



MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING **APPROVED**

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

DATE: Tuesday, December 17, 2024
TIME: 5:30 p.m.
PLACE: Urbana City Council Chambers
Urbana City Building
400 South Vine Street
Urbana, Illinois 61801

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Ann Panthen, Chair; Shalini Smith, Vice Chair; Peter Resnick;
Vahagn Chiflikyan; Jerry Frye; Charles Davidson

ALSO PRESENT: Carla Boyd, Human Rights and Equity Officer;
Tom Unzicker, Human Rights Specialist

A. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Ann Panthen called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. The Recording Secretary took the roll. A quorum was present.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Panthen asked for any additions to the agenda. There were none.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. November 19, 2024

Ms. Panthen called for a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Peter Resnick so moved. Shalini Smith seconded the motion. The motion carried on a voice vote.

D. PUBLIC INPUT

There was none.

E. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was none.

F. NEW BUSINESS

1. CU Reparations Coalition – Presentation

Jeffrey “Jeff” Trask, PhD, one of the leaders of a local coalition in Champaign-Urbana, spoke before the commission and showed a PowerPoint presentation. The CU Reparations Coalition (CURC) started about a year and a half ago, with the goal of looking into providing reparations for African Americans for Champaign County.

The group hopes to establish a Champaign County Reparations Commission. The composition of such a commission would include a member of the Urbana City Council, a representative from the City of Champaign's council, a representative from the County board, and a staff member from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. However, the majority would be members of the community.

One of Dr. Trask's roles in this work is serving as a commissioner with the African Descent Citizens Reparations Commission, a state organization. That commission has held three public hearings across Illinois. Six more hearings occur in the next year, including one planned for Champaign, scheduled for December 6, 2025.

The presentation explained how and why the effort to secure reparations developed. It highlighted segregation in Champaign County through racially restrictive covenants between 1941 and 1950 against "persons not of the Caucasian race". In 1965, a student housing listing service left out 52% of available spaces in homes and 80% of apartments because their operators failed to sign a pledge of nondiscrimination.

CURC proposes a process of education, acknowledgement, and reparations. They ask for a commission, support for their educational efforts, and to explore, research, develop and implement a plan of repair for African Americans in Urbana. The presentation elaborated ongoing efforts to secure various types of reparations in various areas around the country.

Dr. Trask concluded his presentation by asking the Commissioners to endorse the efforts of the CU Reparations Commission. In response to a question from Ms. Panthen about when CURC might go before the Urbana City Council, Dr. Trask stated that might happen around the time of the next Juneteenth. Mr. Resnick requested guidance from the CURC in the process of HRC developing a letter of endorsement.

In response to questions about the reparations program in Evanston, Illinois, Dr. Trask detailed various funding mechanisms that the council there utilized. He went on to describe how they chose to remedy the specific harm of Redlining, which occurred in Evanston between 1919 and 1969. He also spoke about reparations for various groups throughout history.

2. Consideration of EEO Workforce Statistics

Ms. Panthen requested a motion to approve applications this month. Ms. Smith moved to approve certification of the applicants as follows:

- Andrews Technology HMS, Inc. 2 years
- Heyl, Royster, Voeker & Allen, P.C. 2 years
- OpenGov, Inc. 2 years
- Dell Inc. 2 years
- Matrix Consulting, Ltd. 2 years
- Homer Tree Care, Inc. 2 years

Vahagn Chiflikyan seconded the motion. Commissioners discussed the applications of Dell, and Andrews Technology.

Jerry Frye and Mr. Resnick expressed their satisfaction with Dell's responses to questions from HRC.

Ms. Panthen commented on the Good Faith Efforts update of Andrews Technology, which reported

that their staff members work remotely, and their hiring processes are not in person either, making collection of demographics more challenging.

Following discussion, the motion carried on a voice vote.

G. OFFICER'S REPORT

Ms. Boyd shared her monthly report. Highlights included:

- Status of complaints and referrals made
- Attended the conference, "Race forward/Facing Race: Our Power, Our Solutions"
- Participated in the Government Alliance for Racial Equity (GARE) "Sensemaking" session
- Met with two commissioners from the Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes about the new Hate Help Line that launched in October. Plans are in the works for a presentation before HRC in February
- A proposal to change the name of this commission to the "Human Rights Commission" has moved forward with a vote expected at the January 6 meeting of City Council

Commissioner Follow Up:

Mr. Resnick, who also attended the recent City Council meeting when the discussion about a name change for this commission occurred, added he expects the proposal to pass easily as part of a City Council "Consent Decree".

H. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. This Commission has three openings.
2. Next scheduled meeting: Tuesday, January 14, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. (different week and time)
3. February meeting: Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

I. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, Ms. Panthen adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas D. Unzicker
Recording Secretary