DOVER HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

The Dover Human Relations Commission (DHRC) meeting was held on September 21, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. with Chairman Henderson presiding. Members present were Ms. Bogle, Mr. McGiffin, Ms. Mullen, and Mrs. Sadusky.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS
By unanimous consent, the agenda was approved as presented.

DHRC Committee Updates

Government Policy, Programs, and Practices Committee (McGiffin)

DHRC Diversity Research Project

Referring to the Dover Human Relations Commission Diversity Research Project Report, Mr. McGiffin reminded members that former Commissioner Gene Ruane had suggested that determining the City of Dover's diversity and cultural competency as an organization would be a fundamental step in establishing what the DHRC should do as a human relations commission. Mr. Ruane had discovered *Reinventing Diversity*, by Howard Ross, which he thought would be an excellent guide. Mr. McGiffin explained that he and Mr. Ruane had formed the DHRC's Government Policy, Programs, and Practices (GPPP) Committee, whose first task was to consolidate the recommendations in the book into a digestible form. Mr. Ruane then resigned from the DHRC due to relocating. Mr. McGiffin advised members that he and Chairman Henderson developed a series of questions from the book and addressed them to a number of the members of the City's leadership team during interviews. They then asked a subset of the questions to all City employees through an online survey. Mr. McGiffin noted that the survey was also made available by hard copy to employees, although no one had claimed a hard copy.

Mr. McGiffin estimated that there were 25 or 26 survey respondents and 35 sources of data between interviewees and survey respondents. He explained that his report included a history of the project, followed by the questions that were asked and the responses to each of the questions. Mr. McGiffin advised that the responses offered in the report sometimes included both survey responses and responses of interviewees, as well as his summaries of interview responses in some cases. He noted that there were some questions that were answered only by the Human Resources Director because they were specific to human resources.

Mr. McGiffin indicated that the next step would be to complete the report by deciding the meaning of the responses in a section called "Observations and Conclusions." If desired, the DHRC could then make recommendations based on the survey responses. Mr. McGiffin recommended that this be done by the DHRC as a whole, rather than by just himself and Mr. Henderson. He suggested that members review the questions and responses and discuss, as a group, what they mean, for example, the responses that would have been expected versus those received. Mr. McGiffin noted that one of the questions asked was, "Is there an historical event, person, something significant that happened, or somebody significant who was around, that brings to mind the questions of diversity and cultural

competency?" He noted that the most common response referenced the Webster case, which involved a City police officer, an injured man who was arrested, and his subsequent criminal trial and settlement with the City. Mr. McGiffin advised that this matter was topical when the interviews were done in December 2015 and January 2016, and was still in the news when the survey went out over the summer. He indicated that he had fully expected someone to mention the NAACP lawsuit that had resulted in the City's current method of electing Council members. Mr. McGiffin explained that the City's district divisions and election of an at-large Council member were the result of a lawsuit that he estimated had happened more than 30 years ago, and although he thought someone would mention this, he found it interesting that no one did. In addition, Mr. McGiffin noted that no one had mentioned school desegregation, which he felt may seem ancient history to some; however, this had been a big topic in Dover. He noted that he knows many people who went to the black high school and others to the white high school, and these are people that are still in commerce today. Mr. McGiffin thought that someone from the City might have thought that significant. He stated that his comments were not criticism but an example of the kinds of observations that might be useful.

Mr. McGiffin advised members that Mayor Christiansen at one time had urged DHRC members not to forget about the City's history. In thinking about the rather limited response to the question about a particular person or event that brought to mind questions of diversity and cultural competency, Mr. McGiffin believed that the Mayor's comment had been wise. He felt that the Mayor's point was that the DHRC should proceed using a lens that would allow members to see not only where they want to go, but where the City had been, because that would help them to get where they want to go,

Mr. McGiffin explained that one of the DHRC's observations may be that people do not think about the history, and a conclusion might be that people need to be reminded of this. He suggested that members might then recommend that the DHRC Education Committee develop opportunities to present historical perspectives on diversity and cultural competency issues. For example, during African-American History Month, the DHRC could encourage or even help sponsor a program specific to Dover about significant things that happened in Dover that redound today, but that people are not conscious of.

Mr. McGiffin stated that this was just an example of the observations, conclusions, and recommendations that might result from the study. He noted that there were 20 questions, and each would give an opportunity to make some kind of observation. Mr. McGiffin advised that, generally speaking, respondents thought that the City was aware of diversity issues and tries to address issues with cultural competency. He noted that the survey results showed a broad range of opinion, with some who felt diversity was a distraction from giving jobs to the best person, irrespective of any other consideration, and others who felt the City had not gone nearly far enough in addressing diversity issues.

