



AGENDA

Human Relations Commission Meeting

April 4, 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 – December 6, 2022

D. Public Participation

E. Old Business

1. Progress Report on Redevelopment in the Annie Glidden North Neighborhood

F. New Business

G. Announcements

H. Adjournment



Minutes

City of DeKalb Human Relations Commission December 6, 2022

The Human Relations Commission (HRC) held a regular meeting on December 6, 2022, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

A. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 pm. The following members of the HRC were present: Nadine Franklin, Joe Gastiger (Chair), Norden Gilbert, Lisa King, Andre Powell and JJ Wett.

Other City officials/staff present:

- Cohen Barnes, Mayor
- Bill Nicklas, City Manager
- Scott Zak, Management Analyst and Staff Liaison to the HRC

B. Approval of Agenda – Additions/Deletions

Mr. Gilbert motioned to amend the agenda to add item E-1, Role of the HRC, seconded by Ms. King. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Wett motioned to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Mr. Gilbert. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. Approval of Minutes – October 4, 2022 Regular Meeting

Chair Gastiger asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Wett motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Gilbert. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

D. Public Participation

No public comments were received at this point.

E. Old Business

1. Role of the HRC

Mr. Gilbert said the recent revisions to the Crime-Free Housing program seemed like something that would be in the Commission's purview but the Commission was not given the option to give input. City Manager Nicklas



said the Commission spent a lot of time working on the model lease for tenants and that was not changed significantly. He explained the recent revisions focused on landlord responsibilities and consequences.

Chair Gastiger asked when the Suburban Apartment complex would be annexed into the City. Mr. Nicklas said the agreement for the purchase of the property, which would have prompted the annexation, fell through. He explained the property remains in DeKalb County's jurisdiction and the City will continue to cooperate with the County on policing.

F. New Business

1. Discussion of Student Safety and the Role of School Resource Officers in the DeKalb Community Unit School District #428, with Dr. Minerva Garcia-Sanchez, Superintendent; and Security Staff: Tammy Carson, Jose Jaques, and Steve Lekkas (DeKalb Police Department)

Following introductions, the School District began a presentation. Ms. Garcia-Sanchez explained last year physical issues were addressed to ensure security and safety while the summer was spent on organizational issues to prepare for the school year. Tammy Carson, Director of Facilities and Safety Operations, said an outside firm was brought in to conduct a security audit, and the recommendations included additional School Resource Officers (SROs). An additional SRO was assigned to the middle schools with another added to the high school for a total of five districtwide. Other steps that have been taken have included hiring the first security manager since 2009, an institute day to train staff on safety procedures and a tip line to discuss issues anonymously. Ms. Carson added that physical improvements have included improved locking mechanisms, swipe card access and additional communication radios.

Ms. Garcia-Sanchez said technology can help address safety and security issues that extend into the home. Ben Bayle, Chief Technology Officer, said the District is alerted if a student is writing about hurting themselves on District computers. In response to a question from Ms. King, it was clarified this technology extends off campus if the student is using a District-owned device or logged into the District's network. Ms. Garcia-Sanchez added they are able to check on the safety of students day or night because of the support of the SROs.

Jose Jaques, District Security Manager, said security improvements that have been made include requiring IDs to be displayed and backpacks to be kept in lockers, restrictions on cellphone use and training staff on de-escalation. Ms. Garcia-Sanchez said they are looking to add more security assistants. She said their role is to move students to class and be available if students need immediate assistance. In response to a question from Chair Gastiger, