

Meeting Minutes

City of Ypsilanti

Human Relations Commission

Regular Meeting

City Council Chamber – One South Huron St.

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Monday, April 23, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.

I. **CALL TO ORDER:** 7:04 p.m.

II. **ROLL CALL:**

Commissioner Jones-Darling	Present
Commissioner Saunders	Absent
Commissioner Shuler	Present, arrived at 7:09 p.m.
Commissioner Fellows	Present
Commissioner Gaines	Present, left at 8:08 p.m.
Commissioner Hunter	Present
Commissioner Choudhuri	Present
Commissioner Krupin-Carter	Present (non-voting member)

Staff present: Andrew Hellenga, Deputy Clerk
Nancy Hare-Dickerson, Commission Secretary

III. **AGENDA APPROVAL:** Approved

Suggested additions:

Fellows: Update re: Budget Town Hall as item A.

Hunter: Follow-up re: police chief and either a Council meeting or Town Hall
(to be heard at the conclusion of business items)

**Fellows (second Choudhuri) moved to approve the Agenda as amended.
Unanimous approval. Motion carries.**

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 26, 2018

Hunter (second Choudhuri) moved to approve the Minutes as submitted. Unanimous approval. Motion carries.

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE

None

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Budget Town Hall

Fellows: Stated that from discussion with Deputy Clerk Hellenga, that although the cancelled budget meetings are expected to be rescheduled, no date has been set yet.

Deputy Clerk Hellenga: Explained that usually the budget sessions are scheduled for May and the resolution was amended to say that the Town Hall would be held after those were concluded; so it would be before the first reading of the budget.

Choudhuri: Stated that the purpose of suggesting a Town Hall were for citizens to be able to offer suggestions; not to be explained to.

Deputy Clerk Hellenga: Explained that citizens could still offer suggestions; it would be before the Ordinance reading but it would be following the budget recommendations.

Jones-Darling: Added that the department heads would present their ideal budget and then the citizens would come in; that they thought there would be some level of education in it for citizens who then could comment and then Council could go into their final budget process with the feedback they had gotten from the Town Hall.

(Dialogue continued re: the budget process and citizen feedback)

Hunter: Asked when the department heads would consult with the public and their process for getting adequate input into their decision-making process.

Shuler: Responded that he thinks their input comes from Council -- that if they submit to Council, then that would be available for the Town Hall meeting to discuss those submissions, which are just recommendations from the staff; that everybody would be able to read those, comment and then Council would take that into account when they have their first and second readings and discussion about what they want to do. He further added that Council's not going to accept what staff submitted to them; they're

going to make changes to it too. So what Council wants from the public is what changes they may want Council to make.

Jones-Darling: Noted that the Mayor was clear that the intent is that staff should not take up the bulk of the time; that they should be able to do a short presentation and then allow people to comment. He added that while it's not what they wanted, he sees some value in it. He said his understanding of what was explained to him and the way Council voted on it is that the majority of the time will still be dedicated to public comment.

Fellows: Expressed that the form of it feels wrong because the information gathering is happening as a reaction to whatever budget is put out by staff rather than it being citizens coming and talking about what they'd like to see and staff listening. The whole point of recommending this was to improve relations between City residents by making the process a little less backwards.

(Dialogue continued re: the process of staff making recommendations and public input)

Jones-Darling: Stated that the way the Resolution was passed, he thinks it gives a lot of input for Council to decide particularly where this Town Hall will take place and, with that said, he thinks it's important because the Resolution says "just before it concludes". He added that, theoretically, if the amount of Council members needed to call a meeting decided that it was going to be before the department heads begin their presentation, he could see that as still being a case; that there's nothing in the Resolution locking it out from being there.

Fellows: Asked that he read the sentence.

Jones-Darling: Replied that the resolution, as it was passed, stated that: "City Council will conduct a town hall style meeting to provide the community with knowledge on the budget and solicit feedback regarding FY '19 budget priorities before the City Council budget session concludes." He added that it leaves room open for Council to proceed in that manner and if that's what this commission would like to see, that he's more than happy to go forward with Commissioner Fellows to make sure that they talk to them and make sure that that happens.

Fellows: Responded that they should follow the lead of the language, that it's the same amount of work, but just put it in the order that makes more sense.

