



One City for All People

Full Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 1, 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, Phyllis Hildreth, Aisha Lbhalla, Lethia Mann, Oscar Miller, Avi Poster, Ellen Register, Marisa Richmond, Janice Rodriguez, Frank Trew,

Commissioner Absentees: Samar Ali, Jeremy Davis, Marcela Gomez, Abdishakur Mohamed, Erin Pryor, Peter Woolfolk

Others: Mel Fowler-Green (Ex. Dir., MHRC), Barbara R. Gunn Lartey (Dir. of Community Engagement, MHRC), Jim C. Fraser (*People's Guide To Nashville Project*) Mark Murray (Metro Legal),

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was slightly delayed and called to order at 4:03p after a quorum was reached. CBC Frank Trew acknowledged special guest, Jim Fraser, of *People's Guide to Nashville Project*, and community member. Before reviewing minutes and financial he yielded the floor to Executive Director Mel Fowler-Green.

II. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- **Community Dialogue: July 23, 2016, Pearl Cohn High School**

Executive Director Fowler-Green expressed appreciation to everyone who participated in and attended the Mayor's Dialogue on Race and Social Justice at Pearl Cohn High School on Saturday, July 23, 2016. She thanked Comm. Hildreth as the architect of this project, and her team at Lipscomb University (Dr. Michelle Steele and others) for their leadership. E.D. Fowler-Green announced that MHRC will prepare and disseminate a public document that summarizes attendees' views, based on the evaluations designed and analyzed by MHRC. Comm. Hildreth added that the notes will go up on Mayor's Office website. She requested that the notes be disseminated to Commissioners before the next Board Meeting, noting that "we are shaping the Nashville model regarding the police cadets and the Dialogue."

E.D. Fowler-Green said we will discuss next the Dialogue on 9/10, and recognized that the Mayor's Dialogue conflicts with the MHRC retreat date. She explained that since the Mayor has enlisted us as a partner, she believes our participating is worth revising retreat dates.

Comm. Poster reflected that he thought the process was great, particularly the organization on such short notice. Comm. Hildreth thank colleague Comm. Poster for his comments, and said that the conversation on July 23rd was more successful and productive than anticipated. After the three-hour debrief with Dialogue participants, Comm. Hildreth's recommendation to Mayor was to defer proceeding with a 1000-person Community Conversation on Saturday, September 10th at MCC; instead, she suggested smaller, themed, facilitated groups around the city. The Mayor's response: "Both, and." Comm. Poster responded that the feedback he's heard about 1,000 people in a room is looks impressive optically, but it would be, unmanageable and questionably substantive. Comm. Hildreth said that in her capacity as a professional consultant, she voiced those concerns forcefully. Comm. Rodriguez inquired if there was resistance to a group photo? Comm. Poster said that though the request or orchestration of the photo felt promotional, it was a proud moment to have our name attached to it. CBC Trew agreed and said Comm. Hildreth did a superb job.

- **Meeting With MNPS Director Shawn Joseph**

-- E.D. Fowler-Green said the meeting with Dr. Joseph was short but substantive and productive. She said shortly after introductory pleasantries he immediately connected her to the newly-appointed Dir. of Diversity & Equity, Maritza Gonzales. In the context of *IncluCivics: MNPS*, E.D. Fowler-Green said that she and Dr. Joseph agree that the issues to be addressed at MNPS are not just about HR. There must be an analysis of institutional equity for students and parents.

-- She anticipates meeting with Gonzales this week, and plans to discuss the BabbLine initiative we're beta testing. She's particularly interested in whether they are they committed to seeing beta testing through regarding it being a sustainable model.

-- MHRC will be facilitating at least four civic-themed information sessions for LEAF Nights (**L**inking, **E**mpowering, and **A**dvancing **F**amilies)—an Alignment Nashville initiative to provide practical tools and information to the LEP families in MNPS.

- **Vanderbilt Medical Center HR**

Vanderbilt Medical HR called MHRC in response to the LGBT Chamber policy announcement on which we collaborated. They are interested in instituting a process re self-identification for employees. The VMC HR representative said that the paper inspired them and they asked about local companies who might be doing this. E.D. Fowler-Green discussed options for approaching this and referred them. She is thrilled to be a resource to advise them on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion in their workforce.

