



**City of Ypsilanti
Human Relations Commission
Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers - One South Huron St.
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Wednesday, January 9, 2019, 7:00 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioner Browning	Absent
Commissioner Choudhuri	Present
Commissioner Fellows	Present
Commissioner Gaines	Present
Commissioner Hicks	Present
Commissioner Hunter	Present
Commissioner Jones-Darling	Present

III. AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Jones-Darling made amendments to the agenda order.

Commissioner Choudhuri moved, seconded by Commissioner Hunter to approve the agenda.

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

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. December 3, 2018

Commissioner Hunter informed the Commission of edits to the minutes.

Commissioner Hunter moved, seconded by Commissioner Choudhuri to approve the minutes.

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

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE

None

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Human Relations Commission
January 9, 2019

— Election of Chairperson

Commissioner Jones-Darling requested nominations for Chair in addition to the previous meetings nominations.

Commissioner Jones-Darling provided a statement of service.

Commissioner Jones-Darling Elected

Yes – 5; No – 1; Absent – 1 (Browning); Abstain – 1 (Jones-Darling)

— Election of Vice-Chairperson

Commissioner Jones-Darling requested nominations for Chair in addition to the previous meetings nominations.

Commissioner Fellows provided a statement of service.

Commissioner Fellows Elected

Yes – 5; No – 1; Absent – 1 (Browning); Abstain – 1 (Fellows)

— Re-adoption of Bylaws

- Amendments: Attendance

City Attorney John Barr provided an overview on functions of City Council, and the right of the HRC to develop bylaws.

Commissioner Choudhuri stated any authority vests with City Council and in essence the HRC operates at an advisory capacity.

Commissioner Jones-Darling stated there are certain things Council has authorized the HRC to do by ordinance, such as establishing rules and procedures independent of Council. Mr. Barr agreed, except he does not believe it to be independent. Mr. Jones-Darling stated one of the missions of the HRC is to be the overseeing body of the Non-discrimination Ordinance (NDO). Mr. Barr responded he believes Council is looking for ways to improve the present law.

Commissioner Gaines asked if the Commission disagrees with Council what recourse the HRC has. Mr. Barr responded the HRC may disagree with Council and make recommendations. Mr. Gaines asked if the HRC has the same power. Mr. Barr responded no. Commissioner Hunter asked if commissions are operating as a system of checks and balances. Mr. Barr responded yes and no, and explained Council is a political body and as such must listen to the public. However, this body cannot force Council to do anything, only recommend. Mr. Gaines asked if Council can make the HRC to take any action. Mr. Barr responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Jones-Darling stated it would be difficult for Council to intervene if the HRC were to receive a complaint. He added if there is anything the Commission needs for an investigation it can request Council to provide that through its subpoena power.

Council Member Hunter asked if the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) fall under the power of Council. Mr. Barr responded yes and no. He explained the DDA is authorized by state law and is unique in several respects; it is a body that is able to collect taxes and requires the Mayor to be a member. Mr. Hunter asked if it would be a conflict of interest for the Mayor to be member of that body. Mr. Barr responded the statute requires the Mayor be a member. Mr. Hunter asked who appoints the DDA. Mr. Barr responded members are nominated by the Mayor and approved by the Council. Mr. Hunter asked if Council can remove members. Mr. Barr responded in the affirmative. Mr. Hunter asked if there are parameters for removal. Deputy City Clerk Hellenga replied per the Charter Amendment of 2014 members of Boards and Commission may be removed by a two-thirds vote of Council. Mr. Hunter stated his interest in DDA functions is because they are out of the influence of Council. Mr. Barr responded the DDA is a body corporate, meaning they can sue and be sued. The HRC is not and does not have the powers awarded to the type of entity.

Commissioner Jones-Darling suggested changes to the Article VIII regarding absences. Mr. Jones-Darling suggested amending the bylaws to allow for six excused absences and three unexcused absences. He also suggested amendments to protocol on how requests for dismissal be forwarded to Council.

Commissioner Choudhuri asked what happens when an individual applies for a board and commission seat. Commissioner Jones-Darling responded applications are sent to the Mayor. Mr. Hellenga once submitted it goes to the Clerk's Office and then forwarded to the Mayor. Ms. Choudhuri asked if there is a waitlist to draw from to fill vacancies. Mr. Hellenga replied there is and there isn't, there is a handful of applications on file, but it is at the discretion of the Mayor to nominate applicants.

Commissioner Fellows asked if there is feedback to applicants. Mr. Hellenga responded he is not certain of the process, it is at the discretion of the Mayor.

Commissioner Choudhuri moved, seconded by Commissioner Hunter to table this item.

On a voice vote, the motion failed.

Commissioner Fellows stated she isn't certain this section needs to be amended now, but the Commission can engage in discussion. She added she is an agreement in amending the bylaws to allow for six excused absences.