B. Bylaws – First Reading

Choudhuri: Explained that, as they talked about yesterday, that it goes directly into the objectives but there's no mission explaining the overall reason for being. So, a Mission was crafted, showing what we are based upon, primarily looking at Ann Arbor's Human Rights Commission and the Ypsilanti Non-Discrimination Ordinance. Then the objectives derive from our Mission as opposed to just being some objectives that stand alone.

She continued that given all our conversations regarding immigration, that we would be in accordance with what the City and the County had decided about not picking people up on the street, so why should we say we would do this if, instead, we would be following the Non-Discrimination Ordinance. She added that with that being the Mission, it's not necessary to say we're going to cooperate with all state and federal agencies for no reason.

Hunter: Stated his agreement.

Fellows: Stated that the core piece of the "Mission" is that it says "the Commission works to protect the human and civil rights of the people of Ypsilanti".

Gaines: Asked if by us updating the bylaws, is this to make it easier for the next group that comes in? I forgot the point of it.

Hunter: Replied that he would think so, to expand the language where it needs to be.

(Discussion continued re: suggestions in rephrasing the bylaw language)

Jones-Darling: Stated that the current verbiage he has is "the Ypsilanti Human Relations Commission was created in 1994 by City Charter and codified by City Council in 1995 to ensure full access to the human and civil rights for the people of Ypsilanti ..."

(Discussion continued re: suggestions in phrasing the bylaw language)

Fellows: Asked, if they wanted to go into "Objectives".

Jones-Darling: Answered in the affirmative.

[Section 1]

Fellows: Explained that the language of "city manager" was taken out for consistency because "city manager" is only in this particular section.

Hunter: Suggested getting more specific with the language at the end of Section 1 – "the elimination of prejudice and discrimination".

Krupin-Carter: Agreed that the language should be made more quantifiable rather than qualitative.

(Discussion continued re: suggestions in rephrasing the Section 1 Bylaw language)

Fellows: Noted that she has written, "The Commission shall serve as an advisory body to City Council and shall study problems in the city relating to prejudice and discrimination and make policy recommendations to the City Council to identify and

remove discriminatory structures and practices for the elimination of existing discriminatory policies and to remediate the effects of past discrimination.”

Choudhuri: Commented regarding the length of the sentence.

Jones-Darling: Noted that he has written, “The Commission shall serve as an advisory body to City Council and shall study problems in the city related to prejudice and discrimination and make policy recommendations to the City Council to identify and remove discriminatory structures and practices and to act to remediate the effects of past discrimination.”

Choudhuri: Responded, ”...and to act to remediate the legacy of historical oppression”.

Fellows: Asked if commissioners were okay with moving on.

Hunter/Jones-Darling: Verbally answered yes.

[Section 2]

Fellows: Stated that she thinks Commissioner Krupin-Carter brought up that we should add something about the Commission is going to basically follow the City Charter and Code of Ordinances; that I think we covered the statement in Section 1 and in the Mission.

Jones-Darling: Added that the Commission will pursue the Mission and Objectives in accordance with the established laws of the City of Ypsilanti and City Charter.

Shuler: Expressed that he doesn't like the word “policies” in Section 2; that he doesn't think City Council has the ability to pass a policy that would be in conflict with either the Charter or the Ordinance; that he'd rather work with those two things rather than City Council's policies.

(Discussion continued re: suggestions in rephrasing the Section 2 Bylaw language)

Jones-Darling: Noted that he has written, “The Commission will pursue the missions and objectives in accordance with these bylaws, applicable ordinances and the City Charter. The Commission shall also act in a manner to respond to all requests from City Council”.

[Section 3]

Jones-Darling: Asked if anyone had a problem with the language in Section 3.

(Discussion re: suggestions in rephrasing the Section 3 Bylaw language)

Jones-Darling: Noted that he has written, “The Commission shall invite and enlist the cooperation of all racial, religious, national origin, gender, sexual orientation and ethnic groups, as well as all persons representing various economic, educational and social groups, including groups concerned with age and/or such disability in all areas of the city and, as a whole, shall be representative of the diversity of the entire community and will act as a bridge between protected classes in the community and the city for the development of policies and programs which promote empowerment and a socially just community.”

Fellows: I think it could be revisited again for another reading.

[Section 4]

Jones-Darling: Read, “The Commission shall communicate with federal and state agencies regarding human rights and affirmative action programs for the purpose of making recommendations to City Council”.

(Discussion re: suggestions in rephrasing the Section 4 Bylaw language)

Choudhuri: Asked if, for the purposes of getting through other discussion items that seem important, if the bylaws discussion should be paused and then returned to.

