



Approved

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2017  
7:00 P.M.  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Then meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Krista Nordberg	Present
Jennifer Symanns	Present
Theresa Saunders	Present
John Shuler	Present
Tanasia Morton	Absent
Sammy Jones-Darling	Present
Amber Fellows	Present
D'Real Graham	Present

**III. AGENDA APPROVAL**

**Commissioner Jones-Darling moved to add immigration enforcement to the agenda under Discussion Items.**

**Commissioner Jones-Darling moved, seconded by Commissioner Symanns to approve the agenda as amended.**

On a voice vote, the motion carried, and the agenda was approved as amended.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

– January 23, 2017

Commissioner Jones-Darling and Commission Shuler made grammatical edits to the minutes.

**Commissioner Jones-Darling moved, seconded by Commissioner Symanns to approve the agenda.**

On a voice vote, the motion carried, and the minutes were approved as amended.

**V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE**

*Human Relations Commission Meeting  
February 27, 2017*

None

## **VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### — Commission Membership – Youth Members

Deputy Clerk Hellenga stated he is still waiting for a clear opinion from the Attorney's Office if this will require an ordinance amendment.

Commissioner Shuler stated if this would not require an ordinance amendment he does not see why it would be required to go to Council. Mr. Hellenga responded the resolution seeks the blessing of Council to add youth membership.

Council Member Shuler asked if this resolution would need to be renewed each year. Mr. Hellenga responded if the resolution does not include a sunset clause it would be continuous.

Commissioner Saunders asked if there was a definition of an "advisory capacity". Mr. Hellenga responded it would be a non-voting member.

Commissioner Jones-Darling stated in Grand Rapids youth, ages sixteen to seventeen, can sit on a board or commission at an advisory capacity until they turn eighteen. Once they turn eighteen they are offered the next available seat on that body. He said the Grand Rapids also has a youth advisor on its board. Commissioner Nordberg was in favor of the school board having a youth member.

Commissioner Jones-Darling one youth member be required to be a City resident and the other seat be open to a non-resident. Commissioner Symanns responded the City is not at a loss for City youth, and both seats should be filled by City residents.

Commissioner Saunders asked is the age for youth members. Commissioner Jones-Darling responded between the age of sixteen and eighteen.

**Commissioner Jones-Darling moved, seconded by Commissioner Nordberg to approve the resolution requesting youth membership be added to the Commission.**

On a voice vote, the motion carried, and the resolution was approved.

### — Immigration Enforcement

Commissioner Jones-Darling stated he wanted to open up a conversation of what the City and Police Department to show that Ypsilanti Police Department is different the Federal Enforcement. He said the City will not actively enforce immigration, nor will it setup immigration check points.

Commissioner Shuler asked if Commissioner Jones-Darling had any specific ideas. Commissioner Jones-Darling responded when he was younger community policing techniques were used in his

community. Commissioner Symanns asked if this was in the 1990's. Mr. Jones-Darling responded in the affirmative. Ms. Symanns replied in the 1990's the federal government was funding community policing, which is no longer available. Mr. Jones-Darling replied those same type of policies could be used to communicate with the public, to show Ypsilanti Police cares.

Commissioner Fellows asked if any part of City Government knows when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is present. Mr. Hellenga responded from his brief discussion with the Chief of Police was unaware of the recent ICE presence in the City. Commissioner Symanns added if the City knew or not there is nothing it could have done to stop ICE.

Commissioner Nordberg stated the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center held a meeting recently, and local police were specifically asked not to attend. This was done because the immigrant community is not sure what police agencies are friend and which are foe. She stated immigration attorneys now have interpreters on 24 hour call to assist the immigrant community.

Commissioner Symanns stated there is a strong desire to instate more community policing tactics, but currently budget constraints make it difficult. Commissioner Nordberg added the City is aware of what the loss of this tactic can cause.

Commissioner Symanns stated the HRC could possibly hold a community forum to discuss these issues. Commissioner Nordberg added the HRC could also get materials out regarding "Welcoming Communities". Commissioner Fellows stated it would be useful to understand what the police department's role in this community is for immigration. Commissioner Nordberg responded the City recently approved an ordinance forbidding City staff from requesting a person's immigration status unless required by law. Ms. Fellows stated when ICE is in the community and requests cooperation from the police what would be the protocol. Ms. Symanns responded the question is will the police department cooperate with the federal government or not.

Commissioner Jones-Darling asked if ICE asks for cooperation from the police department can they refuse to help. Commissioner Shuler responded in the affirmative. Commissioner Symanns added normally local police departments do not get involved with immigration issues. Commissioner Nordberg added immigration enforcement is not the job of local police departments.

Commissioner Shuler asked if ICE setup a checkpoint or was there a raid. Commissioner Jones-Darling responded there are multiple stories, the spokesperson for ICE is it was a raid, however, multiple sources claim there were checkpoints. Commissioner Graham stated Twitter states there were checkpoints on Holmes and Ellsworth.

Commissioner Shuler stated the Police Chief is trying to build trust in the community to effectively police it.

Commissioner Fellows stated a good goal for the HRC is to host a forum regarding immigration enforcement in the City. Commissioner Nordberg stated immigration groups are already disseminating information. Ms. Fellows stated it is the City's issue too, and it reaches further than just the 3% undocumented individuals living in this City. Ms. Nordberg stated this is a big City and not everyone will share this opinion. Commissioner Symanns responded a forum is about

information, and information is never dangerous. Ms. Nordberg stated how the City can ensure the safety of the people attending the forum.

