

One City for All People

**Full Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, June 6, 2016, from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM**

**Metro Office Building, 800 Second Avenue South, 2nd Floor**

**Davidson Room**

***The mission of the Metro Human Relations Commission is to protect and promote the personal dignity,***

***peace, safety, security, health, and general welfare of all people in Nashville and Davidson County.***

**Commissioner Attendees**: Samar Ali, Jeremy Davis, Jeff Gibson, Marcela Gomez, Phyllis Hildreth,

Aisha Lbhalla, Lethia Mann, Oscar Miller, Abdishakur Mohamed, Avi Poster, Marisa Richmond,

Janice Rodriguez, Frank Trew, Peter Woolfolk

**Commissioner Absentees**: Erin Pryor, Ellen Register

**Others**: Felicia Anchor (Past Chair, MHRC), Mayor Megan Barry, **Dadan** (Vanderbilt Graduate Student),

Rev. Bryan Fesler (Church of Scientology), Mel Fowler-Green (Executive Director, MHRC),

Barbara R. Gunn Lartey (Director of Community Engagement, MHRC),

Michelle Hernandez-Lane (Chief Diversity Officer), William Saffley (Metro Legal),

Sam Perez (Director of Policy and Research, MHRC), Hershell Warren (Mayor’s Office)

1. **CALL TO ORDER**:

Meeting was called to order at 4:04pm by Frank Trew, Commission Board Chair (“CBC”).

CBC Trew also welcomed and introduced new Commissioners and special guests.

1. **CONFIRM QUOROM** (Share regrets from Commissioners not in attendance; introduce guests)

CBC Trew confirmed quorum.

1. **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

In consideration of the visit by Mayor Barry and Chief Diversity Officer (“CDO”) Hernandez-Lane, this item was held until after the Guest Presentation discussion (item IV.). Upon concluding their visit, CBC Trew proceeded with the meeting as scheduled and requested Commissioners to review and approve the minutes from the Commissioner Board Meeting held on May 2, 2016.

After Commissioners reviewed the minutes, CBC Trew inquired if there was a motion to approve them. Comm. Ali moved to approve the minutes. Comm. Miller seconded. Minutes were approved with the caveat that revisions will be made.

IV. **GUEST PRESENTATION**

CBC Trew yielded the floor to Mayor Barry. Mayor Barry initiated her remarks by expressing her gratitude to the Commissioners for volunteering their time. She also introduced CDO Michelle Hernandez-Lane, noting that the goal of appointing the CDO is to make the Metro workforce reflect the diversity of Nashville. Mayor Barry further noted that she looks forward to intentional collaboration between the MHRC and the CDO.

CBC Trew thanked the Mayor for her comments and welcomed CDO Hernandez-Lane. In light of her inaugural post, CBC Trew inquired about her vision to work with MHRC. CDO Hernandez-Lane said that she envisions a purposeful, intentional strategy. With the assistance of an outside consultant, her initial focus will be to develop a strategic blueprint that reflects the urgency of inclusivity and diversity for Metro’s workforce. She seeks to forge a relationship with MHRC, creating a unique model that engenders creative collaboration and encapsulates the Mayor’s vision.

Comm. Poster welcomed CDO Hernandez-Lane and said that MHRC’s mission has many moving parts. He responded to the CDO’s reference about the Mayor’s vision, noting that this was the first time he’d heard of such a notion. He said MHRC has never had a conversation about a vision for Nashville; in fact, this was the first time the Mayor had even visited or attended a Commissioner meeting.

Mayor Barry interjected and said that’s exactly why CDO Hernandez-Lane will create a strategic plan with outcomes and benchmarks. She said this will be challenging primarily because it’s difficult to measure inclusiveness and diversity. As a matter of fiscal integrity and responsibility to taxpayers, the Mayor identified the importance of being able to justify expending financial resources to address these issues. CDO Hernandez-Lane added that for these reasons, she will establish robust goals and outcomes.

