Meeting Minutes

**June 8, 2017**

**The Human Relations Commission (HRC)** convened for its regular monthly meeting at 6:00 p.m. on the above date in the Board Room at the YWCA of Greensboro. **Chair Zac Engle** presided over the meeting.

**Commissioners Present:** Issifou, Engle, Kennedy, Hawkins, Perry-Garnette, Burkart, Wils, Phillips, Sevier, Cobbler, Wesley-Lamin, Bhardwaj

**Commissioners Absent:** King, Allen, Arbuckle, Murphy

**Human Relations Department Staff:** LoveCrossling, Jodie Stanley

**Legal Department Staff:** Rosetta Davidson

**Council Liaison:** Marikay Abuzuaiter

**Visitors:** Susan Ladd, Zaynah Afada (International Advisory Committee), Yacine Kout (IAC), Saroj Patnaik (IAC)

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Engle called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

**II. Moment of Silent Meditation**

Chair Engle called for a moment of silent meditation.

**III. Chair Report**

Chair Engle welcome visitors to Susan Ladd, Saroj Patnaik and Yacine Kout with the International Advisory committee. He reported that Commissioner King was unable to attend as she was receiving her honorary doctorate. All agreed that this was a great accomplishment and the group publicly congratulated her.

Engle continued with his report, stating that much of his work this month had centered around the work of the PCRB. He announced that Brantly Grier and Michelle Kennedy had agreed to serve as the newest members of the PCRB. They received instructions about completing a ride along and had agreed to do so.

Engle continued with an announcement that an election for chair of the commission was upcoming. Vice Chair King was not open to reappointment and he shared that while it was a wonderful two years, it was time for someone else to carry that torch and he would not be running for chair.

He also reported that Commissioner Burkart was stepping down as the chair of the Education Committee, adding that he would be looking for someone to fill that role.

Engle thanked the commissioners for their work and encouraged them to continue.

Commissioner Cobbler asked who was up for reappointment this year. Engle responded with several names, including Commissioners Wesley-Lamin, King, Sevier and King. He stressed the importance of and encouraged everyone to submit interest forms if they wanted to continue to serve on the HRC.

Chair Engle added that the third and last appointment to the PCRB would be delayed for about 45 days. His only concern was that the current board was heavily represented by males, and he wanted to work carefully to ensure that the next at-large appointment was a woman. He expressed his commitment to work diligently to find the right person for the board.

**Committee Reports**

**Police Community Review Board**

Commissioner Cobbler reported that they had a short meeting with no cases, and after the meeting was over, they adjourned to meet with the PCRB Assessment Committee. He advised that Commissioner Sevier would report on the assessment committee meeting.

**Education**

Commissioner Wils reported that in February they had set an ambitious goal to coordinate a program in June 3, which the committee decided to delay until the fall in the hopes to garner more support from stakeholders. Ivan Canada, a participant in the planning, was tasked with reaching out to additional stakeholders and another meeting would be scheduled after that.

Chair Engle asked if a date was set for the fall. Commissioner Wils advised that at this time, a date had not been selected.

Engle explained his reason for asking, advising that the PCRB Assessment committee had a 45 day timeline and encouraged the commissioners to think about whether or not they wanted to call a special meeting to review the findings of the committee. The HRC had already rescheduled the July 6 meeting to July 13, but perhaps it would be best to call a special meeting. The 45 day timeline took them to June 29, so they could consider meeting on June 29 or Friday, June 30. Some commissioners stated that they were unavailable to meet on Friday.

Director Crossling asked for a point of clarification: was the report to be simply completed within 45 days, or was the report to be given in 45 days? Engle confirmed that the study was to be completed within the 45 days. Crossling clarified that the question, then, was whether or not to review the findings immediately at the 45 day mark, or to delay the discussion until the July 13 meeting.