Commissioner Shuler stated if there is already a lot of information circulating about immigrant rights perhaps this forum could be designed as a support forum. Commissioner Saunders stated why the HRC doesn't partner with these other organizations. Commissioner Symanns stated she would invite an immigration attorney, Police Chief, the ACLU, City Attorney, the Mayor, and others. Ms. Saunders stated Commissioner Nordberg makes a good point that people that live in this City that might disagree with this. Commissioner Nordberg stated she would reach out to one of the immigration attorney's that represents Michigan Immigrant Rights Center to ask what the HRC can do to help.

Commissioner Symanns stated this can simply be an informational forum, and not duplicate any previous work. The forum would be very topical and could be very general. She said it does not need to be an activist moment. Commissioner Fellows stated the intention is governmental transparency for this specific issue. Ms. Symanns stated there could be a question and answer portion of the meeting that a panel could engage the public whether they agree, or disagree.

Commissioner Jones-Darling stated it is also important for law enforcement to be present to show they will be on the resident's side. Commissioner Symanns agreed, but suggested being careful with language because a police officer's job is to enforce the law.

Commissioner Jones-Darling stated a concern he has with partnering with any advocacy group is the HRC would run the risk of being biased. He explained as a public body a perception of neutrality needs to be maintained. Commissioner Graham disagreed with the concept this body needs to maintain neutrality. Mr. Jones-Darling replied stating it is difficult to invite a group with one viewpoint and not invite a group of an opposing viewpoint. Commissioner Symanns responded this is not a debate, and equal time for differing views would not be required. Ms. Symanns stated this forum would be about transparency and information. Mr. Graham agreed, and added resources.

#### — 2017 Goal Setting/Brainstorming

Commissioner Graham stated his initial goal is to learn more about this Commission, and past goals of this Commission. He added he would like to know more about the individual Commissioners in order to what skillset each Commissioner possess, in order to better assess what this Commission can accomplish. Commissioner Shuler proposed to put this first on the next agenda. Mr. Hellenga suggested each member submit their biography in advance to save time at the meeting. Mr. Graham stated he was inspired about an initiative occurring in San Francisco in 2012 to increase the number of African Americans participating in Human Relation Commission. He explained another interesting initiative is to make resources more available to African Americans in San Francisco. He stated he would like to begin adding resources to the HRC page on the City website. He added he would like to make it easier for African Americans and LGBTQ individuals to assume leadership roles. He added his initiatives will not begin until the summer, and will forward his ideas prior to the March meeting.

Commissioner Jones-Darling suggested reviewing possible ways the police department could employ community policing methods, and how it can be encouraged through policy. He explained Eastern students he has spoken with trust university police more than city police. Commissioner Shuler asked why that is. Mr. Jones-Darling responded they are more visible. Commissioner Symanns stated most campus police departments are funded to a greater degree than the jurisdictions that house them. Mr. Jones-Darling suggested someone from the Police Department Command be present during Commission meetings to ask questions.

Commissioner Jones-Darling suggested the Washtenaw County Safety Alliance hold more regular meetings. Commissioner Symanns stated Council Member Richardson is the City Council Liaison to that alliance.

Commissioner Fellows stated she is interested in community outreach to learn of possible concerns not made aware to this Commission. She explained an issue involving U of M graduate students living in Ypsilanti, and adding to the gentrification of the City. Commissioner Shuler stated supplying housing in Ypsilanti is difficult because for the most part the City is developed.

Commissioner Jones-Darling asked how many members are on the Ypsilanti Housing Commission and what their purview is. Mr. Hellenga responded he would provide that information to the Commission at a later date. Mr. Jones-Darling asked how the Planning Commission relates to housing in the City. Commissioner Shuler responded two to three years ago developed the "Shape Ypsi" Master Plan. Mr. Shuler recommended reviewing that document to answer any questions regarding the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Symanns stated it's a City issue but really mostly a County issue. Commissioner Graham agreed, and said Washtenaw is one of the most segregated Counties in the Nation.

Commissioner Jones-Darling referenced good and bad gentrification. He explained good gentrification has a positive effect on current residents, and increases their economic vitality. While bad gentrification increases property values while residents economic status stays stagnate, and effectively pushes them out of the community. He stated gentrification will always occur if economic development is successful, however, there are differences in how it effects the surrounding community. He referenced how Depot Town has begun to "push" rather than "pull" residents.

Commissioner Graham stated it appears as a working body the Human Relations Commission would like to attract a diverse cross-section of business owners. Commissioner Nordberg agreed, and stated she is not certain how it can be done. Commissioner Shuler stated it would be interesting for the HRC to examine if there are patterns of discrimination creating that result. Mr. Graham agreed, and said if there are diverse businesses an olive branch should be extended. He explained each all institutions should be encourage to treat other people at a higher level.

Commissioner Jones-Darling asked if there is a way for a person to submit a complaint regarding discrimination online. Mr. Hellenga responded only online complaint is for police complaints.

Commissioner Saunders stated if the Commission even approaches one of these goals with fervor, intensity, and focus could make a difference. Commissioner Symanns recommended prioritizing the immigration enforcement forum.

**VII. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE**

None

**VIII. PROPOSED BUSINESS**

- Commissioner Biographies
- Brief on the Washtenaw Safety Alliance
- 

**VIV. NEXT MEETING DATE**

- March 27, 2017

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

**Commissioner Symanns moved, seconded by Commission Nordberg to adjourn the meeting.**

On a voice vote, the motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.