Mr. McGiffin indicated that the City's leadership was generally positive about what Dover does to respect cultural competency and to try and develop diversity, and that there were a lot of hiring and management practices that are tuned in to that issue. Mr. McGiffin stated that Mr. Scott Koenig, City Manager, received a lot of positive comments, and many people thought the City Manager

worked hard make people aware. Some comments from both the survey results and the interviews suggested that City Council could do a much better job of recognizing the importance of diversity and dealing with issues with a greater degree of cultural competency. Mr. McGiffin stated that this was a message that should probably be conveyed in some form.

Mr. McGiffin suggested that members come to the next meeting with their thoughts about observations, conclusions, and recommendations to be compiled during the meeting. He noted that some of the questions have very simple answers. For example, he stated that the first question was, "Are diversity and cultural competency articulated as values in the mission/vision/value statement of the City?" Mr. McGiffin noted that a lot of respondents did not know, although some knew that it was stated specifically in the City's purchasing policy. He stated that one observation might be that more people who work for the City should know what the City says about itself.

Mr. McGiffin moved to recommend that the members of the Dover Human Relations Commission respond to the question, "What are your observations, conclusions, and recommendations regarding the DHRC Diversity Research Project?" via email to the City Clerk's Office, with their input to be compiled so that members could finish the Dover Human Relations Commission Diversity Research Project Report at their next meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Mullen and unanimously carried.

Education Committee (Bogle)

Ms. Mullen explained that she had attended meetings of the White Oak/Towne Point Civic Association and the Capitol Park Civic Association. She informed members that there were not many people in attendance who were familiar with what the DHRC does, and she educated them and offered the Commission's help if needed. Ms. Mullen felt that raising awareness in the community about the DHRC and what it does should be a priority.

Ms. Bogle stated that she had met with Dr. Dan Shelton, Superintendent of Schools, Capital School District, and with Ms. Tonya Guinn, Supervisor of Student Support Services, to discuss ways that the District could use the DHRC's support. They mentioned many issues involving young people in the school district, such as violence and shootings in the community. Ms. Bogle advised that Dr. Shelton had discussed the possibility of the City heading up a committee that would pool different entities across the community to talk about these issues and make decisions about addressing them. Ms. Bogle noted that, as previously mentioned by Ms. Mullen, people do not recognize what the Commission can do, and she had done her best to explain. She suggested that members discuss the DHRC's particular mission and focus and how they can best support the school district. Ms. Bogle advised members that the school district had named housing developments and other people and entities that could be involved. She indicated that it was a matter of deciding where to start and what to do. Ms. Bogle stated that the DHRC could possibly invite Dr. Shelton and Ms. Guinn to a meeting to obtain more specifics about what they were looking for.

Mr. McGiffin stated that it would be a legitimate and worthwhile endeavor for members to find out exactly what Dr. Shelton had in mind. He felt that if Dr. Shelton was asking the DHRC to convene

a group of stakeholders from various interested parties within the community, this would be a good role for the DHRC, and the DHRC could sponsor or even facilitate such a meeting.

Mr. Henderson stated his understanding that the DHRC serves as a conduit and their function is human relations. He noted that members must be careful about how they conduct meetings and communicate with one another, as they were advised by Deputy Solicitor William Pepper several months ago.

Mr. McGiffin stated that the primary function of the Commission is to advise City Council. He noted that convening a meeting involving stakeholders on an issue identified by Dr. Shelton would allow members to gather information. This information could provide a basis to advise Council on what is going on. Mr. McGiffin noted that the DHRC would be providing eyes and ears in places where Council is not going, and he felt this was a very valuable function. He noted that all members have a level of competency that may allow them to see and suggest solutions to problems. In addition, Mr. McGiffin felt that just providing a forum for people who are trying to solve a problem to talk could be a useful function in itself, since this could allow people to develop their own solutions.

Responding to Mr. Henderson, Ms. Bogle stated that she could contact Dr. Shelton or Ms. Guinn to arrange a meeting if desired.

Ms. Bogle felt it would be useful for DHRC members to have a session to develop an "elevator speech" or unified message about the DHRC, and for members to know what each of its committees stands for so that they could speak intelligently about what they do.

Mr. Henderson advised that members had previously discussed having a retreat to get together as a commission, but this had not occurred due to the many changes in the DHRC. He felt that members needed to get together and define themselves. Mr. Henderson noted that he had been serving as Chair for only a few meetings and needed to get his feet firmly on the ground.

Ms. Bogle indicated that members had discussed waiting until there were more members; however, she felt that moving forward would be useful for current members to provide structure when others come in.

