



**CITY OF YPSILANTI
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION MINUTES
MONDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2007
7:30 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Larkins called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m., in the City Council Chambers.

II. ROLL CALL:

Present: Michael Haynes
Lula Jones
Clifford Larkins, Chair
Darlene Scott
John Shuler (7:40 pm)

Absent: Mary Louise Foley
Judith Monaghan
Angela Scott

A quorum was present.

III. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was no audience participation.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Chair Larkins, supported by Commissioner D. Scott, to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2007 and October 22, 2007 meetings of the Human Relations Commission as presented.

Motion carried.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Commissioner Jones said that Commissioner Foley had recently brought up having business cards printed for the HRC. She said she asked the City Clerk's office whether the City can print business cards for the Commission and was informed that they are only for City staff, Mayor, and Council. She asked that the Commissioners discuss by email if they want the cards and then create a draft to have printed by a local printer, whom she has spoken with and can provide a low price.

A. Review the proposed changes to the HRC website

Commissioner Haynes presented and reviewed the changes made to the HRC website after suggestions were offered about its design at the last HRC meeting.

Commissioner Haynes stated that the history of the HRC must still be added to the website.

Commissioner Haynes stated that a picture highlighting diversity must still be added to the website, and that his intention is to take a group photograph of the Commission itself for this purpose.

Commissioner Shuler asked that the 'Other Resources' section of outside sources of help be moved from the 'Complaint Process' section of the HRC website to its own separate page. The rest of the Commissioners agreed.

Commissioner Jones asked whether rules regarding audience participation should be approved for HRC meetings, similar to those adopted by City Council, and whether this should be posted on the HRC website.

Chair Larkins stated that the Commission should develop and approve similar rules.

Commissioner D. Scott said that the HRC does have the authority to develop rules for audience participation.

Chair Larkins stated that the Commission and in particular the previous Chairperson was harassed by the audience in the past.

Commissioner Shuler asked that a link back to the HRC homepage be added on every page on the HRC website.

The Commissioners decided that the agenda should be posted below the 'Next Meeting Date' section on the HRC homepage.

The Commissioners decided that a link should be present on all pages of the HRC website to a 'Contact Us' section that includes all methods of contacting the Commission.

Commissioner Haynes said that the HRC website information should be added to the HRC brochure.

Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski said that he would update the HRC brochure.

Chair Larkins asked whether the HRC website was currently online with the changes made.

Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski responded that it is currently online in the form presented by Commissioner Haynes. He said that it was accidentally published before being approved by the HRC at this meeting. He continued that all of the changes suggested at this meeting can be incorporated as soon as possible if the Commission agrees that the foundation is acceptable as presented and approves it.

Chair Larkins said that he would have more suggestions for the website after browsing through it on his own.

Commissioner Jones said that she likes the HRC website but that in one section the text heading is overlapping itself. The Commissioners agreed that this should be fixed.

Motion by Commissioner Shuler, supported by Chair Larkins, to approve the changes made to the HRC website and to incorporate the changes suggested at this meeting without need for further approval.

Motion carried.

B. Create annual report to City Council

Chair Larkins asked the Commission to explain what is needed in the annual report to City Council.

Commissioner D. Scott responded that it should contain what the Commission has done since the last report. She said that the Commission could brainstorm and make a list of things at this meeting to include in the written report.

The Commissioners discussed and concluded that the next meeting of the HRC is January 28, 2008, thus the approved report would be overdue to City Council.

Commissioner Jones suggested asking for an extension from City Council.

Commissioner Haynes asked whether the report had to be formally approved by the Commission.

Chair Larkins responded that it never has been in the past.

Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski responded that, should the report be drafted after this meeting, the Commission's approval of the draft by email or other means outside this meeting should be sufficient in order to send it to Council. He said that all Commissioners should be given the option to edit and approve the document. He stated that Council has two scheduled meetings this month, on December 4 and December 18, but that the meeting on the 18th may be cancelled.

Commissioner D. Scott said that the report could be submitted in January.

Deputy City Clerk reminded the Commission that the City Charter requires the report to be in the hands of City Council by December 31.

Chair Larkins stated that the report has never been given to Council before December 31 and that it has never been formally approved by the Commission.

Commissioner D. Scott stated that the report does not need to be presented at a Council meeting by December 31, but just needs to be submitted.

Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski stated that one of the City Council's goals for 2007 was a citywide forum on race relations, and that the status of this event should be included in the report.

Chair Larkins said that it is possible to draft the report but that it cannot be submitted prior to the December 18 meeting of City Council.

Chair Larkins said that he will draft a report and share it with the rest of the Commission by email.

Chair Larkins stated that he knows that certain things were asked of the HRC that may not have happened and that it should be explained why in the report. He said that the report should also describe what has been accomplished.

The Commissioners discussed and determined to include the following items in the report to City Council:

- **Improved communication of HRC goals and objectives with the community through the initiation of neighborhood association presentations, HRC website, and HRC brochure**
- **Creation of an enhanced version of the HRC brochure and extensive distribution of the document**
- **Explanation of why the HRC did not choose to conduct a citywide forum this year**

Chair Larkins stated that it should be clear to City Council that the reason the Commission has stepped back and approached the year as

it has is because it did not feel ready to tackle a major citywide forum.

Commissioner D. Scott stated that an issue that she had with the citywide forum is that it wasn't of the HRC's making and she is not clear about the purpose or intended impact of the forum. She said that the Commission has not been clear about what the forum should be, and this should be explained to City Council. She continued that it is not that the HRC has not wanted to conduct the forum, but does not have enough information to proceed with it. She said that meeting in small groups is a better way to address problems than a large forum.

Commissioner D. Scott suggested that a facilitator be brought in, perhaps from a neighborhood association, to help with the citywide forum.

Commissioner Jones said that she believes that as the Mayor was campaigning residents were complaining about racism and discrimination and that he felt an obligation to follow up on these issues. She said that she agreed that the Commission was not ready to hold the forum this year, as it had new Commissioners coming on to the Commission. She said that the HRC had to first understand its roles and responsibilities.

Commissioner Jones stated that she has heard racism complaints brought up at City Council meetings that do not always seem to her as being caused by racism, but rather personality conflicts or conflicts of interest.

Chair Larkins stated that the Commission, as in the past, is getting over hurdles, but is now focused on a long-term plan. He said that a five year strategy, identifying problems and how to address them is a focus now. He said that it should be explained that the HRC has not forgotten the mandate to hold a citywide forum, but has tabled it for a future time.

Commissioner Shuler stated that he does not recall ever hearing Mayor Schreiber ask that the citywide forum be held in 2007. He continued that a plan to hold the forum in 2008 or 2009 would not be in conflict with the Mayor's request. He said that the HRC should not be too negative about what has not yet occurred, and has not failed to conduct a forum but is still deliberating on it.

Commissioner Jones said that the HRC is making small steps leading up to the forum.

Chair Larkins stated that one of these small steps leading to the forum is attendance and presentations at neighborhood association meetings.

Chair Larkins asked Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski if he has heard anything at City Hall about whether the HRC should be holding the citywide forum.

Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski responded that one of the City Council's goals for 2007 was to hold a citywide forum. He continued that Council is beginning goal setting meetings this month to review its goals for 2007 and set goals for 2008.

Chair Larkins stated that the forum will be addressed in the report.

Additional items to be included in the report are:

- **Explanation that the HRC is focused on long-term problem solving strategies, rather than short-term accomplishments**
- **Highlight leadership shown by holding more meetings than required this year and include the total number of meetings**

Chair Larkins said that a powerful impact can be made on City Council with a short presentation that includes the HRC history, goals, website updates and any other pertinent matters. He said it would explain that the HRC has not been inactive, but has not conducted the citywide forum for certain reasons. He said that Council will be happy with the report if presented in the right way.

Chair Larkins stated that the report should contain a description of what was done to the HRC website to improve it and asked Commissioner Haynes and Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski to assist with this.

Chair Larkins said that a presentation to City Council should be created and given and that it should then be adapted for use at neighborhood association meetings.

Commissioner Shuler stated that a generic presentation should be made that can be used at any venue including City Council.

Chair Larkins said that the presentation to City Council should include the history of the HRC up to where it stands today and what it is accomplishing.

Chair Larkins congratulated Commissioners Jones and Shuler for their work in distributing the brochure and Commissioner Haynes and Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski for their work on the website.

Chair Larkins said that he is pleased with the direction of the HRC and that 2007 has seen a significant improvement upon its activity in recent years.