Comm. Hildreth asked Mayor Barry if there is a distinction between the MHRC’s mission and the public mandate as established by the Commission’s charter. Mayor Barry said she expects the MHRC to focus on complaints, unlike previous years. Though she understands the need for data, she said data collection must be sensible and be used to solve problems.

Additionally, Mayor Barry offered that community engagement should be a priority for the Commission. Regarding MHRC’s outreach activities, the Commission needs to “make sure community engagement makes sense to the people who fund us.”

Comm. Poster circled back to earlier remarks, requesting clarification about workforce/workplace development. He also asked about the Mayor’s and CDO’s theory of change regarding inclusivity and diversity in a minority-majority city—and to address these issues with support or buy-in from the

state legislature.

CDO Hernandez-Lane responded that no resolution or attempt to resolve these issues can be sustainable if Metro is not welcoming. “We have to find a way to maintain people’s interest,” she explained. There must be a “buzz” about working in Metro; word-of-mouth excitement. She wants to focus on workplace culture so that we can get people to stay at Metro.

Mayor Barry added that she wants Metro employees to feel valued and expressly desires to reignite people’s motivation to enter public service. Culture change will be among the CDO’s priorities.

Comm. Poster asserted that he hears lots of different, even conflicting, ideas. He said that a year ago MHRC worked on identifying issues to address. “Our IncluCivics report was reflected in the mayoral campaign,” Comm. Poster offered, adding that it was also a salient part of [Mayor Barry’s] platform. Referring to the Mayor, Comm. Poster noted that she has adopted the Commission’s recommendations to the extent that she even created the Chief Diversity Officer position. The Mayor responded by asking how we can work on diversity and inclusiveness issues together. Comm. Poster replied, “we’re looking at the Mayor’s Office to increate Metro’s diversity numbers. It’s that simple.”

Comm. Gomez asked if the Diversity Advisory Committee (“DAC”) still exists and if it will have a role in the CDO’s plans. CDO Hernandez-Lane said that the DAC has reconvened and has been charged to create a plan among Metro Department Heads to address workforce diversity. She wants the DAC to work with Human Resources to maximize her diversity goals. Comm. Gomez asked if they will only focus on Metro employees. CDO Hernandez-Lane said, “yes.” Comm. Poster added, “yes—in direct response to IncluCivics.”

Acknowledging the urgency of these issues, Mayor Barry said that Metro has to get its own house in order. Economic Development, she said, is imperative, especially since Nashville is the economic engine of the state. Comm. Woolfolk asked how, given the attitude of our state legislators, we can have an impact at the state level. Sensible discussions are drowned out by election year rhetoric.

Referencing CDO Hernandez-Lane, Comm. Poster said, “while you’re building Metro culture, we’re focusing on the community. Will the consultant establish target goals?” CDO Hernandez-Lane answered that it is important to have an understanding of demographics. She is leery about setting artificial goals. CDO Hernandez-Lane reiterated that she wants people to see Metro as a career, not just a job. Comm. Poster inquired that if Metro is so concerned about reflecting the multi-culture of Nashville, why do diversity numbers look worse at top? Mayor Barry said that it’s an issue of retention.

Executive Director (“ED”) Fowler-Green coalesced many of the shared views by framing them within the Commission’s visions and goals to bridge Metro objectives to those of the community. All of our initiatives, she explained, are envisioned and implemented to be strategic, intentional and purposeful in addressing various forms of inequity. For example, The Language Access Survey was conducted to assess the ease with which English Language Learners are able to access Metro services; the MNPD Mobile Diversity Seminar has been designed to enrich trust around community policing.

CDO Hernandez-Lane responded, “I have a sense of what your core strengths are. We need to look at coordinated efforts to see how they fit the Mayor’s vision.” Mayor Barry added, “the Police Department rolls up to me. I’m accountable.” Her primary concern, she noted, is to recruit cadets that reflect Nashville. She referenced the “recruit-promote-develop-retain” model as an ideal method for achieving the diversity goals she’s seeking for Metro.

