DOVER HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF SPECIAL FORUM MARCH 17, 2011
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Present: Chair Roy Sudler., Jr, Commissioners Dawn Allen-Pyne, Ellen Wasfi, Thomas Steele, and from the State Human Relations Commission, Wallace Dixon, Vince Petron, Marion Harris, and Ray Paylor.

I: Meeting called to order and a moment of silence at 7:11pm.

II: Acceptance of the Agenda; **Commissioner Wasfi** made a motion to accept the agenda and the motion carried.

III: Introductions the Dover Commissioners introduced themselves, and the visiting Commissioners from the State Human Relations Commission also gave their introductions.

IV: Purpose of the Special Forum; Chair Roy Sudler said that the purpose of the forum tonight was to allow the DHRC to review the disruptive behavior and make a determination if anything could be done to decrease tension between the groups involved in the disturbance.

V: Chief James Hosfelt's Report: Chief **Hosfelt** read the police report that was filed on the event. The police were called in after the altercation, so the police had to use the Internet video to determine who was involved.

A). Cause of Brawl; Chief Hosfelt determined the cause was alcohol related. All the neighbors were drinking and partying.

B). Not Race Hate Crime Incident; Chief **Hosfelt** said that the crime did not meet the statute of being a hate crime. **Commissioner Wasfi** asked if he would read the statue, and provide the Commission a copy of it. He then read it for the Commission.

C). Conflict Resolution; Chief Hosfelt told the Commission that intoxication caused the brawl, and he suggested calling the police right away to break up any future altercations.

VI: Question Period for Commissioners; Chair Sudler wanted to know if tougher ordinances were needed in Dover. **Chief Hosfelt** replied that they are not needed as the State Law carries more impact than city ordinances. **Commissioner Wasfi** was concerned about the 12-year-old boy who was involved in the fight. **Chief Hosfelt** replied that the boy had attended several schools, an alternative school as well as being home schooled, but he has a violent nature. **Vince Petron** asked if being intoxicated made it a hate crime, and **Chief Hosfelt** said it did not. **Ray Paylor** wanted to know if the whites said racial slurs had occurred, and **Chief Hosfelt** said that

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there were none. **Commissioner Wasfi** wanted to know if the victim who threw the drink and provoked the brawl was charged, and was told that she was not charged. This seemed like an unequal application of justice in **Commissioner Wasfi's** view. **Vince Petron** stated that the State Commission has the power and duty to make recommendations to the governor and general assembly, so he asked if the state law should be changed. **Chief Hosfelt** answered that it was not a hate crime, and that no changes needed to be recommended. **Commissioner Allen-Pyne** said that there was a perception that the woman who threw the drink was getting off without being punished for inciting the brawl. Next **Chair Sudler** talked about the landlords holding the tenants accountable for their rowdy behavior.

VII: Questions from the Audience: In response to concerns over the racial hate comments on the internet postings about the brawl, **Kay Sass** who is the Public Affairs Coordinator for the City of Dover told the audience that if anyone is offended by an internet website or posting, that they can go to the web master of the site and ask to have the offensive material removed**. Jeremy Kopf** said that if the victim was intoxicated she should be charged public drunkenness and not be let off for inciting the melee. **Wayne Lynch** stepped up next and said he is the owner of the property at 111 S. New St. The mother and the 12 year-old boy who were involved in the brawl were his tenants. He said he wants to see the boy get help. He said he sees no racial tension in the neighborhood, just drug and alcohol motivated behavior. He has tried to talk to the loiterers to get them to stop hanging around, but to no avail. **Chair Sudler** told Mr. Lynch that landlords can have tenants removed, and to consult with the "Landlord Tenant Summary" which outlines the procedures. **Marion Harris,** owns the property next to Mr. Lynch, stated she had to move people out, but said she was assessed by the city and cited for code violations. **Vince Petron** said that over his 20 years on the State Human Relations Commission, he has observed that, if the incident was racially motivated or not, people's perceptions vary; therefore, the Commission wants to promote good relations, and decrease racial tension or unrest. He asked what impact this incident had on the community, and how could the Commission help. **Larry Harris** of 38 S. New St. said that it was not just tenants who were involved, but people loitering. "No Loitering" signs need to be posted. **Clinton Brooks** of 29 S. New St. said that this loitering is just a small symptom of what's to come. These people are on SSI and SSD with nowhere to go but the streets. The community needs to provide them with somewhere safe to go. The House of Pride on New St. comes off looking negative, because of the altercations**. Marion Harris** pleaded with the city and community to help keep it going. **Dr. Kim Warfield** of 1403 Woodmill Dr. is a retired NYPD detective. She suggested that they form a tenant patrol or neighborhood watch to help curtail the loitering. A man from the House of Pride stated that he was fearful of the alcohol and illegal drug activity he has seen in the area, and a second resident at the House of Pride said he felt fearful too, and has witnessed guns being shot up into the air and has had racial remarks made towards him.

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VIII: Acknowledgement of State and Local Officials; **Chair Sudler** thanked those officials who were present, and thanked everyone for coming to participate in this special forum.

IX: Adjournment; The Special Forum was adjourned at 8:45 pm, and people were asked to fill out and return the questionnaires which were distributed to those in attendance.

Minutes Taken and Submitted by Mary Walson

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