Chair Larkins said that he has an outline of the report prepared and will distribute it to the Commissioners within the next ten days. He asked the Commissioners to add to it within two weeks after receiving it.

Commissioner D. Scott said that the Commission is still one member short of its total of nine.

Commissioner Shuler suggested that the report contain a note that Commissioner Haynes' appointment is ending in January but he would like to have it renewed for some amount of time, at least until August.

Commissioner Shuler asked Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski if he was familiar with any other commission's annual reports.

Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski responded that he is not but could investigate if asked. He continued that the annual report required of the HRC may not be required of all other boards and commissions.

Commissioner Shuler said that the minutes of the HRC meetings contain all of the discussion and accomplishments needed for the report, and could accompany the report as an addendum or referenced in a bibliography section. He continued that the number of meetings held this year should also be reported.

The Commissioners discussed meeting outside this meeting to work on the report. Commissioner Haynes said he is available after December 20. Commissioner Shuler said that he can not meet in person but can help by email.

The Commissioners stated that the 2008 HRC meeting schedule should be included in the report.

Commissioner D. Scott asked when the first meeting of City Council is in January.

Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski responded that it is January 16, the Wednesday after the Presidential Primary.

Commissioner D. Scott asked when the presentation and report will be given to City Council, as the next scheduled meeting of the HRC is January 28.

Commissioner Haynes responded that the report can be submitted on time if coordinated through email as planned, and the presentation can be decided upon through email correspondence as well.

Commissioner Shuler suggested waiting to make a presentation to Council until February and spend the time in between planning what the HRC will do in 2008.

The Commissioners agreed to submit the written report to Council before December 31 and present its report and goals for 2008 at a meeting in February.

Commissioner Haynes suggested using a Wiki, a group editable online document, to create the report. He said that he would look into this and let the Commission know soon if it is feasible.

C. Develop a plan of action for 2008

The Commissioners tabled discussion of plans for 2008 until the January 28, 2008 meeting.

Chair Larkins stated that the HRC's plan for 2008 should be the main agenda item at the next meeting.

Chair Larkins asked that all Commissioners review the minutes from each meeting in 2007 and come prepared with suggestion for 2008 goals at the next meeting.

Commissioner Jones asked whether the HRC intended to attend a meeting of her neighborhood association to make a presentation, as she had earlier asked by email.

Chair Larkins responded that after the presentation for City Council is developed, it can be given at neighborhood association meetings. He stated that another agenda item for the next meeting is to determine when to attend these meetings and how to present information to them.

Commissioner Jones asked if the presentation given earlier this year to the Historic South Side Neighborhood Association could be used.

Commissioner Shuler responded that it was sufficient but should be better prepared rather than improvised.

The Commissioners agreed to decide upon dates to attend neighborhood association meetings at the HRC meeting on January 28.

VI. NEXT MEETING DATE:

Commissioner Shuler stated that in this past year it was determined that meeting quarterly was not sufficient, and the Commission held more meetings than four. He suggested that in 2008 the Commission meet more frequently as well.

Commissioner Haynes asked whether the Commission could have a meeting every other month.

Commissioner Shuler suggested holding meetings every month.

The Commissioners discussed and agreed to a 10 meeting schedule for 2008, understanding that some Commissioners may not be able to attend every meeting. They agreed that meetings should not be scheduled in May or December due to the occurrences of the Memorial Day holiday and December holiday season.

Chair Larkins asked if Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski if he would be able to attend 10 meetings in 2008.

Deputy City Clerk Golembiewski responded that he should be able to attend the 10 meetings, but if he is forced to miss one a Commissioner may record the meeting or it may be held as a work session. He said that should he not be able to attend a meeting, he will coordinate with someone to open the building.

Motion by Commissioner Shuler, supported by Commissioner Haynes to set the 2008 meeting schedule as follows: the fourth Monday of every month excluding May and December at 7:30 pm in City Council Chambers.

Motion carried.

2008 approved meeting schedule:

Monday, January 28, 2008
Monday, February 25, 2008
Monday, March 24, 2008
Monday, April 28, 2008
Monday, June 23, 2008
Monday, July 28, 2008
Monday, August 25, 2008
Monday, September 22, 2008
Monday, October 27, 2008
Monday, November 24, 2008

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Chair Larkins, supported by Commissioner D. Scott, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.