In response to the Mayor’s goal to diversify Metro, Comm. Hildreth said, “targets are useful for providing dynamic interaction,” noting that data acquired to support those objectives require not just publication, but presentation, as well. Because context is imperative, she emphasized that presentation must accompany publication.

Comm. Mohamed also responded to the Mayor Barry’s position on creating a more inclusive workforce, offering that, “refugees are seeking jobs. I’ve been assisting them for ten years,” he said, explaining that he’s tried to help them secure Metro jobs. But there remain too many barriers, particularly regarding language. And even if they are granted an interview, getting past the interview is even more daunting.

CDO Hernandez-Lane replied she will ensure that Vanessa Lazón (Director of Community Inclusion, Mayor’s Office of Neighborhoods and Community Engagement), develops a plan to address those barriers. As part of her strategic plan, CDO Hernandez-Lane said she will be sure to assess all of the options that are a barrier to enter Metro as an employee.

Mayor Barry concluded her remarks by reiterating her gratitude to the volunteer Commissioners and thanked the Commission for hosting her and CDO Hernandez-Lane.

CBC Trew asked if there were any more questions or comments for the Mayor or CDO Hernandez-Lane. As there were no additional comments, CBC Trew thanked Mayor Barry and CDO Hernandez-Lane for attending this board meeting.

1. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**:  Executive Director, Mel Fowler-Green

ED Fowler-Green said she’s excited about the new Commissioners joining MHRC and welcomed them. She thanked the ones who were able to attend the Meet-and-Greet Lunch on May 25th at our office.

* + - * Update on Current Projects/Programs/Upcoming Events

-- **Mobile Diversity Seminar: MNPD** will be facilitated tomorrow by MHRC for MNPD trainees. The agenda is included in the meeting packet. ED Fowler-Green circulated the Resource Guide. She noted that the Support Fund provided funds for the Guide as well as for lunch.

-- **Music City Iftar** is next Tuesday, June 14th, at OZ Arts. This year the iftar will not have Comm. Lbhalla because she was selected to represent Nashville at the White House Summit, “United State of Women.” ED Fowler-Green said if anyone would like to join us we have a few tickets available for Commissioners. Comm. Ali may be on our program. The theme is *American Muslim: Serving the Nashville Community*. CBC Trew encouraged all to attend – it was fabulous last year.

-- **IncluCivics**–MHRC presented to the Education Committee of Chamber of Commerce. ED Fowler-Green accepted a position on the Report Card Committee. Staffers at Oasis Center relied on our report as part of a successful grant request. Newly-appointed MNPS Superintendent Dr. Shawn Joseph called to request a meeting on July 20th. ED Fowler-Green said she will meet with him to represent the Commission, and welcomes any ideas and messages Commissions may have for him.

-- **Cayce Holmes**–ED Fowler-Green attended a Community Listening Session, sponsored by the Martha O’Bryan Center, at Cayce Holmes on May 18th to address concerns between residents and the MNPD. After hearing from the community that evening, ED Fowler-Green contacted Chief Anderson about what she took away. One outcome was that Chief Anderson sent letter to the East Precinct and he was subsequently invited to a meeting with East precinct and Martha O’Bryan. ED Fowler-Green, flattered that Chief Anderson saw us as a partner, is thinking about how the Commission can do some bridging between the police and the community.

-- **Celebrate Nashville** (October 1st)–Mark’s pet project (Mark Eatherly, Director of Operations and Special Projects). ED Fowler-Green is excited that we’ll have increased participation from the Mayor’s Office. Additionally, after two years of Mark’s efforts, there will be a Naturalization Ceremony at Celebrate Nashville with the Chief Judge. Comm. Hildreth requests that there be a detailed agenda so Commissioners know where to be. Comm. Hildreth volunteered to help get Commissioners involved.

-- **Data**–ED Fowler-Green is excited to announce that Metro has hired a new Chief Data Officer. Keith Durbin, Chief Information Officer at ITS, asked her to participate in the interview process as part of a small panel of other interested parties. She sat on a panel to gauge the candidate’s appetite for open data as it concerns social justice issues. She’s honored that CIO Durbin wanted to bring her on board. ED Fowler-Green is thrilled with the choice that was made and will let Commissioners know the start date.

