

One City for All People

**Full Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, May 2, 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**: Jeff Gibson, Marcela Gomez, Tasha French-Lemley, Phyllis Hildreth, Aisha Lbhalla, Oscar Miller, Abdishakur Mohamed, Avi Poster, Erin Pryor, Janice Rodriguez, Frank Trew

**Commissioner Absentees**: Samar Ali, King Hollands, Sharon Kay, Alistair Newbern,

Deb Palmer George, Peter Woolfolk

**Others**: Executive Director Mel Fowler-Green and Director of Community Engagement Barbara R. Gunn Lartey—both from the Metro Human Relations Commission, and Josh Lee from Metro Legal

**Note**: Commissioners King Hollands, Sharon Kay, Alistair Newbern and Deb Palmer George

were not in attendance because they are rolling of the Commission. For the same reason,

this was Commissioner Tasha French-Lemley’s last meeting.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

Meeting was called to order at 4:00pm by MHRC Board Chair, Frank Trew.

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

Because a quorum was not attained at the beginning of the meeting, Commission Board Chair Trew advised waiting until the minimum requisite number of Commissioners arrived to review minutes or vote on any measures. Commissioner Poster said he will have to leave early because of a prior commitment.

1. **CONSENT**

When a quorum was reached, the Commissioners reviewed the minutes from the Commissioner Board Meeting held on April 4, 2016.

Commissioner Hildreth moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Rodriguez seconded. Minutes were approved with the caveat that revisions will be made.

**IV. FINANCIALS**

E.D. Fowler-Green enumerated essential cost-intense items that she believes will enhance the work and effectiveness of MHRC, including:

* ***Iftar expenses****,* given the *ala carte* requirements for hosting this event at OZ Arts
* ***Revised brochures***, a mock-up of which was circulated for review by Commissioners
* ***Promotional video***, prepared by the same documentarian who produced our Community Statement. It will showcase the work of the MHRC.
* ***Technology***, namely Adobe Pro because it provides staff extensive latitude to produce high quality work. CBC Trew inquired about the cost of this program. E.D. Fowler-Green said approximately $1,000 per staff member. Comm. Rodriguez asked why so much, suggesting that we consider less expensive alternatives that offer a government rate. She said techsoup.org is an ideal option. CBC Trew said this was the government/non-profit rate. E.D. Fowler-Green said that she’ll look into other options but feels pretty certain that we are required to purchase though the Metro procurement process.
* ***Office configuration***, to maximize existing space and optimize productivity.
* ***Resource Library****,*Comm. Poster inquired about resources for the office, including books and relevant reports. He said we could offer an array of materials that might advance our work; we could even operate in concert with community partners as professional lending library of sorts.

Comm. Hildreth agreed, adding that she strongly recommends that MHRC be a library for Commissioners as well as community partners. She said that sometimes there is no substitute for the hard copy. E.D. Fowler-Green concurs with the benefit of having resources at our fingertips and is open to suggestions for books, reports, training tools, *etc*.

Comm. Gomez said she can recommend someone to train MHRC staff. E.D. Fowler-Green said she will follow up.

CBC Trew inquired if there were any additional questions or insights about financials. All said no.

1. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
2. **Officer Elections**

Before proceeding, E.D. Fowler-Green noted that we need to vote before Comm. Poster leaves today’s. CBC Trew agreed and turned the discussion to elections. He revisited that at the December 2015 meeting, Commissioners decided to suspend elections until May. “Well,” he said, “it’s May!”

E.D. Fowler-Green said that as the Commission is in transition and in the midst of having new Commissioners named, it may be in our best interest to wait until June to vote on officers.

Significant discussion ensued.

Comm. Miller moved that we vote in June. Comm. Gomez seconded. All voted in favor. The motion carried.

1. **Special Announcement re Comm. Alistair Newbern**

E.D. Fowler-Green announced that Comm. Newbern has been appointed a

Federal Magistrate; consequently she must vacate her seat on the Commission. She said that this is a big deal because the competition is very stiff. E.D. Fowler-Green will apprise Commissioners of when Newbern’s Confirmation Hearing will be scheduled for those interested in attending.