(Dialogue re: pausing the Bylaw discussion)

Fellows: Asked if Section 4 is okay as it is now.

Jones-Darling: Answered in the affirmative and stated that the Bylaw conversation would end until the Commission chose to pick it back up, whether now or at another date.

Krupin-Carter: Asked if a supplementary meeting should be scheduled.

Jones-Darling: Agreed that a supplementary meeting would be best – a Special Meeting for Consideration of the Bylaws, May 21st, at 7 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

Choudhuri: Asked if, due to the hour, audience participation could be opened up so that it could take place before 9 o'clock.

Jones-Darling: Replied, that it could be done if there's a motion.

Choudhuri (second Hunter) moved for consideration of Agenda item VII before continuing with the Agenda Discussion items VI. Unanimous approval. Motion carries.

VII. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE

Mickeila Tate, Ypsilanti: Greeted the Commission and mentioned that she is running for office. Stated that election after election, promises are made that certain things are going to change - such as getting housing or getting education or getting health care or getting gun laws under control; that there's all these real-life issues that are suppressing and oppressing Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor citizens. She stated that there are other issues being swept under the rug – domestic violence being at the top and that domestic violence and family issues that are capable of being dealt with by the State, their workers and administrators are not being taken care of due to lack of diligence and accountability.

Mickeila Tate further stated that coming from a place of a person who's dealt with these issues, that policies and rules in all government offices are not being followed and asks that the Commission address this because in order for the problem to resolve, you have to go for the root. She stated that she wonders, on the other side of that fence, why these things are not being dealt with by people who have authority over us that have the ability to make changes. She said she praised God for the Commission when they brought up human rights because people go to their homes and lie in their beds in distress and that people are on their phones daily constantly trying to figure out who to call but they can't figure out which direction to go.

Hunter: Stated he'd like to make a motion to extend the time.

Mickeila Tate: Apologized and added that she has maybe one more thing.

Jones-Darling: Asked her to continue.

Mickeila Tate: Continued that people are climbing the ladder trying to get attention on things that are being done to them and that, at the end of the day, the fate that you have to eat or the bed you have to lie in is persecution; or, being intimidated because you're screaming out for help and instead of the people who have the power to help, helping, you get attacked and persecuted. She stated that a lot of people are in fear right now, that they don't know what to say and don't know how to talk about things like the housing issue; all they know to do is to keep running up to DHS and doing the same cycle.

She expressed that one of the things she was thinking about is the need to create easy access for housing homeless citizens because, at the end of the day, they still have to live too. She continued that if we're saying we're trying to make this city better, why keep creating hoax in these areas that are causing oppression and suppression because the money is there.

She shared that she was triggered by the Holy Spirit to approach the Commission. When she saw in the newspaper that Ann Arbor is trying to fix something for \$8Million of

some little structure that's on the outside of a museum, her thought was that they're putting big money on all these different projects but people are still out here.

Bottom line, she continued, the top dog on her list is policies and rules because the policies and rules are not being followed from the start - the original policies and rules from the beginning, starting with Abraham Lincoln on down to now; that people are cherry-picking policies and rules and it's hurting the people. In conclusion, she said "if you got a bad head, the whole body's going to fall". She said, it's time to get heads that have a heart and a soul for the people and it's time to get a head that's going to go and talk to the people.

Choudhuri: Expressed thanks, and responded that she agrees with the layout of the ills and the current state of the issues as presented, but asked Mickeila Tate to share, from her experience, what could be looked to that would be one thing to begin a change in the direction of what she would like to see happen.

Mickeila Tate: Responded that the thing she would look to, first of all, is a person listening. She stated that the Lord our God says "he who humbles himself shall be exalted but he who exalts himself shall be soon humbled"; that in this hour that we're in right now, with all the stuff that's going on, someone having a heart to listen and having a pure heart is, at this time, the only thing I could see to fix it.

Choudhuri: Stated that it sounds like trust could be built only if you saw someone acting with a heart to listen in the first place.

Mickeila Tate: Stated in the affirmative.

Krupin-Carter: Asked what office she's running for, based on her earlier mention.

Mickeila Tate: Replied that she wanted to run for City Council; however, after getting kind of a nudge, she plans to run for mayor.

Krupin-Carter: Wished her luck.

Mickeila Tate: Expressed her appreciation.