-- **Budget Report**–At least two Councilmembers filed the “wish list” form–a mechanism for the Budget/Finance Committee to move money around. After our budget hearing, at least two Councilmembers supported our request for a new administrative assistant. ED Fowler-Green hasn’t seen a substitute bill yet, but there’s a hearing tomorrow night. We’re hoping to hear whether we get at least a part-time position.

* + - * **Participation Snapshot**

-- **Affordable Housing**–MHRC participated in an *ad hoc* affordable housing roundtable

-- **Stand Against Racism**–MHRC co-sponsored **Stand Against Racism** with the YWCA

-- **NMAAM**–ED Fowler-Green was invited to be part of a panel discussion at the National Museum of African American Music Think Tank about the First Amendment and artists, partly in response to union police officers who suggested that the union not accept volunteer hours during the Beyoncé concert. ED Fowler-Green will look to see if there is a video and will send it out.

-- **CABLE**–ED Fowler-Green attended the Annual CABLE Luncheon and there was a nice “shoutout” to the Commission

-- **Human Relations Award Dinner**–ED Fowler-Green represented MHRC at the Community Awards where former MHRC Commission Chair Hershell Warren was awarded

* + - * **Future Projects**

-- **PRIDE**–MHRC is a general sponsor this year and will not have a booth

-- **Fisk Sesquicentennial**–As part of the yearlong celebration that commemorates the University’s 150th Anniversary, MHRC has co-sponsored the Fisk Food and Music Fest. We will have a booth. Barbra Gunn Lartey (Director of Community Engagement) participated on the planning committee and will represent MHRC at the Festival.

-- **World Refugee Celebration**–TFLI is leading, June 25th 3-6pm Coleman Part. We are sponsoring the shuttle. They are also screening a film at the Refinery on June 20th. Comm. Rodriguez will send material so we can distribute the event information.

-- **Southern Foodways Alliance** will have a number of events, concentrating on Nolensville Road. Mark Eatherly was very involved in bridging SFA with some restauranteurs along Nolensville and will have him send out notes.

-- **Title VI Training for Juvenile Court**—Barbara Gunn Lartey and Sam Perez will facilitate this portion of their employee retreat on Friday, June 10th

-- **Nashville Bar Association**—ED Fowler-Green will discuss the Flint Water Crisis at their Monthly Lunch-and-Learn

1. **FINANCIAL REPORT**

ED Fowler-Green announced that we were good financial stewards and as of today we still have about 19% of our budget left. We had to spend more money in this last month because of the iftar and all of the events from last month and this month. We also took the opportunity to purchase a plentiful supply of brochures and supplies for the office. It is difficult to predict precisely how much will have left at end of the year.

1. **COMMITTEES**

CBC Trew initiated the Committee Report by advising that elections need to be held for the Executive Committee; Commissioners can email ED Fowler-Green to express their interest. Comm. Gibson asked about the positions. ED Fowler-Green said there are five positions: One Chair, two Vice-Chairs, one Secretary, and one Treasurer. ED Fowler-Green clarified that for this body the Secretary does not take the minutes, but serves as a liaison to the Support Fund. “The bylaws allow for this,” she added. For context, she explained that the Community Foundation was initially created by Iris Buhl, a former MHRC Commissioner, to support expenses outside of the traditional MHRC budget. ED Fowler-Green further noted that the Fund is motivated to pursue more robust fundraising if they have a better sense of MHRC’s work—this is why we ‘re revising the Secretary’s to encompass this task.

Referring to elections, Comm. Miller asked, “didn’t we do this?” ED Fowler-Green said that though we initiated the conversation in January, we paused the process. CBC Trew reminded that we suspended the elections rule in January because there would be so many new Commissioners coming on boards.

