



AGENDA

**Human Relations Commission Meeting
December 5, 2023
6:00 PM**

**DeKalb Police Department
700 W Lincoln Hwy
2nd Floor Training Room
DeKalb, Illinois 60115**

- A. Roll Call**
- B. Approval of Agenda – Additions/Deletions**
- C. Approval of Minutes – August 1, 2023**
- D. Public Participation**
- E. Old Business**
- F. New Business**
 - 1. Discussion on Belonging Council**
 - 2. Recognition of service of outgoing HRC members**
- G. Announcements**
- H. Adjournment**



Minutes

City of DeKalb Human Relations Commission August 1, 2023

The Human Relations Commission (HRC) held a regular meeting on August 1, 2023, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

A. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm. The following members of the HRC were present: Nadine Franklin, Norden Gilbert, Lisa King, Andre Powell (Chair) and JJ Wett.

Other City officials/staff present:

- Mayor Cohen Barnes
- Scott Zak, Management Analyst and Staff Liaison to the HRC

B. Approval of Agenda – Additions/Deletions

Chair Powell asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Wett motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Gilbert. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. Approval of Minutes – April 4, 2023 Regular Meeting

Chair Powell asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Gilbert motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Franklin. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

D. Public Participation

Resident Derek Van Buer said Professor Willaims' housing concerns should be taken serious, online comments by Alderman Scott McAdams were concerning and he saw a disproportionate number of nonwhite people at an Administrative Hearing session.

Resident Mark Charvat questioned why the draft minutes from the Commission's previous meeting were not posted with the agenda, said an ordinance allowing fines for parents who contribute to juvenile criminal behavior should have been reviewed by the Commission and is concerned the Commission did not meet for four months after hearing from Professor Williams.

E. Old Business

1. Housing Concerns of Ms. Telia Williams



Chair Powell invited Mayor Barnes to address the Commission. Mayor Barnes said it is his understanding from the State's Attorney's Office that the possible housing discrimination described by Ms. Williams is a legal matter. He said he sees an incredible amount of diversity in the City. While noting it is the court's and not the Commission's role to be the judge and jury, he asked the Commission for its input on what can be done.

Ms. King said a successfully diverse community is integrated with access for all people. She said while the Commission cannot remedy Ms. Williams' concerns, the Commission may be able to address them. Mr. Gilbert said the legal remedies can be cumbersome but Ms. Williams' experience of being denied 36 times is evidence of a systemic problem. Mayor Barnes disagreed with that assessment, noting he has seen diversity in all of the apartment complexes he has toured.

Commissioner Gastiger joined the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

Mayor Barnes said after hearing Ms. Williams' concerns, he talked with local landlords. The landlords said they have already removed parts of the application process that could be considered discriminatory, and whether an application is approved usually comes down to the credit check. He said a role for the Commission could be educating the public on the legal options available to those who believe they have been discriminated against. Ms. King said this is also an opportunity to state the City's values, and a website would be helpful. Mr. Gastiger said he would like to see applicants provided with the reason their application was denied. Mr. Norden said he would have liked a special meeting called in May to hear more from Ms. Williams.

Mr. Wett asked if the City could promote a tenants' association. Mayor Barnes said while the City cannot run a tenants' association, it could promote it. Mr. Gilbert noted a tenants' association was created in the past but it is hard to keep it going. Ms. King said the City could hold meetings to hear from residents. Mayor Barnes notes ward meetings are held but are attended by few people.

Mayor Barnes said a lot came out of Ms. Williams' concerns, including Chair Powell having conversations with the State's Attorney, City Attorney and Ms. Williams. Chair Powell said he asked the City Attorney if there is anything the City can do and was informed housing discrimination is already illegal under state and federal law, which would supersede any City ordinance. He said a meeting was not held earlier since he was researching the issue.

Ms. King asked what is being done to make people feel that they belong in the community. Mayor Barnes said that effort is being led by the Belonging Council. Chair Powell said he will follow up with Ms. Williams on the HRC's discussion. The Commission discussed the Belonging initiative and Beloved Community Dinners, and Chair Powell suggested putting the Belonging Initiative on a future agenda. Mr. Gastiger said he believes the pandemic hampered the Beloved dinners.

F. New Business

G. Announcements

Ms. King shared Building Leaders Advocating for Change has been organizing activities for children this summer and encourage Commissioners to come out to the events.



H. Adjournment

Mr. Gilbert motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Franklin. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Scott Zak, Management Analyst & HRC Liaison

Minutes approved by the Human Relations Commission on December 5, 2023.

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