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS (Continued)

C. Housing Equity & Discrimination

Jones-Darling: Explained that in his conversation with the Mayor, that she brought up some of the things she's hearing across the city which might be worth the Commission diving into. He stated that there was a bit of discussion at the last meeting to potentially bring in the person who handles Section 8 related things, as a primary contact for the County is from the City of Ann Arbor and works with the Ann Arbor Housing

Commission; and to bring in our own housing commission to discuss housing inequities and discrimination specifically based on Section 8 vouchers and other forms of things.

Hunter: Added that Mিকেila Tate mentioned DHS. He stated that he doesn't see this conversation moving forward without some sort of representation on their end. He asked if there was such an entity in Ypsilanti involving matters relating to Section 8 housing.

Jones-Darling: Replied that housing vouchers usually go through the local commissions, which would be the DHS contact.

Fellows: Added that sometimes it's the Housing Commission and sometimes it's the State, MSHDA. Explained the many different kinds of housing vouchers and gave insight into how the agencies interconnect. She expressed curiosity as to how the Mayor would want to tackle this.

Jones-Darling: Shared that discrimination on sources of income with regards to housing was one of things brought up during the meeting and that it is illegal in Ypsilanti; that a property owner cannot, as method of source of income, deny a Section 8 voucher for rental purposes because it is considered a source of income.

Fellows: Stated that there is some movement on policies that are being developed at City Council level; that the Mayor talked about doing an ordinance to require landlords to give out a renter's rights handbook when they sign a lease and that City Councilor Murdock is putting together a package of ordinances that will put some protections in place. She further shared examples of income-based discrimination which is causing a lot of the current housing crisis right now.

Choudhuri: Stated that she noticed the Non-Discrimination Ordinance only mentions source of income, not amount of income as a reason to not discriminate; so, essentially, it's okay to discriminate on the basis of poverty.

Hunter: Replied that it always has been and that's why homelessness exists.

Choudhuri: Stated she doesn't think that it's accidental that there's way more in Ann Arbor who then move to Ypsilanti.

Hunter: Expressed his curiosity as to what Ann Arbor's Human Rights Commission would have to say about this in particular.

Jones-Darling: Replied that that's something he wanted to talk directly to Commissioner Fellows about specifically, because their ordinance also prohibits source of income. So the question is why is the Ann Arbor Human Rights Commission failing to act on their duty, which is then falling to us in the city to handle?

Krupin-Carter: Stated that it sounds like a good thing to bring up at our joint meeting with them, if we have a joint meeting.

D. Resolution No. 2018-001, requesting City Council to display the LGBT Rainbow Pride Flag in Council Chambers

Jones-Darling: Explained his reason for writing the resolution - that it means a lot in terms of being representative with what the City's values are. He added that the Mayor also noted her support and then opened the floor for discussion.

Hunter: Stated his agreement.

Choudhuri: Asked Jones-Darling if he's offering it.

Jones-Darling: Replied that, yes, he is offering the Resolution.

Fellows: Expressed that this Resolution will likely pass in Council but may have some push-back from some corners of the community; however, thinks there's good cause for inclusion and she is supportive of representation.

Hunter: Asked why the "QIA+" in "LGBTQIA+" isn't listed on the last line of the Resolution?

Jones-Darling: Replied that it is debated whether or not that particular flag represents the "QIA+", which is why.

Fellows: Asked if there could be a discussion on that issue?

Jones-Darling: Answered in the affirmative.

Fellows: Expressed that there's lots of conversation that the flag is not very representative at this time and kind of represents the most privileged and bourgeois of queer folks.

Hunter: Asked if this could be seen as pink washing?

Fellows: Answered yes, to some people.

Shuler: Asked what is "IA".

Choudhuri: Answered, "Intersex and Ally".

Jones-Darling: Added, or asexual.

Choudhuri: Clarified that it is “Ally” rather than asexual, that it does not acknowledge asexual.

(Further discussion re: different types of flags and historical perspectives)

Fellows: Noted that there was a lot of public input push-back against flying the Trans flag at the police station from Trans folks in our community who say that it is insulting to fly the Trans flag at the police station when brutality is still an issue for many folks that are transgender. She said she does hear a lot of critiques around standing behind the symbol of flags or rainbow washing/pink washing, so it will probably always be a bit conversational and controversial on both sides.

Hunter: Added that the communities we’re addressing are not monoliths, so when it comes to displays of support for the Muslim community or black community, we understand that even within those, there are people who may not find these flags to be efficient or relevant or positive even. He stated that there’s nuance but he still supports having something here.