- **Current Projects/Programs/Upcoming Events**

-- **September 17: *Our Muslim Neighbor Conference***: We are cosponsoring this event with the Faith & Culture Center, Family of Abraham, Nashville Public Library, Women Muslim's Council, Humanities TN, and Religions for Peace. The event, where we will be leading a workshop on civic engagement, will be held at the Downtown Public Library. Comm. Lbhalla, who is on the planning committee, added that the topic is *The Power of Rhetoric and Imagery*. Comm. Poster inquired about the civility statement that the Board discussed drafting and adopting. E.D. Fowler-Green said she is willing to further explore this but wants to proceed with caution to be respectful of people's rights to speak.

Comm. Register offered that when she was the E.D. at RoundTable, they convened a debate about civility, using Rules of Civility as a basis, and she is willing to offer that information as a resource material. Comm. Lbhalla added that many mayors across the country adopted similar statements, including anti-bullying campaigns and those addressing compassion and civility.

Significant discussion ensued about the issue of a leading the effort to craft a civility statement.

E.D. Fowler-Green said that there's a way o be an honest broker of these ideas—reminding Commissioners that she is not the only one who has to bring ideas to the table. She encouraged them to contact CBC Trew to place items on the agenda.

-- **September 30-October 1: *Cal Turner Action Summit***: We are co-sponsoring this event with several community partners, including American Baptist College, the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University, and the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies.

-- **Week of September 26-October 1: *Celebrate Nashville***: Mark Eatherly organizes Metro Village & Global Village. This weeklong commemoration, to celebrate the 20th year of this cultural festival, includes:

- Sunday, September 26--Caravan Faith Tour
- Monday, September 27-Dirty Pages
- Wednesday, September 28-*World Music Night* at The Ryman Auditorium
- Friday, September 30-
- Saturday, October-Celebrate Cultural Festival at Centennial Park

Comm. Poster asked how many people are expected to attend the Saturday Festival. CBC Trew estimated 60k-75k.

-- **Thursday, December 8:** *MNPD Diversity Seminar:* We've been invited to by Chief Keith Stephens to conduct another one. Thanks to Chief Anderson & Mayor Barry for acknowledging this initiative. She said other partners want to participate. Comm. Lbhalla requested that we consider ICT (Islamic Center of Tennessee) as a stop on the tour. E.D. Fowler-Green requested that that follow up with her to discuss.

-- E.D. Fowler-Green reminded:

- **Monday, September 5** is *Labor Day*; in lieu of a rescheduled meeting on Monday, September 12, we will host the Board's Orientation Retreat.
- **Monday October 3** is *Rosh Hashanah*; meeting moved to Monday, October 10

III. GUEST PRESENTATION

CBC Trew introduced and welcomed Jim Fraser, a professor at Vanderbilt University. Mr. Fraser assisted the Mayor with housing issues during election. Other groups such as *A Voice* have taken this up.

Mr. Fraser thanked the Commission for hosting him and said that the primary reason he is here is to discuss his approach to *A People's Guide* by collecting stories. This particularly project, based on *A People's Guide to Los Angeles*, will profile the oral histories of those who've resided here for up to 50 yrs. These are the voices that are often concealed. The distinction of this project, however, is that unlike the *LA Guide* with three authors, the *Nashville Guide* will feature many residents. He's collaborating with professors and graduate students at TSU, as well as partners at Vanderbilt's Office of Diversity & Equity and the Frist Foundation. He hopes to enlist the MNPL as well. They have secured commitments from almost 100 entries. Their website invites people to contribute.

Comm. Poster asked if Mr. Fraser can give me some examples. He said that he could and will send some links. He explained that the project is guided by a 25-person advisory board and ensures diversity re racial/ethnic/social justice (gender, LGBTQ, youth, etc.). Perspectives from *Trail of Tears*, *Fort Negley Encampment (Black Soldiers)*, and *Worker's Dignity* (advocates for worker's rights and lost wages) are among those who presented at the launch. Submissions can be historical or current. The publication will include guided tours.

Comm. Rodriguez inquired if there will be periodic updates. Mr. Fraser responded that it depends: The book will happen only once, but the website will be updated. Comm. Rodriguez suggested that he connect with the Visitor's Bureau. Mr. Fraser said that's a wonderful idea.