Mrs. Sadusky questioned whether members wished to have Dr. Shelton and Ms. Guinn come to speak with the DHRC. Mr. McGiffin stated that he was unsure if it would be beneficial to have them come in while the DHRC was weak in terms of its membership. Ms. Bogle questioned if a logical next step would be to contact the school district, let them know this was being discussed, and advise that the DHRC was hoping to work with them. Ms. Mullen agreed with that approach, stating the desire for those from the school district to know that they had been heard. Mr. McGiffin stated that if members wanted to wait until they are at full strength before inviting them, then Dr. Shelton and Ms. Guinn should be advised that the Commission was going through some turnover and would get

back to them soon when it is back up to full membership. Mr. McGiffin noted that the other option would be to invite them to come now.

Mr. Henderson felt that members needed to feel comfortable about what the DHRC's function is so that they could present a unified message, as mentioned by Ms. Bogle. Ms. Bogle concurred, stating that being on the same page was even more important than being at full strength when bringing someone in.

Responding to Mrs. Sadusky, Mr. McGiffin stated that the DHRC has a mission statement and a lot of documentation about what they are and what they do; however, this would not answer the question of how this could be explained in 50 words or less.

Ms. Bogle expressed concern that the group was ever evolving and that people would be pointed elsewhere if there was no set time for them to come to the DHRC.

Mr. Henderson expressed a desire for those who come to feel that they are in an environment where people know what they are doing and what their mission is. He offered to work on developing a statement for the DHRC.

Mr. McGiffin suggested putting discussion of a thumbnail explanation of who the DHRC is and what they do on the next meeting agenda.

Old Business

DHRC Vacancies (First and Fourth District)

Mr. McGiffin advised members that he had been nominated by the Governor to be a family court judge; therefore, his tenure on the DHRC was about to end because members of the Human Relations Commission cannot hold another appointed position. Mr. McGiffin stated that he would be present at the next meeting if it was scheduled before October 25, 2016. He indicated that he represented the Third District on the DHRC and had a replacement in mind for his seat.

Mr. Henderson stated that it was vitally important for the Commission to get its feet on the ground if it was going to make a difference. He indicated that he had contacted the Mayor and Council President Slavin about the need for members. Mr. Henderson felt that the provision that prohibits individuals from other holding other positions should be amended, noting that the best people are those who are involved in other things, and that is why they are asked to serve.

Mr. Henderson expressed his opinion that the Commission was important because of things that are going on now, noting that words such as racism and xenophobia were being tossed around. He stated that every time he hears about another person being killed by a police officer, it tears his heart out. Mr. Henderson felt that the DHRC could be on the tip of being a calming agent, noting that he had gotten involved in the Commission because he wanted to make a difference. He stated that solving problems early on will prevent problems later down the road. Mr. Henderson felt that term the racism was being minimized, but there was nothing minimal about it. He stated that people had died for the right to vote and had been lynched in this country. Mr. Henderson did not believe that hatred and bigotry should be minimized. He felt that the Commission could have a role before

things escalate in the community, noting that when people become frustrated they turn to other things. Mr. Henderson encouraged members not to minimize how important they could be in providing advice and serving as a conduit for people who may be hopeless or angered by what is going on, and indicated that he did not want anything to happen in the Dover community. He stated that comments regarding the Webster case had come up over and over again, and this was brought up not by black individuals but by white individuals who wanted justice. They wanted to do what was right and felt that the Webster case was outrageous, and Mr. Henderson found this very encouraging. Mr. Henderson stated that he would not give up on the DHRC but would ask the Mayor and Council to either provide commissioners to work with or dismiss the Commission.

Responding to Mrs. Sadusky, Mrs. Stein stated that there were four (4) current vacancies on the Commission, not including the position that would be vacated by Mr. McGiffin.

In response to Mr. McGiffin, Mrs. Stein stated that the City ordinance stated, in reference to the DHRC, that, "No member of the commission shall hold any elected or appointed office under the Government of the United States, or the state, county, or city."

Mr. Henderson suggested the possibility of reaching out to former Commissioner Kenneth Roach who had mentioned possibly having someone to replace him.

After further discussion, members agreed to schedule their next meeting for October 18, 2016 at 6:00 p.m., and established October 13, 2016 as an alternate date.

Mr. McGiffin moved for adjournment, seconded by Mrs. Sadusky and unanimously carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Theodore A. Henderson
Chair

TAH/JS/tm/
S:\AGENDAS-MINUTES-PACKETS-PRESENTATIONS-ATT&EXH\Misc-Minutes\HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION\2016\09-21-2016 DHRC.wpd