



One City for All People

Full Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 10, 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: Lethia Mann, Oscar Miller, Abdishakur Mohamed
Avi Poster, Marisa Richmond, Janice Rodriguez, Frank Trew,

Commissioner Absentees: Samar Ali, Jeremy Davis, Jeff Gibson, Marcela Gomez, Phyllis Hildreth,
Aisha Lbhalla, Erin Pryor, Ellen Register, Peter Woolfolk

Others: Mel Fowler-Green (Ex. Dir., MHRC),
Barbara R. Gunn Lartey (Dir. of Community Engagement, MHRC), Mark Murray (Metro Legal),

I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Board Chair Frank Trew (“CBC Trew”) called the meeting to order at 4:04p.

II. CONFIRM QUORUM

There was no quorum when the meeting was called to order.

III. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUES

Minutes were reviewed and approved.

IV. BOARD RETREAT FOLLOW-UP

The Board Retreat book was distributed to commissioners who were unable to attend. CBC Trew noted that the retreat was “fantastic” and thanked Comm. Poster, his retreat subcommittee, and MHRC staff for a meaningful, “perfect” experience.

V. DIRECTOR’S REPORT

A. MHRC Commissioner Board Retreat

Executive Director Mel Fowler-Green (“E.D. Fowler-Green”) announced that she wants to review the goals and objectives discussed at the retreat. She acknowledged that several commissioners were unable to attend because the retreat conflicted with a Muslim holiday.

In light of the holiday conflicts, Comm. Poster asked if we could create a “one pager” of religious holidays identifying the ones that would preclude attending public events. E.D. Fowler-Green said that we can, though some are moving targets (e.g. Ramadan). Comm. Poster said we could prepare it as a gift to the community. Comm. Rodriguez said that Google Calendar could be helpful. Comm. Poster clarified that we wouldn’t have to create a comprehensive calendar of holidays—only the ones that prevent people from participating. E.D. Fowler-Green said that MHR staff will prepare.

Three Primary Issues from MHRC Board Retreat

1. *Broad Inclusion and Diversity Goals.* The commissioners discussed and identified goals as they align with the agenda established by Mayor Barry and Chief Diversity Officer Hernandez-Lane. E.D. Fowler-Green referred commissioners to the summary in meeting packet. E.D. Fowler-Green specified that many of these ideas were extracted from the Mayor's REAL Dialogue.
2. *Diversity Blueprint/Strategic Framework.* The Mayor's Office will release its strategic plan for diversity and inclusion by the end of October 2016. E.D. Fowler-Green is seeking opportunities to collaborate and once the Mayor's strategic plan becomes available she expects to circulate a memo to commissioners by the next meeting.
3. *Data from REAL Dialogue.* MHRC has transcribed constituents' perspective of the Mayor's REAL Dialogue. CDO Hernandez-Lane will assist with interpretation.

Comm. Poster inquired whether CDO Hernandez-Lane will be attending today's meeting. E.D. Fowler-Green said the CDO confirmed that she will be joining us but is slightly delayed. He requested clarification on the Inclusion Goals document in the meeting packet. E.D. Fowler-Green said the CDO prepared it before REAL Dialogue and that it is the basis for the Diversity Blueprint.

Comm. Poster said he doesn't understand the document. He noted that the ideas enumerated in the Diversity Blueprint speak directly to our mission, including improving the complexion of Metro. He asked, "is this what the consultant will be doing? Is this responsive to *IncluCivics*?" E.D. Fowler-Green responded that in addition to those objectives, the CDO's goals include improving Metro's culture to enhance retention. Comm. Poster countered that to changing cultures requires changing the attitudes of those who hire—how will this be measured?

E.D. Fowler-Green said that there is an RFP for a consultant whose role includes working with the Diversity Advisory Committee to identify those goals and objectives. Comm. Abdishakur asked if recruitment regarding diversity efforts will be accomplished through HR. E. D. Fowler-Green said it will and that, in fact, HR is currently seeking a permanent new director because the former director is now a part of the Mayor's team. Comm. Abdishakur followed up by asking if there will be cultural competency training for the new director. E.D. Fowler-Green said there will be, and that MHRC will assist the CDO with revising HR's training.

For the newly-appointed commissioners, Comm. Poster requested permission from CBC Trew to provide the historical context for Metro's focus on diversity and inclusion. He explained that *IncluCivics*: Metro received considerable resistance from the previous administration because the report revealed significant opportunities for growth re diversity and inclusion issues. He applauded E.D. Fowler-Green's acumen for shepherding both the report and the process.

Comm. Poster added that we're experiencing inertia implementing many of *IncluCivics*' recommendations because they challenge cultural norms. One of the major suggestions was hiring a Chief Diversity Officer. Mayor Barry immediately adopted and acted on this recommendation. He advised that is it imperative that we remain abreast of the momentum re these issues.

CBC Trew acknowledged Comm. Poster's insights, adding that things get done, albeit slowly. He said it is important to nurture, cultivate and maintain relationships.

B. Financial Audit

E.D. Fowler-Green announced that as a matter of routine, MHRC will be audited. She said that though she is uncertain about the extent of the audit, and what it will entail, it is an opportunity for training and procedures moving forward. She added that there has previously been no onboarding or guidance for her or several of her predecessors. Regarding the scope of the audit, Comm. Richmond inquired about the timeframe. E.D. Fowler-Green said they will be reviewing financial records from the last three years.

Comm. Lbhalla asked about the basis of the audit. E.D. Fowler-Green said bank statements; CBC Trew added that they will also be reviewing purchases and purchasing procedures.

