SPECIAL DOVER HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

The Special Dover Human Relations Commission (DHRC) meeting was held on March 23, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. with Chairman Henderson presiding. Members present were Mr. Fleming, Mr. Gaddis, Mrs. Herbert, Mrs. Mullen, and Reverend Paige. Ms. Bogle was absent.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Mr. Gaddis moved for approval of the agenda, seconded by Reverend Paige and unanimously carried.

DHRC Committee Updates

Government Policy, Programs, and Practices Committee (Gaddis)

Mr. Gaddis advised that he had nothing to report.

Community Engagement Committee (Mullen)

Mrs. Mullen advised members that she was exploring barriers to community engagement. She stated that one (1) barrier she had encountered was trying to contact or communicate with populations that are hard to reach, such as young people and older people, noting that she finds older people more closed off when she tries to have conversations with them. Mrs. Mullen stated that the isolated inner city population does not want to engage in conversation, and she did not know what members could do as a Commission to open communication.

Mr. Fleming asked if Mrs. Mullen had been talking with individuals or if she had gone to places like the Modern Maturity Center. Responding, Mrs. Mullen indicated that her first approach was to try community associations where the bulk of the communities congregate. She stated that it is possible to find out a lot from community associations, noting that she had done so in her own community. Mrs. Mullen indicated that she wanted to be able to expand beyond where she resides and had gone to Capital Park to present, but she found it very closed in, so she just gave her speech.

Mrs. Herbert asked if Mrs. Mullen had tried neighborhood watches. Responding, Mrs. Mullen indicated that these organizations relate to community associations, which have crime watches.

Mr. Henderson expressed appreciation to Mrs. Mullen for reaching out, stating that at times this is a thankless job. He suggested that members schedule a time to put their heads together in this regard.

Mr. Fleming stated that when he previously served on the DHRC, members would go into the communities, set up dates, and meet at association meetings, community centers, or churches. He advised that this approach was very effective, rather than asking people to come to City Hall, which they were often reluctant to do. Mr. Fleming indicated that members worked through the community to set up a date when the DHRC would come to their facility, and all people were welcome to express their concerns. He asked if members were permitted to do this now. Responding, Mr. Henderson noted that City Council members cannot get together as a council in unscheduled meetings, and the DHRC is under the same constraints. Mr. Henderson advised that DHRC members can attend meetings as individual Commissioners.

Mrs. Jody Stein, Administrative Assistant, City Clerk's Office, explained that a quorum of members could not meet without a meeting agenda being posted. Noting that there were currently seven (7) members serving on the DHRC, she stated that a quorum would be four (4) members. Mrs. Stein also advised that there was also a provision in the Dover Code that all DHRC meetings were to be held at City Hall. She noted that members could participate in and attend events such as the "Cracking the Code" film series that the DHRC had previously participated in at the Dover Public Library.

Mrs. Herbert asked if members could attend events by invitation, for example, if her neighborhood watch invited Mrs. Mullen to attend. Responding, Mr. Henderson indicated that he would think so. Mrs. Stein explained that individually there would be no problem; however, there could be a problem if a quorum of members was present.

Mrs. Herbert stated that she and Mr. Gaddis would not attend the neighborhood watch meeting as Commissioners but as members of the Old Dover Neighborhood Watch, noting that she serves as the corresponding secretary. Mr. Henderson noted that he also wears many hats in addition to being a Commissioner, stating that on the weekend he and Reverend Paige also circulate as members of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (IMA). Mrs. Stein stated that there would not be a problem if there was not a quorum of members and they were not conducting City business.

Reverend Paige stated that she was finding it hard to deal with all of this, explaining that she thought that the DHRC was hindered and set up to be defeated. She stated that she was unsure how to go about looking at policy changes; however, it seemed that if the Commission was to be effective, doing what Mr. Fleming had suggested would be the best way to go. Reverend Paige indicated that she was in favor of going to where the people are, if they were not going to come to City Hall, which she could understand. She questioned what the harm would be in members being invited to an event, showing up as a group, and explaining who they are. Reverend Paige advised that the policy regarding a quorum made no sense to her and asked if someone was afraid that members would do or say something that they did not want them to do or say.

Responding to Reverend Paige, Mrs. Stein explained that this was not something that the City was imposing on the DHRC, noting that under the State of Delaware Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), all meetings must be posted ahead of time with an agenda so that all City business is conducted transparently. She informed members that the purpose is to provide the public an opportunity to view proceedings and an agenda is posted so that anyone who wants to attend can do so. Reverend Paige stated that this was fine, noting that the agenda could be posted on the website and indicate where the DHRC would be. She stated that if the DHRC went to the Capital Park Civic Association meeting to introduce the members, this would be very transparent. Mrs. Stein reiterated that the DHRC had participated in events such as a film series with the State Human Relations Commission (SHRC) and all members were invited to attend.