1. **Budget Update**

E.D. Fowler-Green said that the Mayor has revealed her budget and that we did not receive requested improvements. As to the request for parity for E.D. Fowler-Green, the salary adjustment will be honored though pay-plan. Commissioners asked if it will be at the rate MHRC requested. E.D. Fowler-Green said yes.

E.D. Fowler-Green encouraged Commissioners to attend the Metro Council’s Budget Hearing at 5:30p on Tuesday, May 10, 2016. She also recommended Commissioners to contact their respective council members to support the work of the MHRC.

Comm. Poster said it’s easier to go to the website (Nashville.gov) and send a note to Council Members. Comm. Pryor asked for guidance regarding exactly what should be said. E.D. Fowler-Green said, “To support the Mayor’s budget and to fund a full time administrative support professional.” She explained that her staff is at capacity and that could grow our programs if she had administrative support. Comm. Gomez embraced that insight, noting that a lack of administrative support can kill a vision.

Comm Hildreth said the request for administrative support is consistent with MHRC’s expectation of the Executive Director to create effective, multi-dimensional programming that represents the mission and ideals of the Commission.

1. **Activities, Events**

E.D. Fowler-Green provided an update on current projects and programs.

* **Title VI Trainings**: MHRC continues to offer this training to Metro Departments, including Drug Court and Juvenile Court. We have incorporated Language Access into this training.

Comm. Hildreth expounded that Title VI is the genesis of our statutory mandate to exist. The original reason MHRC came into being is to address that aspect of that federal mandate. She reminded that while we engage in other activities, we must never forget our roots.

E.D. Fowler-Green said she has plans to submit Title VI recommendations to the Mayor. They will not be made public. Director of Community Engagement, Barbara Gunn Lartey, will begin facilitating Title VI training in June 2016.

* **Language Assessment**: MHRC has moved into the community perspective phase of this project. After assessing preliminary results from initial Language Assessment responses, it is patently clear that there’s work to do. For example, we have received “African, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern,” in response to the top five languages spoken by constituents. Sam Perez, Director of Policy and Research, will send a link to the MHRC Board so they can share with community partners.
* **Fair Housing Conference**. Mayor Barry opened this insightful, enlightening colloquium regarding fair housing issues. MHRC attended as a participant and with an information table.
* **Joint Meeting with the Support Fund of the Community Foundation**: E.D. Fowler-Green personally thanked CBC Trew and Comm. Rodriguez for attending the presentation by the Public Defender’s Office to this joint board meeting. PD Dawn Deaner presented. E.D. Fowler-Green said MHRC will be partnering with the Public Defender’s
* Office and seeking opportunities to support their work through more data-driven projects. One of their signature initiatives, *Defend Nashville*, interests MHRC because beyond advocating for more public defenders, this campaign explores diversion as a strategy to alleviate significantly burdensome PD caseloads. E.D. Fowler-Green is also interested in racial disparity re defendants.

CBC Trew noted that one of his main takeaways from the presentation was the reference to PD caseloads being so heavy that they have only seven minutes to prepare for each case. Comm. Hildreth noted that lay citizens underestimate the systemic meaning of this issue, particularly re school discipline. She mentioned that NOAH is helping to address this problem.

* **Staff Activities**

E.D. Fowler-Green said that on behalf of MHRC, she serves on a Steering Committee for *A Voice* – an initiative to address poverty reduction. Comm. Poster explained that *A Voice* was convened to influence public policy re reducing poverty, particularly regarding workforce conditions, minimum wage and affordable housing. He noted that the Steering Committee enthusiastically appreciates E.D. Fowler-Green’s perspective, energy and brilliance.

E.D. Fowler-Green mentioned that she finds it useful for MHRC staff to integrate their work into other entities, including the American Constructional Society, Celebrate Nashville, Alignment, Southern Word, and others.

* ***IncluCivics: MNPS***.

E.D. Fowler-Green expressed that the feedback to this report has been incredible, adding that according to an MNPS official, our “timing is impeccable.” She further enumerated that she has fielded several requests to discuss the findings expressed in *IncluCivics*: *MNPS*, including from the Chamber of Commerce.

E.D. Fowler-Green said she anticipates that we’ll be hearing from MNPS Superintendent Candidates in the very near future. She said that there will be public hearings for the final three candidates; she will send an email tomorrow (May 3rd) regarding those dates.