Comm. Poster inquired whether there are other commissions with program plans and purchases similar to ours—especially given the uniqueness of our mandate and how we carry it out. E.D. Fowler-Green agreed that as a commission we are very unique—e.g., purchases to engage constituents, including training, workshops, events, sponsorships, materials for focus groups, etc. For example, she explained, constituents donate their time, efforts and expertise during lunch and dinner hours. To engage them to an extensive degree we offer modest meals or tokens of our appreciation.

Significant discussion ensued about the audit. Commissioners Miller, Lbhalla, Richmond and Rodriguez requested more insight about the impetus for it, especially since one has not been conducted in 13 years. CBC Trew said that the audit is a matter of routine, adding that nothing lavish or inappropriate has been purchased. “More than anything,” he said, “the issue is not so much what was purchased but the way it was purchased,” referring to training for using the procurement system. “I stand 100% with Mel,” he concluded.

Comm. Miller said that this kind of attention to detail requires another admin staff.

C. Update on Current Projects/Programs/Upcoming Events

Current Projects/Programs

- **September 17:** *Our Muslim Neighbor Conference: The Power of Rhetoric and Imagery.* E.D. Fowler-Green said the conference, held at the Downtown Library, was a successful one that identified significant barriers to civic engagement and explored the opportunities to address them. She said that Comm. Lbhalla participated on the Islamophobia panel with keynote presenters and others, moderated by Comm. Ali in the Civil Rights Room. Mayor Barry provided the lunch address.
- **Week of September 26-October 1:** *Celebrate Nashville.* This weeklong commemoration celebrated the 20th year of this cultural festival. Commissioners Trew and Gomez volunteered at World Music Night. Comm. Trew noted that it was nice to enjoy centralized world entertainment. E.D. Fowler-Green said that at least 15 cultures were presented. She also noted that one of the many highlights of that particular event was giving performers the opportunity to be onstage at Ryman.

Comm. Trew said we need more of these types of activities. Comm. Poster requested that we do more to promote our activities, particularly through our own personal e-list. He offered that we consider a protocol for commissioners to circulate information. E.D. Fowler-Green agreed, adding that such a protocol, referenced at the retreat, would be helpful.

- **September 30-October 1:** *Cal Turner Action Summit.* E.D. Fowler-Green said that this was a great conference, co-sponsored with several community partners, including American Baptist College, the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University, and the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies.

The discussions primarily focused on restorative practice, restorative justice, adding that she wonders what Nashville would look like if such practices were incorporated in our culture.

In response to E.D. Fowler-Green's insights regarding the success of restorative justice practices implemented by the Oakland, CA, school district, Comm. Poster said he will send an article by Elfie Kohn. E.D. Fowler-Green also invited commissioners to consider policy and research opportunities to incorporate RJ measures in MNPS.

- **September 7-September 8: *Linking, Educating and Advancing Families (LEAF)*.** This four-week module, entitled *More Than Voting: Becoming Civically Engaged*, is part of an Alignment Nashville pilot program that catered to needs of immigrant/refugee families. MHRC presented and facilitated discussions that explored topics such as navigating Metro Departments (with representatives from the Mayor's Office) and success in MNPS with testimonies and insights from FUTURO students.
- *Language Assessment.* Sam Perez has completed the focus groups and is in the process of interpreting the data upon which we will craft recommendations.
- *A Voice.* Mark Eatherly will attend these meetings until the Report Card Committee wraps up.
- *Title VI Training:* Barbara Gunn Lartey and Sam Perez co-facilitated this training for Juvenile Court.
- E.D. Fowler-Green presented to Chamber of Commerce re diversity and cultural proficiency

Upcoming Events

- **November 7:** *MHRC Board Meeting with the Community Board at the Downtown Library.* This meeting, co-facilitated by Comm. Richmond and Fund Board Chair Iris Buhl, Chair, will focus on the experiences of transgender families.
- **November 10:** *Oxfam Hunger Banquet at Goodwill Career Center on Herman Street*
- **December 6:** *Human Rights Day at First Amendment Center*
- **December 8:** *MNPD Mobile Diversify Seminar*
- **December 11-13:** *National Immigration and Integration Conference (NIIC): We The People.* E.D. Fowler-Green said that because of the expense we've submitted a proposal to the Community Fund.

Comm. Poster asked if we can we hear from New Americans. He's interested in immigration/refugee-specific issues. Comm. Poster also inquired if we can we invite Eric Cole to address poverty-related issues. E.D. Fowler-Green said we should invite both Eric Cole and members of the New Americans community.

VI. FINANCIAL REPORT

CBC announced that there was nothing to report. He asked E.D. Fowler-Green if there's anything the Board should be aware of. She said that we've spent less than we had last year this time.

VII. COMMITTEES

CBC Trew announced that the Bylaws Committee will submit a report in short measure.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no Public Comment.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Comm. Abdishakur announced he will be in a production about the Burmese community called All Saints that will address Muslim issues.

Comm. Richmond invited the Board to an event by TTPC (Tennessee Transgender Political Coalition).

CBC Trew announced that HipDonelson will be producing a show called HipDonelson TV. It will focus on the diversity of Nashville's neighborhood, expressly Donelson/Hermitage. It'll be in the vein of TN Crossroads. HipDonelson is the executive producer and controls the licensing. McGavock and NECAT are community partners.

E.D. Fowler-Green announced that she's seeking recommendations for the Human Rights Day.

XI. ADJOURN

Comm. Richmond motioned for the meeting to be adjourned. Comm. Mann seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 5:35p.

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.