Mr. Henderson stated that, after completing the committee reports, members could discuss steps they could take toward becoming better commissioners and perhaps alleviating some frustrations, noting that members could be creative.

Education Committee (Bogle)
No report was provided.

Communications Committee (Paige)
Reverend Paige stated that she did not have a formal report but had a couple of ideas. She indicated that once the DHRC has a clear mission and purpose, she would like to move forward. Reverend Paige informed members that she had a friend who was willing to possibly develop a website, noting that the DHRC could have updates regarding what the Commission was doing and where they were going to be. Reverend Paige stated that members could continue to provide updates to Council and develop a pamphlet that would clearly state the Commission's mission, vision, and goals. She stated that she had been thinking about having a reception where people could come in and members could explain who the Commission is, the services it can provide, and what members cannot do, so that everybody is clear.

Mr. Henderson noted that the Communications Committee could bring in additional members from the community.

Old Business

2016 DHRC Annual Report to City Council
Mr. Henderson reviewed the Dover Human Relations Commission 2016 Annual Report to Council.

In regard to the DHRC Diversity Survey, Mrs. Mullen questioned what happened to the data from the report, whether it was being utilized, and if recommendations were made. Responding, Mr. Henderson indicated that the data was tabulated and available online. Mrs. Jody Stein, Administrative Assistant, City Clerk's Office, stated that the data was included in the meeting packets for previous meetings which were posted online. She noted that the DHRC's meeting minutes went to Council for their review, and Mr. Henderson and Mr. Gaddis had also presented the information to Council.

Mrs. Mullen stated her understanding that the purpose of the diversity survey was to bring more awareness to the City and asked if this mission or goal was achieved. Responding, Mr. Henderson indicated that the goal was achieved, explaining that it was a completely objective tool. He stated that he thought that the people who responded were either aware and sensitive to diversity or they were not but, by and large, people were sensitive.

Mr. Henderson informed members that the four (4) points in the 2016 DHRC Annual Report would be considered by Council at their next Regular meeting, noting that he did not think he necessarily had to attend the meeting to present the report. In response to Mr. Henderson, Mrs. Stein stated that it would be Mr. Henderson's choice whether or not to present the report, and clarified that the report would be considered during the April 10, 2017 Regular City Council meeting.

Mr. Gaddis moved to recommend approval of the 2016 DHRC Annual Report to City Council, seconded by Reverend Paige and unanimously carried.

DHRC Vacancies
Mr. Henderson noted that the DHRC vacancies were being filled.

Mr. Henderson asked Mrs. Herbert and Mr. Fleming which committees they were interested in serving on. In response, Mrs. Herbert stated that she was interested in the Community Engagement Committee, and Mr. Fleming advised that his experience lent itself to the Education Committee.

Responding to Mr. Henderson regarding her background, Mrs. Herbert advised that she graduated from Delaware State College in 1979 as a human services worker, and worked at Cecil Community College on networking for abused and other women, connecting them with education, health, and other resources. She then served as a community service worker at Queen Anne County Department of Social Services, working with abused and disabled adults. Mrs. Herbert advised that she did substitute teaching, and also performed case work at Laurelwood Nursing Home. She noted that she spent 20 years working for the Cecil County Health Department where she was an adolescent case coordinator for pregnant teens and teens who were at risk of pregnancy, which involved reproductive health teaching and client advocacy. She stated that she also worked as a perinatal coordinator helping to coordinate services between doctors, nurses, the health department, and social services. Mrs. Herbert explained that this resulted in the first Fetal and Infant Mortality Board to review poor pregnancy outcomes, and this entity grew into a Fetal-Infant-Child Review Board. Mrs. Herbert explained that she had done community work since she was approximately 20 years old.

New Business

Scheduling of DHRC Workshop
Mr. Henderson expressed the desire to schedule a DHRC Workshop for members to discuss what the DHRC is all about and what members can and cannot do. He indicated that it did not have to be an all-day event, noting that there could possibly be a morning session, lunch, and an afternoon session.

Mr. Fleming noted that he serves on the Delaware Senior Olympic State Board, which has an annual meeting at Outback Steakhouse. He explained that the restaurant normally opens at 11:00 a.m. but allows members to come in at 10:00 a.m., hold their meeting, and stay for lunch.

Mr. Henderson stated his understanding that the workshop would have to be in City Hall. Mrs. Jody Stein, Administrative Assistant, City Clerk's Office, explained that the workshop would have to be a public meeting.

Mrs. Herbert asked if there had just been a retreat at City Hall. Mrs. Stein confirmed that City Council had held a retreat and the press attended. Mrs. Herbert questioned why members would mind people coming, and Mr. Henderson indicated that this would not bother him in the least.

Mrs. Herbert asked if the Commission had money. Responding, Mr. Henderson advised that the Commission's budget was $2,000. *(City Clerk's Office Note: The amount budgeted for the Dover Human Relations Commission in FY 2017 was $3,000 and no funds had been expended to date.)*

Mrs. Herbert stated that members might not want to spend their budget on lunch. Mr. Fleming stated that he thought members could handle their own lunch, and Mr. Henderson agreed. Mr. Fleming stated that he knew the owner of Outback Steakhouse, who might be able to give members a discount on lunch.