Commissioner Sevier inserted that his objective was to have a report ready to read before the June 29 date. Engle asked if there was interest in a special meeting on June 29, that attendance would not be required, but he hoped that all would be interested. Crossling indicated that there were others not in attendance that would be impacted by their decision. Engle confirmed with Crossling that all members of the ad hoc committee would be notified of the plan to meet at 6pm, Thursday, June 29.

**Employment Committee**

No report given, Commissioner Burkart had stepped down as chair.

**Human Services Committee**

Chair Engle asked for interested commissioners to let staff know if they were interested in supporting the Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast planning.

**Montgomery/Wells Housing Committee**

Commissioner Issifou stated that there was nothing to report at this time.

**International Advisory Committee**

Yacine Kout reported that the IAC had supported a PB idea collection summit at the Islamic Center as well as a panel discussion at Sedgefield Presbyterian on June 1 designed to show neighboring Sedgefield Elementary’s immigrant population. The panel included Kout, members of GPD and FaithAction, and it was very successful. On May 17, the IAC supported the planning of the upcoming educational equity summit. The IAC was also partnering with the India Association of the Triad at their June 10 summer fest event at LeBauer Park. Kout announced additional upcoming events: June 19 was an event called Around the World at Central Library, and July 8 was World Refugee Day at Barber Park.

Saroj Patnaik invited all to the IAT’s Summer Fest event on Saturday, June 10 from 4-8pm at LeBauer Park.

On behalf of the HRC, Chair Engle thanked all of the members of the IAC for serving, and for their incredible work. Kout thanked Engle, said they were very welcome and assured the HRC that the newly elected IAC team would continue the good work.

**Committee for Social Equity**

Chair Engle reported that Commissioner Hawkins was healing quickly and he hoped to be back at meetings soon.

**AD Hoc PCRB Assessment Committee**

Commissioner Sevier first thanked City staff for their support in scheduling meetings and gathering needed information over the last few weeks. He reported that he and Co-Chair Commissioner Allen had interviewed over 20 people at this point, a group they believed was an accurate cross section of the community. He handed out an overview of their study. They planned to continue with their interviews in the coming week. Sevier pointed out the objectives (to adhere to the missions and visions of both the HRC and PCRB, to adhere to the laws of the municipality and the State in the process of reviewing it, to understand varying perceptions). He reported a detected theme of agreement in all of the interviews for the need for increased transparency and visibility, that while transparency in light of certain laws was a challenge, it was something they were committed to reviewing. He informed commissioners of another association that was solely committed to the civilian oversight of police departments, adding that at least 3 other cities in North Carolina had bodies of civilians that provided accountability and oversight of police departments. He encouraged commissioners to review the association’s study, which provided guidance on how to go about creating a body of civilians that would provide accountability and meet the needs of most people.

Sevier added that he had asked many interviewees what worked, what didn’t work, what their expectations were, how the process worked, and other questions to garner information needed to create a spreadsheet. He was aware of the short timeline of 45 days but expressed confidence that they would provide a well informed report on how to proceed with the needed changes. He added that he had also spoken with the Police Chief, which was important because the PCRB was tasked with reviewing and returning information that came from the Police Department.

He stressed his opinion that this committee was independent and needed to move forward in a positive way. Sevier passed out another document that illustrated the challenges faced by a civilian oversight body, citing the various perspectives that they had to consider in reviewing cases. He added that it was important to improve police-community relationships, and that it was his impression that Police Chief Wayne Scott and many others he had spoken to felt the same way.

He asked if anyone had questions, then asked if Commissioner Allen had anything to add. Allen stated that he felt Sevier did a good job of laying out what they were trying to accomplish and thanked Sevier for his leadership. Allen shared that he had spoken with community members and staff about working to actively reach the community and shared about an upcoming event entitled “Stop the Violence” cook out. He encouraged members to consider that there were community members who did not feel safe, that it was important to inspire trust in the community by supporting this and other events that were designed to bolster the community’s need for safety.

Commissioner Wesley-Lamin asked how they could know if the persons being interviewed were an accurate cross section. Sevier stated that the information, including demographics, were being gathered and would be reported. He stressed that because of the short timeline provided, the research approach was informational, not intensive.