Comm. Ali asked if the Secretary could be responsible for fundraising, particularly regarding private partnerships. ED Fowler-Green said that could be a valuable dimension to that role, especially since we can accept up to $5,000 without (Metro) Council approval. Comm. Poster provided a historical perspective for the Fund, explaining that it was created to generate income for need, not just to have money for money.

Comm. Ali responded that “people around this orbit don’t understand what the MHRC does,” reiterating that we should consider establishing strategic partnerships. CBC Trew acknowledged that there may be a need, particularly regarding visibility. ED Fowler-Green said that we already provide monetary sponsorship, cautioning that there’s a fine line between supporting interests and becoming a grant resource. ED Fowler-Green added that fundraising would be burdensome to an already

overtasked staff, and she’s not comfortable leaning on Commissioners because their time is so limited. It could, however, provide resources to fund a full-time position to facilitate additional outreach endeavors.

Comm. Woolfolk inserted that some of these ideas were contemplated in the Strategic Plan and asked if it was still on the table. CBC Trew said that it is.

Responding to Comm. Ali’s repeated suggestions for fundraising, Comm. Hildreth said that as the outgoing Liaison, her observations are that the Support Fund is doing just that. Comm. Hildreth said it will be important for the new Secretary to leverage the system that’s already in place. She explained that the Endowment Fund partners with the Community Foundation, and that we must maintain a relationship such that *friend-*raising remains intact.

CBC Trew said that there is room and time to further discuss this in the future, but at the moment he wants to focus on elections, reminding Commissioners to email ED Fowler-Green with interest. ED Fowler-Green said she will start the conversation by sending out an email.

CBC Trew introduced the concept of a Board Orientation to support and prepare the new Commissioners and re-orient/refresh the veterans. He announced that we need an *ad hoc* committee to make this happened. CBC Trew asked Comm. Poster if he’d be willing to chair such a committee; Comm. Poster accepted. Commissioners Lbhalla and Rodriguez agreed to serve.

Comm. Rodriguez asked if there are standing committees, such as advocacy and compliance. ED Fowler-Green said there had been, but that Commissioners have to take the lead on forming and maintaining them. CDC added that the vision was there, but effort and follow through were not.

Comm. Lbhalla inquired if there will be time to revisit these matters at a Board Retreat. CBC Trew enthusiastically responded, “yes!” Comm. Gibson asked if August 27th could bed a possible date. Commissioners checked their calendars and agreed on August 27, 2016, as the date for the MHRC Board Retreat. CBC Trew said it would not be all day, but only from 9am-12:00noon, on metro-owned property. He will follow up with the Board will details.

CBC Trew offered an update on the Bylaws Committee, which will be chaired by Comm. Gibson and supported by Comm. Miller. He said this is really important work that hasn’t been addressed in years. One of the first matters they will review is the Commissioner election cycle.

CBC Trew asked if there were any questions. Since there were none he revisited the Director’s Report.

1. **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no New Business to report.

1. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Commissioner Trew thanked our guests for joining us. Rev. Brian Fessler expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Commission for the work it is doing.

1. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Comm. Richmond announced that as part of PRIDE week she is receiving a service award at Hard Rock Café. ED Fowler-Green mentioned that Comm. Richmond is one of our panelists tomorrow at the MNPD training.

Com. Lbhalla wants ED Fowler-Green to remind Mark to put all these events on a community calendar (as discussed at the luncheon).

ED Fowler-Green made one final announcement – we now officially have brochurs in Spanish! She requested Commissioners to distribute them widely.

1. **ADJOURN**

Chair Trew called for a motion to adjourn. Comm. Rodriguez seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:55pm.

**Appeal of Decisions From the Metro Human Relations Commission**If you are not satisfied with a decision of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, you may appeal the decision by petitioning for a writ of certiorari with the Davidson County Chancery or Circuit Court. Your appeal must be filed within 60 days of the date of the entry of the Human Relations Commission’s decision. We advise that you seek your own independent legal advice to ensure that your appeal is filed in a timely manner and that all procedural requirements have been met.