E.D. Fowler-Green asked how MHRC can best support him. Mr. Fraser requested assistance with getting the word out. Comm. Rodriguez asked if the book will be published in other languages. Mr. Fraser said the website might be multi-lingual. Suggestions also included connecting with *North Nashville Heritage Project* and the *Arts Commission* (they have a reconciliation project). E.D. Fowler-Green suggested he consider connecting with *Codes* for building an app. CBC Trew said he can assist with the app component.

Comm. Poster said he'd lived through the *English Only* season, the burning of the mosque in Columbia and other forms of Islamophobia, school desegregation and its path towards a rise in private schools. He strongly suggested that Mr. Fraser consider looking into such pivotal events that inspired impact.

CBC Trew thanked Mr. Fraser for his presentation. Mr. Fraser said that we're doing great work and he wishes he were on the Commission. CBC Trew joked, "Be careful what you ask for!"

E.D. Fowler-Green requested Comm. Poster to make his announcement before leaving for a prior commitment.

Comm. Poster: Affordable Workforce Housing has been addressed by A Voice. The Proposed Bill: If a developer wants a zoning change or other entitlement from the city, in exchange must include certain amount of workforce housing. BL-133. Advocates do NOT see it as a perfect bill. Tomorrow will be the public reading. Mel will make a public comment on behalf of MHRC and will identify as individual citizen. Comm. Poster—if you're coming, plan on by 6:00p because the turnout will be significant. If you cannot come, please write council person per email. Because the bill passed the Planning Commission, only need 21 signers, not 27. He said the most strident objection is from developers. E.D. Fowler-Green said that had five years.

IV. **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

CBC Trew circled back to review the minutes and requested a motion to approve. Comm. Hildreth motioned to approve. Comm. Richmond seconded. CBC Trew asked if all were in favor. All in favor; minutes approved.

V. **FINANCIAL REPORT**

E.D. Fowler-Green explained pay period overages that affected all departments. CBC Trew said overage was pursuant to a privilege tax and was a miniscule amount.

VI. **COMMITTEES**

- **Orientation/Retreat:**

CBC Trew: Too much is happening on the same day on 9/10. Originally envisioned a retreat for new board members so everyone would be on the same page and to get a sense of what the Commission's about without having to wait six months to feel acclimated. Consequently, E.D. Fowler-Green who confirmed that trying to host a retreat on the same day as the Mayor's Dialogue, would be a logistical nightmare. Also, she believes there would be value for Commissioners to sit to sit at tables on 9/10 so you can hear from the community. Comm. Register asked what time? E.D. Fowler-Green said, Saturday, September 10, 1:00p-4:00p, at MCC. Comm. Hildreth said it's based on the National League of Cities Race Equity and Leadership platform.

After significant discussion, Commissioners agreed to have Board Retreat on Monday, September 12 from 3:00-6:30p. Sonny West is preliminary locale. CBC Trew said members of Retreat/Orientation Committee will follow up with Deb Palmer-George to facilitate.

- **Bylaws Committee:**

Comm. Gibson said there is no report but will be meeting shortly.

VII. **NEW BUSINESS**

CBC Trew asked Comm. Richmond to discuss her experience at DNC, a nonpartisan event. She said she had a front row to history and passed around credentials. CBC Trew said it's a wonderful honor.

VIII. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Summary of comments of Roger Freeman: Has lived in Davidson County all my life. Is a freelance photographer. Is here today because when he turned 50 he started having psychiatric issues. He was involuntarily admitted. He requested a police report from a 2007 event, but the statute of limitations tolled for mental illness. Wants to make positive changes and needs help securing police records. Seeks assistance from MHRC. Has no criminal record. Sees our mission statement is to promote the dignity of all people. Has no ax to grind. Does not hate the police, is simply seeking direction and guidance with these challenges.

CBC Trew thanked Mr. Freeman for coming and said E.D. Mel Fowler-Green will assist him.

E.D. Fowler-Green said there have been real conversations about training law enforcement with treating people with mental wellness/illness issues. In addition, there are discussions regarding the value of funding for mental health diversion for those who need referrals instead of jail. If you've reduced your experience to writing, or are beginning to do so, we can connect you to people who can assist. E.D. Fowler-Green vowed to follow up.

IX. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

X. **ADJOURN**

Comm. Richmond motioned to adjourn; Comm. Davis seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 5:29pm.

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.