will give teachers a heads up when dealing with any potential issues the student may have, and get them help through the school counselors. The Center for Family Health will also have professionals on site for additional help. This is the pilot program, the first in Michigan, with hopes to spread throughout the state.

**VI. Approval of the Meeting Minutes for January 18, 2017:**

Motion by J. Hawthorne to approve the meeting minutes for January 18, 2017. Support by S. Mure. Motion carried.

**VII. Guest:** Mayor Jors spoke about the passing of the Non-Discrimination Ordinance (NDO) at the last council meeting. He commented that even though he voted no, he did not oppose the NDO, and was glad to see it pass and was ready to move on. He informed the commission of a group of area churches that has formed to propose a referendum to the NDO in order to put it on the ballot for a vote. Mayor Jors is not in favor of this. Discussion on the details and specifics of the referendum.

He talked about building on the positive momentum in the city and focusing a little more on fighting the blight and improving the neighborhoods surrounding the urban core.

He noted the importance of Don Tassi’s, ‘Be More Kind’ message.

**VIII. Community Update/Chairperson Correspondence:** Chair Lewis reported that she attended both of the last two City Council meetings, and she hopes to meet with some of the local pastors to help explain the NDO to them. Chair Lewis also mentioned that she would like to give the HRC Annual Report at an upcoming City Council meeting.

**IX. Staff Report:** John Willis reported that there are no current complaints at this time.

Staff J. Willis discussed setting up a meeting to gain a clear understanding of the HRC’s role in handling complaints under the passage of the NDO. J. Greene discussed details of the complaint process. He further reported that the position of Director of Police and Fire Services is in the process of being filled. Chair Lewis requested to be present during the interview process.

**X. Ex-Officio Report:** V. Toops discussed passing of the NDO and the positive feedback coming from citizens regarding the improvements in the city.

**XI. Committee Reports:**

- a. Nominating Committee: J. Clemons discussed the two vacancies. Waiting for them to be approved by City Council. Will be interviewing two more applicants. Ex-officio seat will be vacant upon council’s approval of new members.

- b. Teressa Delph Essay/Oratorical Contest: A. Lewis reported the contest is to be held Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup>. The committee reviewed over 100 essays. She handed out an outline of the program. Discussed details of the contest and school participation. This will be held from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Frost Elementary School. First place winners will read essays to Mayor Jors and City Council at an upcoming City Council meeting, and also to appear on JTV. Judges will be Rev. Darius Williams, Don Tassi, Ted Miller. Commissioners should arrive at the school at 12:00 p.m.

**XII. Old Business:**

No Old Business.

**XIII. New Business:**

New Mediation Training will be put into the 2017-18 Fiscal Year budget, and training will have to be taken after July 1, 2017. Commissioners will need to take the full 40 hour training.

A discussion included the remaining funds in the budget. Jessica Embury asked about purchasing a trifold display/presentation board for HRC use. John Willis stated that he would check to see if the City already has a presentation board available.

Discussion regarding a goal setting session, which will be added to the next meeting's agenda.

Chair Lewis asked if there were any new developments about getting information into the City's newsletter.

J. Embury requested pictures from any events attended by Commissioners. Everyone was also reminded to contact Will Forgrave regarding stories, issues and bios on the City's website.

**XIV. Commissioner Comments:**

Melissa Morse said she was happy to be able to help read essays for the Teressa Delph Oratorical Contest. John Hawthorne stated that he was grateful to the Mayor and Council for finding a venue for the last two City Council meetings and a particular commendation to the Mayor for showing a remarkable amount of patience. Rev. Clemons stated that he was concerned about the public being informed about the NDO. He feels each Commissioner needs to be aware of what the issues are where they live and then find out how to address those issues. He hopes the study groups can be started. Val stated that she feels safer downtown with all of the lighting improvements, and she would like to see the gun violence lessening.

Chair Lewis thanked the Mayor for attending.

Motion to Adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Morse". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a distinct 'D' in the middle.

Melissa Morse  
Secretary