SPECIAL DOVER HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION MEETING

A Special Dover Human Relations Commission (DHRC) meeting was held on May 13, 2014 at 5:35 p.m. with Chairman Wilson presiding. Members present were Mr. McGiffin (arrived at 5:48 p.m.), Mrs. Sadusky, Ms. Smith, Ms. Stewart (arrived at 6:14), Mr. Roach, and Mr. Ruane. Ms. Hicks and Mr. Henderson were absent.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Mr. Roach moved for approval of the agenda as presented, seconded by Mrs. Sadusky and unanimously carried.

Presentation - DHRC and City of Dover Police Department Interaction *(Police Chief Bernat)*

City of Dover Police Chief Paul Bernat advised members that the Dover Police Department was involved in many facets of the Dover community. He stated that the Department was active in 49 homeowner associations/neighborhood watch groups and could provide neighborhood crime statistics and crime prevention tips to these groups. He noted that the Department had become increasingly involved in social media by issuing news releases, participating in Facebook and Twitter, and maintaining its own website (www.doverpolice.org), and was in the process of implementing a new phone application that would push out news feeds and allow the Department to receive anonymous tips through text messaging. Chief Bernat explained that the Police Department offers personal and workplace safety talks, as well as bicycle safety programs for five (5) to 12-year-olds. Officers visit day care centers, preschools, and elementary schools, interacting with children through their "Meet a Police Officer" Program, and also attend block parties. They provide drug awareness and education through the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program for fifth graders at William Henry Middle School. He stated that the Police Department has a very successful Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program (CHMHP), which brings together property managers, residents, and police officers with the goal of promoting crime-free housing, and this program had resulted in a 90% decrease in calls for service in one (1) City neighborhood when first implemented. Chief Bernat explained that the Police Department's Sex Offender Management Unit was very active, managing more than 200 sex offenders within the City and conducting quarterly, semi-annual, and annual checks of offenders at various tier levels. In coordination with the Modern Maturity Center, the Department also participates in an "Are You Okay" program to check on homebound residents who do not respond to pre-programmed phone calls.

Chief Bernat explained that the functions he had described were predominantly performed by the Department's Community Policing Unit; however, as the recently appointed Chief of Police, it was his goal to expand this focus and to make the entire Dover Police Department a Community Police Department. He noted the importance of building rapport within the community through the development of trust and understanding, and by proving the Department's ability to help. He expressed his opinion that if the Police Department adopted the philosophy of community policing, which promotes community, government, and police partnerships; proactive problem solving; and community engagement to address crime and community issues, the City of Dover would be a better place. Chief Bernat stated that a good community policing officer is a good manager, relates well with the public, and is a good problem solver. He stated that every police officer should have these characteristics and that he intended for all Dover officers to be trained in this regard. Noting the diversity of the City's population, he stated that the Police Department could benefit from diversity training.

Chief Bernat informed members that he was promoted to the position of Chief of Police on April 4, 2014, and that during the month of April 2014, police detectives handled a total of 191 cases and cleared 185, resulting in a clearance rate of 96.9%. Seven (7) burglaries were investigated and four (4) were cleared, which represented a 57% clearance rate. Five (5) robberies were investigated and all were cleared. He emphasized that the City's police force was extremely busy and working hard to make Dover a safer place to live and visit. He noted that a police force of 93 officers was currently authorized and 92 were serving. He stated that a Police Academy was scheduled for September 2014 and it was hoped that the open position would be filled at that time.

Responding to Ms. Smith regarding the current perceptions of the community regarding the Dover Police Department, Chief Bernat advised members that within the past six (6) months there had been allegations of police brutality from the community. He indicated that while serving as Deputy Chief, all use of force reports came across his desk, and if he felt there were "issues," he would launch a formal investigation or seek video of the incident. Chief Bernat explained that checks and balances are in place and when an officer uses force, a use of force report is required. The report is checked by a sergeant, reviewed by a lieutenant and captain, and finally approved by a major. In regard to the particular allegations of brutality that were brought forward, he indicated that video related to one (1) incident revealed that the allegation was not supported; however, in another case, something did occur and action was taken.

In response to Ms. Smith's inquiry with respect to the Chief's vision regarding how the gap between the police and the community could be bridged, Chief Bernat stated his intention to be accessible and hear from the citizens, noting that having community support would empower the Police Department and vice versa. He indicated that he had met with many community members who had expressed their support. Noting that Deputy Chief Marvin Mailey was currently attending a meeting in downtown Dover, Chief Bernat stated that it was his intention to meet with business people in that area. He planned to stress to police offers that they should introduce themselves to others when walking through communities and let people know how to contact them. It was his hope that officers would act in a manner similar to the Chief of Police during their 12-hour tours, becoming familiar with their assigned areas and using crime mapping and the Regional Analysis and Information Sharing (RAIDS) Online tool. He stated that having an analyst in the Department would be helpful; however, this was not in the Department's budget. He advised members that he would be devoting the next three (3) years to accomplishing his goals.

Mr. Roach stated that he had spoken with some individuals who felt that there was a disconnect between patrol officers and the community. He stressed the importance of not regarding those who reach out to shake a police officer's hand as criminals, noting that officers would need the community's support in order to protect and serve them. He stated his appreciation of the previous Drug Awareness and Resistance Education (DARE) program, which allowed officers to be known by children in the community. He inquired what Chief Bernat would do to change the negative connotations that many young children have of police officers.