E.D. Fowler-Green strongly encourages Commissioners to attend at least one hearing to ask questions of the candidates, *e.g.*, *Have you seen the IncluCivics Reports* (referring to the Metro and MNPS reports)*? Do you know about the demographics? What ideas do you have? How do you intend to develop recruitment or retention programs?* She also mentioned that MHRC has disseminated *IncluCivics: MNPS* so that organizations and interested parties can feel empowered to pose these questions during the selection process.

Comm. Gomez inquired if the candidates will be local. Her concern is that when national search candidates relocate to Nashville, they tend to have grandiose ideas that are not consistent with the local Nashville culture. And, she said, they are seldom bilingual.

Significant discussion ensued regarding Comm. Gomez’s concern.

E.D. Fowler-Green expressed that she appreciates that perspective, which is why we need a pipeline and a vision. Commissioners vibrantly shared their opinions about how to construct such a pipeline, how to address the demographic disparity in MNPS, and whom we should hold responsible.

Comm. Gomez, for example, offered that she is not convinced the government should be blamed, or required to single handedly solve these problems. Comm. Miller said he respectfully disagrees, holding that the government is responsible for providing what’s need to lead, educate and enlighten. He further remarked that these are not new issues, but now we have tools (*i.e.*, data) to address them in a more timely, effective manner.

Comm. Gomez insisted that the unique nuances regarding immigrant issues must be further explored and considered—particularly regarding acculturation, assimilation, education and employment. Comm. Hildreth responded that this is exactly why reports such as *IncluCivics: MNPS* are essential—for data illumination to intelligently discuss what’s needed re immigration as it relates to Metro employability.

Comm. Mohamed countered that there must be undercurrent dynamics beyond employability. By example, he said that immigrants and refugees affiliated with World Relief and Catholic Relief have work status. Yet they have no representation in the Metro workforce. Many of whom, he continued, are Cuban, highly educated, experienced, and even holders of valid commercial driver’s licenses—yet they cannot get hired by the MTA hiring managers with whom he’s met. Why? Why are these employable, eligible, documented Nashvillian immigrants without Metro jobs? Comm. Rodriguez, referring to the *IncluCivics: Metro* report, concurred, concluding that we are not employing the employable to achieve diversity.

E.D. Fowler-Green reigned in this conversation by agreeing that Comm. Gomez’s concerns are valid and worthy of further reflection. She also acknowledged Comm. Miller’s views, asserting that Metro currently does not have a diversity plan to address Comm. Gomez’s observations. “You can help us message why immigration reform is so important,” E.D. Fowler-Green noted.

Comm. Pryor quickly inserted that she hears two different perspectives. Comm. Gomez, she said, has explained that educating and enlightening the Hispanic community about working for the government is a cultural competency issue. By contrast, if there are disparities in hiring the hirable, why are they not being hired? Two distinct concerns.

E.D. Fowler-Green promised to revisit this discussion, particularly to craft recommendations.

**VI.OLD BUSINESSS**

1. **Committee Work**

* **Board Orientation and Retreat**

CBC Trew announced that the MHRC Board will facilitate a Board Training on a Saturday in August, perhaps the second or third week, from 9:00am – 12:00pm. He said that Comm. Poster offered a fantastic idea to invite former Commissioners. Commissioners Lbhalla, Poster and Woolfolk will serve on the subcommittee to plan this training.

1. **Bylaws Committee**

* CBC Board Chair Trew noted that Comm. Newbern volunteered to chair this Committee. However, given her Federal Magistrate appointment, he said that we need a new Chair. Comm. Gibson quickly volunteered. E.D. Fowler-Green clarified if he was stepping up to be a part of the Bylaws Committee or to lead it; he said he’d be happy to chair the Committee if needed. To begin he requested previous versions. Comm. Rodriguez said she’d like help.

**VII NEW BUSINESS**

No New Business.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**IX. UPCOMING COMMISSION EVENTS**

E.D. Fowler-Green referred to the events insert in the Commissioners’ Meeting Packet. To review:

1. **MNPD Training**

* This training, branded as *The Mobile Diversity Seminar,* will be Tuesday, June 7th, 6:30am –4:00pm
* It will include guided conversations, facilitated dialogues, and panel discussions
* Throughout the day, cadets and participants will be invited to consider the following:

-- What do you see as barriers to developing trust between and you community?

