



MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING **APPROVED**

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

DATE: Tuesday, November 19, 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;
Charles Davidson

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Vahagn Chiflikyan; Jerry Frye

ALSO PRESENT: Tom Unzicker, Human Rights Specialist

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

Ann Panthen called the meeting to order at 5:48 p.m. The Recording Secretary took the roll. A quorum was present.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Panthen asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Peter Resnick so moved. Shalini Smith seconded the motion. The motion carried on a voice vote.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. October 15, 2024

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

D. PUBLIC INPUT

There was none.

E. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. 12-22(g) Complaint - Update

Ms. Panthen provided an update on the complaint about the circumstances surrounding the Hope Village Development. She reported she has completed her report and sent copies to the commissioners, the mayor and to Melinda Carr, the lead signatory of the complaint and petition filed at the August 2024 meeting of the Human Relations Commission.

Ms. Panthen conducted her investigation over the course of 90 days. During that time, she has talked with people involved in the Hope Village project, and read news accounts about the project going back two years. Among those she spoke with were Carol Mitten, the Administrator of the City of Urbana; Claudia Lennhoff, the Executive Director of Champaign County Health Care Consumers; Melinda Carr, Interim President of North End United; Deborah Roberts, a resident of the Carver Park neighborhood; and Kevin Garcia, the principal planner and zoning administrator. Mr. Garcia had convened public meetings on the project.

At this point, Ms. Carr, from the audience, stated that she had not received a copy of Ms. Panthen's report.

Ms. Panthen continued her summary. She stated that she did not see discrimination by the City of Urbana, as alleged in the complaint. She explained that the City had partially funded the project utilizing funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The public meetings followed afterward.

There were 18 meetings scheduled with some well attended, and Ms. Panthen reviewed recordings of meetings. Representatives of Champaign County Health Consumers walked neighborhoods, knocked on doors, and distributed informational materials. The University of Illinois and Carle Hospital were involved in the planning process as well.

Part of Ms. Panthen's investigation included a zoom call. Richard Painter, a former resident was on the call. Ms. Panthen stated though, she did not list Mr. Painter as a witness as he is no longer from the area.

Ms. Panthen reached the conclusion that after the initial announcement of the project, the Planning Commission, the City of Urbana, and the project organizations involved made extra efforts to be sure the neighborhoods were aware of what was going on. Keven Garcia had explained to her that several changes occurred because of the neighborhood input received.

Ms. Panthen stated she will send her report to all the email addresses she has from the complaint to be sure all those present would see her report. She appears before the Urbana City Council on November 25 to share her report with the mayor and council members.

Ms. Panthen shared a comparison from Mr. Garcia that if the property had had a private developer, the developer would not have had to seek public input. She concluded her summary by stating her finding that there was no probable cause to consider the City of Urbana was discriminatory; there is insufficient evidence to support the claim.

Following her summary, Ms. Panthen invited discussion from commission members.

Mr. Resnick shared his view that the commission cannot determine whether there might be something more systemic – as in particular neighborhoods treated differently over long periods of time for all sorts of structural reasons. He went on to say that the ordinance refers to individual acts or a series of acts of discrimination.

Mr. Davidson said he had not yet read the report.

Mr. Resnick moved to accept the report as submitted. Ms. Smith seconded the motion. The motion carried on a voice vote. Ms. Panthen reminded the audience that the report goes to City Council at their next meeting, Monday, November 25, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

[An audience member made comments without the benefit of a microphone. The chair did not repeat or paraphrase the comment, but responded.] Ms. Panthen indicated Commissioner Jerry Frye was out of town today.

Mr. Resnick encouraged those interested to send comments to the council members before their meeting, and to attend the meeting. He also suggested reviewing HRC procedures to ensure advance distribution of similar reports in the future.

[Additional comments and dialogue from the audience occurred without the benefit of a microphone.] Ms. Panthen indicated that the commission was going to move on to the next agenda item.

2. **Scheduling 2025 Monthly Meetings**

The commissioners had received a list of likely dates for meetings in the new year, entitled "Option A", consistent with the schedule of 2024. The office had not received any feedback to propose changes.

Meetings in 2025 will continue the third Tuesday of the month except for the January meeting, which changes due to King's Day Week.

Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. (different week and time).

All other meetings are the third Tuesday of the month at 5:30 p.m.

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|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| • February 18 | • May 20 | • September 16 |
| • March 18 | • June 17 | • October 21 |
| • April 15 | • July 15 | • November 18 |
| | • August 19 | • December 16 |

Mr. Resnick moved to accept the proposed dates. Ms. Smith seconded the motion. Motion carried on a voice vote.

F. NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration of EEO Workforce Statistics

Ms. Panthen announced seven company submitted applications this month. Ms. Smith moved to approve certification of the applicants as follows:

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| • Ken's Oil Service | 2 years |
| • Coe Equipment, Inc. | 2 years |
| • TriTech Software Systems | 2 years |
| • Ideal Environmental Engineering, Inc. | 1 year |
| • JT Tree and Crane | 2 years |
| • Center for Public Safety Management, LLC | 1 year |
| • 72 Hour LLC | 2 years |

Mr. Resnick seconded the motion.

During a brief discussion, Mr. Resnick expressed his concern about the employment numbers reported by Coe Equipment. He agreed though that given their location in Sangamon County, and their limited turnover, a two-year certification was reasonable.

The motion carried on a voice vote.

G. OFFICER'S REPORT

Ms. Panthen shared Ms. Boyd's monthly report in her absence. Highlights included:

- Status of complaints and referrals made
- Carla attended the Midwest Leadership Institute, “Leadership in Practice: Exploring the Culture of Cruelty in Modern Society”. Homework included reading an article by David Brooks: “How America Got Mean”. The discussion at the institute was on leadership.
- Due to family emergencies, she was unable to attend the Black Mental Health & Wellness Conference, at Parkland College, nor the U of I Celebration of Diversity Breakfast
- She provided Ms. Panthen with technical support finalizing the complaint report
- Ms. Boyd is now attending the conference, “Race forward/Facing Race: Our Power, Our Solutions”

Commissioners requested clarification: The outcome of a finalized complaint sent for a signature by the City Attorney was not known. Another complaint is still open and under investigation.

H. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. This Commission has three openings.
2. Next scheduled meeting: Tuesday, December 17, 2024, 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