Responding, Chief Bernat stated that he had recently spoken to members of the public who expressed appreciation for the former Police Athletic League (PAL) football program; however, federal funding for this program had "dried up." He indicated that he had recently received information that $72,000

in federal competitive grant opportunity funding was available through Project Safe Neighborhood (PSN). He spoke with Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend, Director of Planning and Community Development, regarding this grant and his lieutenant called Delaware State University to see if their facilities could be used in this regard. It was their hope that, by partnering together, activities such as flag football, basketball, etc., could be offered. Chief Bernat noted that other ideas had also been discussed, such as taking underprivileged kids to baseball/basketball games to build trust.

Noting that hate crimes are one (1) of the concerns that are sometimes addressed by human relations commissions, Mr. Ruane inquired if hate crimes presented a challenge in Dover. Responding, Chief Bernat stated that hate crimes were not on the forefront of problems in the community and that the only related issue that he recalled was a "nasty flyer" that had been distributed approximately two (2) years prior, and the Police Department was unable to find who had issued it. He was unable to recall a "true, horrible" hate crime.

Mr. Ruane requested that the members of the DHRC be provided the list of 49 homeowners associations that Chief Bernat had referenced previously and suggested that this list be compared with information maintained by the City Clerk's Office regarding homeowners associations. Responding, Chief Bernat stated that the Community Policing Unit prepares a quarterly report which includes a list of all associations, community concerns and what has been done to combat the problems, and he would be happy to share this information with members.

In response to Mr. Ruane regarding the effectiveness of neighborhood watch programs, Chief Bernat stated that these groups empower neighbors by explaining what to look for, helping to set up phone trees and email chains, and holding regular meetings. He mentioned that the Police Department's social media staff member was very active with these associations and helps them to establish their own blogs for communication.

Mr. Roach stated that several people had indicated to him that there was an alleged hanging/suicide at Silver Lake one (1) or two (2) years ago and the City had not communicated with them regarding the resolution or outcome of this matter. Responding, Chief Bernat stated that former Police Chief James Hosfelt was very involved with this matter and that he had met with community leaders regarding the incident, who were completely satisfied with the outcome.

Mr. Wilson expressed appreciation to Chief Bernat for the information provided.

Scheduling of DHRC Workshop

Mr. Ruane advised members that Mr. Wilson had requested him to facilitate a strategic planning workshop for commissioners to establish specific objectives and ways of implementing goals, determine time frames, and develop ways to measure results. The purpose of the workshop would be to ensure that all members are "on the same page" by developing a mission statement and a vision of where the commissioners see the DHRC going. Mr. Ruane indicated that he hoped to send a related outline for members to review.

By unanimous consent, members scheduled the workshop for Tuesday, July 8, 2014 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Discussion - City Council and DHRC District Orientation Meetings

Mr. Wilson encouraged members to meet with their corresponding City Council district representatives to share information and possibly alleviate problems. He requested members to obtain contact information for their respective City Council representatives from the City Clerk's Office, schedule meetings, and email him to let him know that such meetings had taken place.

Discussion - Member ID Cards

Mr. Wilson advised members that it was very important that they obtain and present their DHRC identification when working in the community. He suggested that members be provided a few business cards and asked the City Clerk's Office for assistance in this regard.

Update by Chairman Wilson - City Manager Department Head Meeting of April 29, 2014

Mr. Wilson stated that he attended the City Manager Department Head meeting on April 29, 2014, since he felt that it was important that the DHRC establish a relationship with City departments and get to know the people who run the City and what they do. He advised department heads that the DHRC was seeking their input to be included in their strategic plan and requested them to inform the DHRC how they could help to alleviate staff's concerns. Mr. Wilson stated that the Public Works Department had indicated that the DHRC could do a lot of work for them. Mr. Wilson reminded members that everything that the DHRC does should be positive.

Responding to Ms. Smith regarding input received from department heads, Mr. Wilson explained that the purpose of his attending the meeting was to introduce himself and the DHRC to staff and request their input. He indicated that he was now awaiting their responses.

Discussion of Future Quarterly Meeting Dates

Mr. Wilson reminded members that future meetings had been scheduled for July 22, 2014; October 28, 2014; and January 27, 2015. He expressed his hope that the DHRC Strategic Plan would be in place by July 22, 2014.

Commission Members' Announcements

Mr. Roach suggested that it would be helpful to obtain information regarding some of the complaints previously received by the DHRC, noting that this would be helpful in developing goals for the future. Responding, Mr. Wilson stated that previous meeting minutes would reveal these actions and were available on the City's website.

Mr. Ruane stated his recollection that the DHRC had previously completed a survey with the assistance of a former member associated with Delaware State University. Responding, Mrs. McDowell stated that she was not aware of such a survey but that the City Clerk's Office could research this further. *(City Clerk's Office Note: DHRC meeting minutes reveal that the DHRC conducted a survey between 2003 and 2004, the results of which were briefly discussed during the DHRC meeting of September 22, 2004; however, official results of the survey were not provided to the City Clerk's Office.)*

In response to Mr. Ruane regarding the relationship between the State Human Relations Commission (SHRC) and the DHRC, and whether the SHRC would provide members with information on matters in Dover that the State might be involved in, Mr. Wilson stated he had attended a SHRC meeting during the previous week, was in communication with the Chair and Director of the SHRC, and had another meeting scheduled to meet with them. They were pleased and excited about the newly organized DHRC and would be working with the Dover Commission. Mr. Wilson stated that he hoped that there would be a good connection between the SHRC and the DHRC and that they would consult regarding the development of a complaint form. He indicated that he would like to see the SHRC participate in the upcoming workshop in case there were questions at the State level. It was his understanding that the DHRC was the only municipal human relations commission in the State of Delaware.

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Cecil C. Wilson
Chairman

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