-- What strategies or opportunities exist to overcome these barriers?

* It’s designed for 43 recruits and seven staff, including the Captain and Lieutenant
* Mayor Barry and Chief Anderson will appear at 6:45am to deliver the welcome
* The salient components of the training have been confirmed, including the bus, participants, and cultural sites.
* We are seeking financial support from the MHRC Support Fund to underwrite the Resource Guide and lunch—catered by King Tut’s, one of Casa Azafrán’s microbusiness.
* We are collaborating with engaged community partners, particularly for guided conversations during lunch.

Comm. Gomez asked if the training is open to the public. E.D. Fowler-Green said no, but Commissioners, of course, could attend.

Comm. Pryor inquired about the design of the training, particularly if the conversation will be reciprocal. That is, since community members will be able to share their views, will cadets have the opportunity to do the same? Comm. Hildreth said that for the part she’s co-leading, the Fisk component where the focus is on the relationship between law enforcement and the Black community, a public model for group discussion and processing will be utilized.

Comm. Hildreth enlightened that it will be essential to build a safe space in which to have this type of conversation. E.D. Fowler-Green reinforced this assertion by noting that many of the cadets are not from Nashville and have never been in a cross-cultural environment.

Comm. Gomez noted that the MNPD initiative *El Protector* has been tremendously effective and wonders if the police department is considering replicating it for other communities. E.D. Fowler-Green said she wasn’t sure but it’s worth looking into.

E.D. Fowler-Green reiterated that the primary goal of *the Mobile Diversity Seminar* is to build something that’s sustainable to provide daylong training for every recruit class.

1. **Iftar**

E.D. Fowler-Green announced that all systems are go. The venue, caterer, and other essential elements are in place. She reminded that this year’s *Music City Iftar* is on Tuesday, June 14th at OZ Arts. She warned that if anyone wants an advance ticket, to call Mark, Director of Operations and Special Projects, as soon as possible because tickets are released to the public on Monday, May 9th. And, because they are in such high demand, she requested that if a Commissioner reserves a ticket, to please show up.

**C. New MHRC Brochure**

E.D. circulated a mock-up of the new MHRC brochures. Comm. Pryor expressed how they are the perfect in terms of shape and size; she particularly likes the way they open up to three intersecting circles describing our commitment to policy and research. E.D. Fowler-Green said we worked with a wonderful consultant. She will bring final copies for circulation to the next meeting.

**D. Promotional Video**

E.D. Fowler-Green said that now that she has a better sense of what her office is capable of, she would like to spend time addressing messaging. For this reason she has commissioned Jordan Bellamy, the documentarian who produced our Community Statement, to create an informative, promotional video for MHRC. He’s ideal for this project because he understands what we do AND has great artistic vision. E.D. Fowler-Green said we’re still in the development phase but hopes to have it completed to show at the iftar.

1. **Additional Events**

* Fisk Community Festival – Saturday, June 25th,12:00 noon-8:00pm **(FREE admission)**
* Nashville Pride – Saturday, June 25th , 10:00am-5:00pm **(FREE admission)**
* Southern Foodways Alliance – Thursday, June 23rd -- Saturday, June 25th **(we’re co-facilitating)**

**X.    ANNOUNCEMENTS**

* Comm. Rodriguez announced that she is involved with Camp Illuminate, a summer program designed for middle school students to strengthen English language skills.
* Comm. Lbhalla inquired if there’s a more systematic way to publicize Commissioners’ activities. E.D. Fowler-Green said she will consider this. She intentionally limits email blast to MHRC-sponsored events. She did offer, however, an idea she been musing about: A series of “Meet the Commissioners” events. Comm. Lbhalla, Gomez and Hildreth readily embraced this idea.

* CBC Trew announced the annual Double Double SNAP program at the Donelson Farmer’s Market. He explained this program focuses on teaching SNAP beneficiaries how to prepare healthy meals with newly-affordable food. He distributed flyers to Commissioners to share with their constituents.

XI.   **ADJOURN**

CBC Trew motioned to adjourn the meeting. Comm. Gomez seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 6:01pm.

**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.