



# MINUTES HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION Meeting

7:00 PM - Wednesday, July 10, 2019  
Council Chambers

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The HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION of the City of Ypsilanti was called to order on Wednesday, July 10, 2019, at 7:00 PM, in the Council Chambers, with the following members present:

## I CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 pm.

## II ROLL CALL

Commissioner Choudhuri	Present
Commissioner Fellows	Present
Commissioner Gaines	Present (8:42 p.m.)
Commissioner Hagenauer	Present
Commissioner Hicks	Present
Commissioner Hunter	Present
Commissioner Rosser	Present (9:08 p.m.)

## III AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Rosser added Commissioner Choudhuri's video about historic trauma to the agenda. Commissioner Hicks moved item (H) medical marijuana licensing facilities before item (D) equitable land acknowledgment. Commissioner Fellows moved item (B) review of current goals to the next agenda.

Motion to approve the agenda.

**Offered by: Commissioner Hagenauer; Seconded by Commissioner Hunter  
Approved: Yes - 7; No - 0; Absent - 0**

The agenda was approved as amended.

## IV APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) June 12, 2019

**On a voice vote, the June 12, 2019 minutes were approved.**

## V AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE

## VI SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

Housing Subcommittee is in the process of finalizing the second public input survey.

## **VII DISCUSSIONS ITEMS**

### **a) Vice-Chair Elections**

Commissioner Gaines provided a brief statement of service for the position of Commission Vice-Chair. He stated that he would be a good fit, due to his dedication and consistent hard work outside of meetings. He stated that Commissioner Hunter would also be a good fit.

Commissioner Hunter provided a brief statement of service for the position of Commission Vice-Chair. He stated that he is a life-long Ypsilanti resident and has been involved with numerous organizing efforts and actions to bring about awareness of housing issues. He is interested in sharpening the focus of the commission to do more actively.

Commissioner Hagenauer asked the commissioners what they have done in the community. Mr. Gaines responded that is an actor and rapper and has been involved with 17 Stop the Violence Music and Comedy Tour events. He went to five schools last year on the Grades Is Money School Tour, educating youth. He has been involved with other youth events and ran for City Council. Mr. Hunter stated that his involvement with government began at military school in Battle Creek through a National Guard program. While he was there, they assisted with the relocation of Hurricane Katrina evacuees to the National Guard station. He was groomed by Mike Henry to join the Housing and Human Services advisory board in Ann Arbor and gained more experience with local government. He has been involved with Defend Affordable Ypsi and Ypsilanti Gathering Space.

Commissioner Fellows asked the commissioners to state their primary concerns. Mr. Gaines responded that he is very pro-black and if we uplift the African American community then it will even out and benefit everyone. Mr. Hunter agreed with Mr. Gaines and stated that he would focus on Ward 1 to address residents' basic necessities including financial institutions, grocery, and health care. He stated that if you improve the well-being of African American residents, you improve the well-being of everyone.

Commissioner Hicks asked the commissioners what the primary concerns they are working on with the commission. Mr. Hunter replied that white supremacy is his main concern. Mr. Gaines replied that he wants to even things out - the Commission has good representation and has the potential to address many issues.

Motion to appoint Commission Vice-Chair.

**Carried: Hunter - 5 (Choudhuri, Fellows, Hicks, Hunter, Rosser); Gaines - 2 (Gaines, Hagenauer)**

**b) Historic Trauma Video**

Commissioner Choudhuri developed a 4-minute video about historic trauma as it impacts communities of color. It will be shown at the next meeting.

**c) Commission membership and recruitment**

Commissioner Hagenauer stated that he is interested in recruiting commission members with expertise related to commission goals. Commissioner Choudhuri stated that a strategic plan would help with recruitment and the development of a commission that represents the City. Commissioner Fellows stated the Commission has lacked members for the past few years and is concerned about institutional racism in the commission appointment practices. She added that it is important to be transparent about the recruitment and nomination process. Commissioner Rosser stated that she was surprised that she was not required to attend a council or commission meeting prior to appointment. Ms. Fellows stated that recent appointments have made it clear that there are issues with the appointment process. Commissioner Hunter stated that an unspoken rule of the council was to establish a new standard of accountability for Council. Ms. Fellows stated that she, Mr. Hunter, and Ms. Hicks updated the youth recruitment material. Ms. Choudhuri suggested looking into school leadership credit opportunities for youths serving on the HRC. The Commission discussed membership, recruitment, and residency requirements.

**d) Equitable land acknowledgment**

Motion to postpone this matter until next meeting.

**Offered by: Commissioner Hunter; Seconded by: Commissioner Gaines.  
On a voice vote, the motion carried.**

**e) Resident and City relations event**

Commissioner Gaines stated that Chief DeGuisti suggested having the police/resident basketball game when school starts back up to have more youth involvement. Mr. Gaines stated that the purpose of the event is to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community. He is currently in the process of organizing the event, but it open to it being an HRC event if the commission chooses. Commissioner Hicks asked why this event would target the youth and wants to make sure youth voices are heard. Mr. Gaines stated that this would be a weekend, family event. Commissioner Rosser stated that sports are set up to be adversarial, so the structure of the event is very important. Mr. Gaines stated that his experience with these types of events have been positive and have made interactions with police smoother. Commissioner Hunter stated that police culture is anti-black. He added that it is difficult to humanize oppressors when there are problems with institutional racism. Commissioner Choudhuri stated that these events can be structured to allow the police to humanize the youth. Commissioner Hunter added that cops kill black teenagers with impunity in this country right now and that should be considered above all else when introducing youth to police officers. Commissioner Hicks stated that it is important to have officers interact with

residents when they are not policing. Commissioner Hagenauer noted that police culture differs greatly throughout the country.