Commissioner Bhardwaj noted that Sevier had circulated data from national databanks and asked if there was more local information available. Director Crossling reported that in times past there was a “State of Human Relations” study that looked at all different aspects of living in the City. She stated that the study had not been updated since 2008 because the funds were not available, and that HUD had no plans to offer the funds again in the coming year. Engle asked how the study was conducted. Crossling stated that the last study was done through focus groups and that it was most desirable to use a contracted agency. She offered to look into what it would take to get another study done. Bhardwaj pointed out that the research being done simply wasn’t very scientific. Sevier agreed and added that in the longer term, it would be necessary to conduct additional research. National data was helpful in the short run, but it was important to consider the local landscape. Sevier noted that he had already considered enlisting additional resources, including local universities, to conduct a more intensive research study.

Sevier expressed his opinion that while accurate research practices were important, it was important to take this on as an independent initiative. His initial findings showed that there was a perception that they were not an independent body, and it was important to take steps to represent the people as an independent body.

Chair Engle asked if commissioners were interested in expanding the scope of the committee to a 12 month time period for implementation strategy and accountability. Commissioner Perry-Garnette pointed out that the CRC Enhancement Committee took the same extended time, perhaps more than 12 months, to conduct research and make recommendations. She suggested that the committee not reinvent the wheel, but look at the study that was done as a part of the first process and incorporate those findings. Commissioner Wesley-Lamin stated that she was not on the enhancement committee, so was unaware of their process, but she knew that the study and its findings had been passed along to Sevier. Sevier confirmed this, and said that it was his hope to incorporate the information. He added that in addition to the function of the PCRB, he was concerned about the community’s perception of it. Engle suggested that former HRC Chair Kevin Williams served on the former enhancement committee and would possibly be a good resource. It was his understanding that the committee did not necessarily focus on the potential for change within State law, that it was important to consider what could be changed in City ordinance and what could be changed at the State level.

Sevier added that it was his perception that many of the suggested changes came from council and were passed along to the body. Their process this time was much different in that it was starting with the people and would be passed along to Council.

Commissioner Issifou stated that no matter what they did, it would fall on Council to support the decisions made, that it was important to keep this in mind as they proceeded. He encouraged Council to think about what they really wanted for the City.

Commissioner Cobbler asked Council Member Marikay Abuzuaiter to speak to the enhancement committee. Cobbler stated that he found it strange that they did not ask any members of the CRC to serve on the enhancement committee. Abuzuaiter stated that in her memory it was a council only committee. Chair Engle pointed that it had been suggested to include the chair of the CRC, and that had not been done. At this time, he, Sevier and Allen were in the community actively talking to people in the community about this topic in the hopes to garner public trust and feedback. He stated again that he would be open to lengthening the time frame and scope of the ad hoc assessment committee.

Sevier moved to extend the time frame beyond the 45 days, and to include a broader policy interaction or discussion to address the policy community relations.

Commissioner Perry-Garnette stated that there were two issues at hand, one that included the assessment of the functions of the PCRB, and another regarding police community relations. She had yet to hear from City council on the second issue, and warned that a study focusing on that could be stretched out without end. She suggested that the two issues were too different to align, but that this conversation was an important one to have. It would be too frustrating for this community to go through another effort to have a discussion only to have it go nowhere. Commissioner Sevier stated that it was his opinion that there was increased sensitivity to this issue, that several council members had already expressed support for the effort. Perry-Garnette stated that the PCRB assessment committee played an obvious role but she was not sure that it was the right vehicle for a deeper conversation about police community relations.

Director Crossling asked to clarify the role of the Committee for Social Equity in this initiative, as it was created in part to support outreach around policy community issues. Crossling stated that perhaps the ad hoc committee could focus on the assessment piece, and the committee for social equity could focus on the outreach piece. Perry-Garnette agreed and stated that she thought that was why the Committee for Social Equity was created. Crossling agreed, explaining that the outreach was delayed when the scope of the PCRB was brought into question. Going forward, if the Commission chose, perhaps they could conduct conversations about police community relations through the Committee for Social Equity.