Shuler: Added, in agreement, this truly acknowledges this city as very inclusive of this community and that displaying a symbol of what is true in the city is not a bad thing. He said that it’s different to say “let’s put that up there because it makes us look good”, but thinks that we do look good and it’s different than that.

(Further discussion ensued re: perspectives)

Fellows: Stated that people talk about the gay lobby, that there’s lots of money behind certain initiatives and so it isn’t kind of a grass-roots effort anymore.

Jones-Darling: Shared that as a person who came from the “gay lobby” at one point, working yourself into that system is a grass-roots effort in itself, coming out of the closet is a grass-roots effort in itself, getting out of the bed is a grass-roots effort in itself, living every single day in this country that, in a lot of places, doesn’t even recognize that you exist is literally a grass-roots effort in itself. He added that he takes offense to individuals who characterize the LGBTQ+ movement as a massive thing because, literally, it’s not.

Choudhuri: Stated that it is intersexual but, at the same time, we already have some flags, so we’re not avoiding complexity. She added that we don’t have anything that represents our support for or diversity in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity, so a beginning place is a Rainbow flag. She expressed that she would be prouder to be in this room if there were such a flag.

Shuler: Asked if the Commission wants just a Rainbow flag or wants to specifically name both flags.

(Discussion re: flag type(s) and perspectives)

Jones-Darling: Stated that there needs to be a decision on what flags we're asking for.

Hunter: Stated that he can't really make any request.

Shuler: Agreed, stating that he's not really connected enough to make a decision.

Krupin-Carter: Stated that she's not part of the community and isn't comfortable speaking on it.

Jones-Darling: Stated, the Rainbow Pride flag because of its history of activism and what it means politically and, personally, as to the queer part of him, primarily for what it means visibility-wise.

Choudhuri: Expressed that, historically, gender identity has found its first home, as homes go, in the LGBT community so that even though the issues are different, they are linked by acceptance, affiliation and space given.

Shuler: Asked what is meant by "joint" in the second "Whereas"; that since it applies to two different entities, he doesn't know who it refers to.

Jones-Darling: Explained that it's the citizens' joint responsibility – "the citizens of the City of Ypsilanti acknowledge our joint responsibility". So Council's passing this and, like in the words of Council, they're speaking from themselves and as citizens.

Hunter: Asked if it could be said in a more concise way.

Krupin-Carter: Responded that it makes sense in Council-speak.

Choudhuri (second Hunter) requested a friendly amendment to amend Resolution No. 2018-001 with the following language: "Be it resolved that the City Council of the City of Ypsilanti authorizes the display of the LGBT Rainbow Pride and the Trans flag in the Ypsilanti City Hall Council Chambers".

Shuler (second Choudhuri) moved to accept Resolution No. 2018-001 as amended. Unanimous approval by voice vote. Motion carries.

- E. Resolution No. 2018-002, requesting City Council to call upon the Eastern Michigan University Board of Regents and Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority Board of Directors to enter into an agreement granting Eastern Michigan University students, staff, faculty and administrators 100% subsidized fixed-route transportation.

Shuler (second Fellows) moved to table consideration of Resolution No. 2018-002 to the May 21st special meeting. Unanimous approval. Motion carries.

VIII. PROPOSED BUSINESS

A. Follow-up re: Police Chief and either a Council meeting or Town Hall

Jones-Darling: Presented the history explaining a resolution which City Council recently passed. He stated that it might be best for the Commission Chair/Vice Chair to meet with the police commission chair/vice chair to determine how it will proceed.

Krupin-Carter: Asked why that commission was created and why the Commission responsibilities were separated and given to them.

Jones-Darling: Replied that there's been a demand for a police/civilian appeals-type of board. He stated that although Council went ahead with this, they didn't really consult the Commission on it, outside of the Black Lives Matter task force meetings, that were suspended halfway through last year.

Shuler: Further added that it wasn't specifically ever the Commission's responsibility to review complaints; that City Council and the Commission came up with a resolution to form a police council based on our Charter, which was to review complaints only specifically regarding matters of discrimination.

**IX. NEXT MEETING DATE: Monday, May 21, 2018 – Special Meeting
Monday, June 25, 2018 – Regular Meeting**

X. ADJOURNMENT: 9:35 p.m.

Fellows (second Hunter) moved to adjourn. Unanimous approval. Motion carries.