



MINUTES

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION Meeting

7:00 PM - Wednesday, September 11, 2019
Council Chambers

The HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION of the City of Ypsilanti was called to order on Wednesday, September 11, 2019, at 7:00 PM, in the Council Chambers.

I CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

II ROLL CALL

Commissioner Choudhuri	Present
Commissioner Fellows	Present
Commissioner Gaines	Absent
Commissioner Hagenauer	Present
Commissioner Hicks	Present
Commissioner Hunter	Present
Commissioner Rosser	Present (7:09)

III AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Fellows moved to add commission appointments as a discussion item.
Commissioner Choudhuri moved to removed historic trauma.

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

IV APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) August 14, 2019

On a voice vote, the minutes were approved.

V AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE

VI DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) Sister City with Chelsea

Commission Fellows provided a brief summary of last meeting's discussion. After some discussion, the Commission decided against moving forward with the partnership at this time. Commissioner Hagenauer stated that he would like to keep in contact with the City of Chelsea's Human Rights Commission.

b) ~~Historic Trauma (removed)~~

c) Commission appointments (**added**)

Commissioner Fellows stated that there has been an issue filling seats. She discussed an article from the community-driven newspaper *What's Left Ypsi?*. She stated that there is a pattern of black commissioners not being reappointed and commission appointments that are overtly unbalanced and unprecedented. She added that it was unprecedented that the former chair Sam Jones-Darling was not reappointed. There was a Freedom of Information Act request to find out which applications were received. Commissioner Hagenauer asked if there were any requirements for ward balance or other representation. Ms. Fellows stated that there is some informal consideration of ward balance and added that other municipalities split commission appointments between the mayor and council. She stated that the current appointment process is not transparent and should be changed. She added that applications should be public record. Commissioner Rosser stated that it is a fundamental part of the democratic process to know who applied and who was appointed. The commission continued discussion regarding ways to make the appointment process more transparent.

d) Strategic Plan and Recruitment

Commissioner Choudhuri stated that the average cost for skilled facilitators is \$750. She suggested reaching out to the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) and the Washtenaw County Racial Equity Officer. She added that they have provided services for many offices within the county, including the Sherriff's office. Commissioner Fellows stated that she will reach out to them and look into scheduling a special work session. Commissioner Choudhuri suggested inviting them to a meeting. Commissioner Rosser asked if racial equity was discussed among Council as a whole. Ms. Fellows stated that individual council members discuss it, but it has not been a focus in their goal-setting sessions.

The commission discussed ways to improve the appointment process to boards and commissions and possible recommendations to Council.

Commissioner Hagenauer moved, seconded by Commissioner Hunter that the Human Relations Commission recommends that City Council adopt an appointment process that includes forwarding a copy of commission applications to the commission that has been applied to, to encourage transparency and public access to the commission appointment process and allow commissions to review and advise council of those applications that appear to help it meet its strategic initiatives and fulfill it's charge, as written in the charter.

On a voice vote, the motion carried.

e) Recreational Marijuana

Commissioner Hunter stated that Council Member Somerville and Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson spoke to local pastors to discuss support for recreational marijuana. He said that there has been some push-back and some people are

trying to get the City to opt-out and marijuana is still considered a gateway drug. He added that there are concerns about not educating about potency. He stated that Ms. Somerville is working with the police chief to make marijuana offenses less of a priority. Commissioner Hagenauer brought up concerns about residue and second-hand smoke. Mr. Hunter is interested in more town halls in Ward 1 to educate residents about the legacy of drug policing and disproportionate prosecution. He asked for commission support to help prepare city residents for the changeover. He also asked about the provision regarding meetings in city hall. Ms. Somerville is working to remove the drug testing requirement for city employees.

Mr. Hagenauer suggested including an explanation about marijuana when the tax bill is sent out. Mr. Hunter asked for the Commissions opinions about opting in versus waiting to opt-in later. Mr. Hagenauer stated that waiting will create more problems with equity. Ms. Hicks stated that there are a lot of uncertainties about the effects on adolescents, but is in favor, as long as it is safe. Ms. Choudhuri stated that she has mixed feelings because of potential dangers, but criminalization is more dangerous. Ms. Rosser stated that she is concerned about big business profit motives and is worried about equity and monopolization in the new market. She also brought up concerns about criminalization, lack of trauma-informed care, and medical professional training. Mr. Hunter stated that there are efforts to address the need to introduce equity in these places. He added that some existing medical dispensaries are exploitive.

VII SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

Commissioner Fellows provided a brief Housing sub-committee update. The housing survey will be open for another three weeks and asked that commissioners share it around.

Commissioner Hunter brought up the removal of the flags. The commission discussed Council's reasons for removing them. Mr. Hunter was displeased with the removal of the flags. Ms. Fellows suggested adding this as a discussion item on the next agenda.

VIII AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/COMMISSION RESPONSE

1. Brian Geiringer, Ward 1, stated that Commissioners Fellows and Hunter are in danger of not being reappointed. Mr. Geiringer expressed his disappointment in the turnout to the Master Plan Visioning Session in Ward 1 and that more Ward 1 input is needed. He added that as a member of the Ethics Board, he is interested in collaboration between the two commissions. He would be supportive of the HRC's decision to advise Council that commission members be representative of the community.

Commissioner Hagenauer also expressed his disappointment in Master Plan attendance. He added that meeting should not be in the evenings, and perhaps should be on Saturdays. Commissioner Fellows stated that engagement and outreach is an ongoing issue.

IX PROPOSED BUSINESS

1. Commission appointments and racial equity
2. Council Chamber flags
3. Youth commissioners and voting power
4. Commissioner Rosser requested information about demographics and attendance to the Master Plan session.

X NEXT MEETING DATE

- a) October 9th

XI ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 p.m.