Chair Engle revisited the original motion, offering a friendly amendment to exclude the piece about police community relations. Commissioner Phillips advised that it would be important to stick to the vision of the goal at hand. Director Crossling asked for clarity on the motion.

**Extend Timeline of Ad Hoc PCRB Assessment Committee’s Study from 45 Days to 12 Months with the Purpose of Continuing Policy Assessment**

**with the Goal to Provide a Report and Make Recommendations to Council,**

**and Garner Council’s Support in Implementation**

Moved by: Commissioner Sevier

Seconded by: Commissioner Cobbler

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Engle advised that the next motion might include tasking the Committee for Social Equity with the discussions about how to approach improving police community relations. Commissioner Perry-Garnette asked if they should check with the chair, Samuel Hawkins. Directors Crossling advised that ultimately, the work of the committee was subject to the will of the commission, and that they could make the decision as a team. Sevier asked if a vote was needed, as this was a topic already included in the mission of the Committee for Social Equity. There was general agreement that a vote was not needed. Engle asked who would be interested in supporting the Committee for Social Equity in this endeavor. Commissioners Wesley-Lamin, Bhardwaj, Allen and Perry-Garnette expressed interest.

Commissioner Bhardwaj reported after some initial research online that GPD had a 19 question survey that they used to collect data. He encouraged Sevier to use the report data available. Bhardwaj promised to send a link to all commissioners.

Chair Engle asked if Council Member Abuzuaiter had any comments. Abuzuaiter thanked Lindsay Burkart for coordinating the Barnabas Network fundraiser, A Chair Affair, adding that Love Crossling had donated two painted chairs to help raise funds for the event.

**Staff Report**

Director Crossling pointed out that the new format of the staff report now included follow up elements. She encouraged commissioners to serve on the MLK planning committee, announcing that this event hosted 900+ people and was an inspiring, annual event that many people looked forward to.

She also announced the upcoming CSW WorkSmart event, scheduled for the following Monday, June 12 and went on to describe Thrive GSO’s upcoming initiatives. On July 22, Thrive GSO and the Human Relations Department planned to partner with NC Justice on a former offender listening session focused on expungement and reentry efforts. On August 3, Thrive GSO planned to host an education, employment and reentry event at NC Works Career Center. She stated that there had not been any follow up requests made over the past month, and for clarity, announced the items needing follow up mentioned during the meeting:

* Notify the ad hoc committee members about the June 29 meeting
* Provide information to community members about the Stop the Violence event
* Gather information about creating a study and conducting research to support the conversation about police community relations
* Update the chair of the Committee for Social Equity about taking on the police community relations concerns and outreach

She encouraged commissioners to feel free to submit additional follow up requests via email throughout the month.

Chair Engle thanked Crossling, said the new report format seemed a good one and asked if there was a motion to hold a special meeting on June 29.

**Motion to Hold a Special Meeting on June 29 at 6 pm at the YWCA for the Purpose of Reviewing the Findings of the Ad Hoc PCRB Assessment Committee**

Moved by: Commissioner Phillips

Seconded by: Commissioner Burkart

The motion passed unanimously.

Engle asked Director Crossling to send a note out to the Ad Hoc PCRB Assessment Committee.

**VI. Review of Meeting Minutes**

**Motion to Approve May Meeting Minutes**

Moved by: Commissioner Phillips

Seconded by: Commissioner Kennedy

The motion passed unanimously.

**Additional Comments**

Chair Engle invited all in attendance to comment or bring up other issues. No one commented.

**IX. Adjournment**

**Motion to adjourn.**

Moved by: Commissioner Cobbler

Seconded by: Commissioner Phillips

The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

**M**inutes Approved by:

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson Date**

**Greensboro Human Relations Commission**