Commissioner Hicks stated she would prefer to continue to allow for only two unexcused absences. Commissioner Choudhuri interjected it might be too extreme to hold youth members. Commissioner Hunter stated the bylaws outline a number of items that would constitute an excused absence. Commissioner Fellows stated this body would need to have faith the Chair would make the appropriate decision. Ms. Hicks asked if the Chair would make the decision solely on their own. Commissioner Jones-Darling responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Fellows suggested adding accessibility to the list of reasons for an excused absence. She added it was discussed at a prior meeting issues in transportation facing youth members, and be provided information on what is expected of them.

Commissioner Fellows moved, seconded by Commissioner Hunter to table this item.

On a voice vote, the motion carried, and the item was tabled.

— 2019 Budget

Commissioner Jones-Darling asked if there is anything the Commission foresees costing more than \$1,000. Commissioner Hunter asked for clarification. Mr. Jones-Darling asked when the beginning of the budget process is. Mr. Hellenga responded the first Goal Setting meeting is January 22nd. Mr. Hunter stated he would like to have an idea of what the money be spent on prior to requesting it. Mr. Hellenga stated if the Commission is going to request an appropriation it should pass a resolution at this meeting. Mr. Hunter asked if the Commission has asked for funds in prior years. Mr. Jones-Darling responded no, but the Commission is due an appropriation per the Charter.

Commissioner Choudhuri stated funding could be used to study social problems in the community. She suggested requesting \$5,000. Commissioner Jones-Darling responded he sees that as inadequate, and stated this Commission needs to perform professional goal setting. Commissioner Hunter asked if \$5,000 is a feasible request. Ms. Choudhuri responded it never hurts to ask. Commissioner Fellows stated she would feel more comfortable having a use for the funds prior to requesting it. Mr. Jones-Darling suggested a study regarding housing. Also, community forums that cost money to hold. Ms. Choudhuri added this Commission has stated it would like to establish an archive regarding the history of discrimination in this city.

Commissioner Fellows stated the Housing Affordability and Accessibility did release a survey for housing assessments. The survey asks if people have experienced discrimination in housing. The survey has already reached five-hundred response and encouraged the Commission to take the survey. She likes the idea of using funds for an archive. Commissioner Choudhuri added not only to establish an archive but make it available to the residents of the city. Ms. Fellows stated a project manager would be needed in order to understand what to do with the funds. She asked if a Commissioner feels like they could spearhead a large project. Commissioner Jones-Darling replied the Clerk's Office would manage the funds of this Commission. Anything that would need to be purchased would be a directive from the entire Commission to the Clerk's Office.

Commissioner Hunter stated he would like to examine entering marginalized communities into the field of Medical Marihuana. He shared information regarding Oakland, California's Equity Dispensary. It provides dispensary permits for those most affected by the drug war, or those convicted of a cannabis crime. Commissioner Jones-Darling stated Michigan is very particular to whom they license for medical marihuana provisioning centers. He encouraged Commissioner Hunter to speak with staff regarding that issue. Mr. Hunter suggested creating an equity ordinance.

Commissioner Choudhuri volunteered to create a budget for the use of \$5,000. Commissioner Fellows supported requesting an allocation for public engagement, studies, archives, etc... because it will not be decided upon tonight.

Commissioner Jones-Darling Moved, seconded by Commissioner Choudhuri to request Council to appropriate \$5,000 to the Human Relations Commission for effective operation of the Commission and to meet strategic goals per 9.02 of the City Charter.

Approved: Yes – 6; No – 0; Absent – 1 (Browning)

— Chair Updates

Commissioner Jones-Darling asked for unanimous consent to discuss the absences of Commissioner Browning. Receiving no objection it was added to the agenda.

Commissioner Jones-Darling read aloud a communication from Commissioner Browning.

Commissioner Fellows stated she is interested in offering Commissioner Browning transportation support.

Commissioner Choudhuri asked why Commissioner Browning is not present at this meeting. Commissioner Jones-Darling added the communication was only offered after the Commission sent a letter to show cause for his absences.

Commissioner Hunter stated young people can feel intimidated when being requested certain things by adults. Commissioner Hicks understood but there are other community youths that have shown more initiative. Commissioner Fellows stated there is currently an open seat for a youth member on this Commission. She asked the Commission if it feels comfortable with reaching out to Commissioner Browning to understand what his needs are to attend more meetings.

Commissioner Jones-Darling asked if Commissioner Browning took the same oath as other members. Mr. Hellenga responded in the affirmative. Mr. Jones-Darling stated his concern with extending Commissioner Browning another chance because of professional nonfeasance. Commissioner Fellows agreed, but would like to extend another chance to Commissioner Browning. Commissioner Choudhuri agreed. Mr. Hellenga stated it is very difficult to recruit youth members to boards and commission. His absence does not affect quorum and does not interrupt the business of this commission. Commissioner Jones-Darling stated the Commissioner will be given another chance, but if he does not respond an action for removal will be taken.

VII. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE

None

VIII. PROPOSED BUSINESS

- Commission Bylaws
- Presentation from the Downtown Development Authority Director.
- Resolutions for recognition of service for Commissioners Shuler and Saunders.

IX. NEXT MEETING DATE:

Human Relations Commission
January 9, 2019

February 13, 2019

X. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Hunter moved, seconded by Commissioner Choudhuri to adjourn the meeting.

On a voice vote, the motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.