Commissioner Fellows stated that many community events do not have police presence; however, events that have predominantly black representation have a heavy police presence. This issue recently came up with the Heritage Festival. Ms. Fellows added that the Police Advisory Commission (PAC) does not have any tools for police accountability. The commission discussed the potential consequences and benefits of police/youth events. Ms. Choudhuri added that when the HRC brought bias training to Council, they stated that was under the purview of the PAC. Mr. Hunter stated that no two precincts act the same and there is no standard of conduct for the treatment of marginalized communities and therefore has a healthy suspicion of these events. He added that police culture has changed especially after Ferguson, Tamir Rice, and Trayvon Martin. Ms. Fellows suggested bringing this event before the PAC. Mr. Gaines stated that this event is more likely to help, rather than hurt the community; he will keep the commission updated on the progress of the event.

**f) Medical marijuana licensing facilities**

Commissioner Fellows stated that businesses are predominately in black areas with white ownership. Commissioner Hunter stated that there are no black-owned dispensaries in the City. He added that the Patient Station is located in a heavily black area, as far as he knows they have never hired a black male. Commissioner Fellows stated that the Patient Station began to build on city-owned property. Deputy Clerk Stachnik stated that Council denied the purchase of the property. Ms. Fellows stated that the City has a cap on the number of marijuana businesses allowed in the City. Ms. Stachnik added that Council is in the process of deciding whether they will opt-in or out to allowing recreational marijuana businesses in the City and is waiting for further information from the State; they have until November to make their decision.

Mr. Hunter suggested holding a town hall. Ms. Fellows stated that greater public input is aligned with their goals. Commissioners Choudhuri and Gaines are in favor of holding a town hall themselves, potentially in Ward 1, and invite City Council Members to attend. Mr. Gaines added that public education is an important part of this because the higher levels THC play a role in the violence happening. Mr. Hunter added that people's sentences have to be lifted and increase education about how to start a grow facility and the laws related to growing marijuana at home. Mr. Hagenauer stated that there is a need for both an education and public input, which will require knowledgeable people to speak on the issue. Ms. Choudhuri suggested reaching out to EMU. Mr. Hunter stated that he knows a few people who may be good speakers. Mr. Gaines will look into dates available to have a town hall at Parkridge. Ms. Choudhuri will reach out to Eastern. Commissioner Rosser asked if they should form a subcommittee and supports public outreach efforts.

Motion to recommend that City Council seek specific and significant public input to address economic and racial structural inequalities pertaining to the marijuana facility licensing process.

**Offered by: Commissioner Choudhuri; Seconded by: Commissioner Hicks.**

**Approved: Yes - 6; No - 0; Absent - 1 (Gaines)**

**g) Parkridge conditions**

Commissioner Hunter asked about the status of the Riverside restroom facilities. Commissioner Fellows stated that there are now port-a-john services in the parks. The commissioners questioned the need for the fitness equipment. Commissioner Rosser stated that there is an equity issue for people who do not have access to gym membership and good equipment is expensive.

Ms. Fellows stated that there are resource and news communication gaps within the city. She informed the newer commissioners that they have in the past asked Council to address the ordinance that does not allow public posting except on public kiosks, and there are no kiosks in the city. She stated that this has been an ongoing issue. She also stated that this money has been taken out of the County Millage for Mental Health and Public Safety Fund. She asked how the rest of the fund was allocated.

**h) Status of Pen Park**

The Friends of Pen Park had a Community Forum this afternoon. Commissioner Hicks stated she is in favor of the improvements.

**i) Resolution No. 2019-009 to recognize Sam Jones-Darling**

**Offered by: Commissioner Choudhuri; Seconded by Commissioner Hunter.**

**Approved: Yes - 5; No - 0; Absent - 2 (Gaines, Rosser)**

## **VIII AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE**

1. Devin Eagle, BSW student at Eastern, appreciates learning about this. He encouraged the commission to act fast with the medical marijuana resolution and focus on the revenue stream. Most of the state money is going to vets and roads. He stated there is still time for cities to provide their input about where they would like to see the money spent. He added that he was at the emergency meeting for Parkridge and would encourage them to get involved with the county commissioner and their engagement with the community. He works with the youth who are incarcerated through the drug court and treatment program. He suggests involving the schools in the resolution. Education is an important part of this. He has had youth commit crimes after having bad reactions to the higher THC levels.

Commissioner Hunter agreed that the THC levels have not been taken into consideration and the effects are not common knowledge. Commissioner Choudhuri stated that the risk of prodromal psychosis is increased. She added that for some adolescents (under 27) the high THC levels in new strains can result in psychotic

breaks which leads to early-onset schizophrenia. Commissioner Fellows thanked Mr. Eagle for his comment and his work as a social worker.

## **IX PROPOSED BUSINESS**

- a) Choudhuri - Historic Trauma Video
- b) Strategic plan for goals and recruitment.
- c) Marijuana facilities town hall
- d) Equitable land acknowledgment.
- e) Hunter - resident complaints related to the parking meter.

## **X NEXT MEETING DATE**

August 14, 2019

## **XI ADJOURNMENT**

**The meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm.**