Mr. Henderson indicated that during the workshop members could review the City of Dover Human Relations Commission Strategic Plan 2015-2018 and the various responsibilities for the committees. He advised that members could brainstorm what they can do within the current format and how to accomplish their plan within the rules and laws.

Mr. Gaddis asked if there was anything codified that tells members what they cannot do. He stated his understanding that part of the constraints came from Mr. Nicholas Rodriguez, City Solicitor, and beyond that Mr. Gaddis did not know what the constraints were. Responding, Mrs. Stein noted that the Dover Code states that meetings must be held at City Hall and the Strategic Plan outlines goals for the Commission. She indicated that it sounded as though there should be discussion regarding how to attack those goals and that Mr. Henderson was suggesting working on strategies. She noted that everything about the DHRC's mission was included in either the City's Code or the DHRC Strategic Plan.

Mrs. Herbert asked if people who came to observe the workshop would be allowed to participate. She expressed her belief that this would have to be controlled in terms of when and where; however, she felt that there were a lot of ideas out there. Mrs. Stein noted that members of the public had spoken at the recent City Council Retreat. Responding to Mr. Henderson, Mrs. Stein stated that the City Council Retreat was held in the City Hall Conference Room.

Reverend Paige asked if the City Solicitor would be included in their workshop. Mr. Henderson stated his belief that the City Solicitor would have to be paid to attend. Responding, Mrs. Traci McDowell, City Clerk, advised that a bill would be received for the City Solicitor's services; however, this is what they are there for.

Mr. Henderson suggested, as part of the workshop, having the City Solicitor brief members on what they can and cannot do and this could be done at the opening of the meeting. He suggested then looking at the strategic plan and reviewing the subsections for each committee, with members providing their ideas for each committee. He indicated that the workshop could be broken up into blocks of a maximum of 50 minutes. Mr. Henderson advised that there would be a break for lunch, and members could then return and do some brainstorming. He advised that he could easily put together an agenda. Mr. Henderson suggested holding the workshop on a Saturday beginning at 9:00 a.m. He noted that members could bring in donuts, coffee or a continental breakfast.

After further discussion regarding scheduling the workshop and members' availability, members agreed that the City Clerk's Office would work with Mr. Henderson to come up with proposed dates. Mr. Henderson indicated that the workshop needed to be held sooner rather than later.

Mr. Fleming suggested using a scheduling tool called Doodle to check availability for meeting participants. Mrs. McDowell indicated that the City Clerk's Office could use Doodle, noting that

it had been used in the past. She explained that members would receive a Doodle survey by email and check boxes to indicate their availability. Mrs. McDowell advised that, if members wished to invite the City Solicitor, the workshop dates would depend on his schedule, since he does not usually attend City meetings on Saturdays.

Reverend Will Grimes, Neighborhood Revitalization Coordinator, Restoring Central Dover, National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor Research Fund, Inc. (NCALL), informed members that last year Restoring Central Dover had held a "Cracking the Code" event at Wesley College. He noted that this year they would be holding an event called "Bridging the Racial Divide" from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on April 22, 2017 and invited members to attend. Responding to Mrs. Herbert, Reverend Grimes indicated that the event was held in the chapel at Wesley College last year and he thought it would be held there again this year; however, he was unsure.

Reverend Grimes indicated that Restoring Central Dover would also be briefing City Council on what their organization had been doing to revitalize the central Dover area on Monday, March 27, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. during the Regular City Council Meeting and invited members to attend.

Mr. Henderson invited members to attend any of the City Council meetings, which he stated were very educational. He advised members that there is an Open Forum segment held prior to each Regular Council meeting where people can stand up and state their views.

Mr. Fleming indicated that he had attended the recent "302 Back the Blue" event downtown to show support for correctional and police officers, which was attended by about 50 people. He indicated that he did not represent the DHRC there but attended, and it was a very nice activity.

Mr. Fleming asked if business cards were available for members, and Mrs. Stein indicated that they could be ordered for members if they would like them. Ms. Denise Devine, Assistant City Clerk, advised that business cards had been ordered in the past from Vistaprint and this could be done again. Mr. Fleming asked if cards were expensive, and Mr. Gaddis estimated that 500 cards would cost $10, according to the television promotion.

Mr. Henderson asked for the business cards to be ordered, noting that it would be good for morale.

Mrs. Mullen indicated that she had also attended the "302 Back the Blue" event. She also noted that there would be an upcoming event about Dover culture and black history, and offered to send the information to the City Clerk's Office for distribution to members.

Mrs. Herbert moved for adjournment, seconded by Reverend Paige and unanimously carried.

The meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Theodore A. Henderson
Chair

TAH/JS/dd
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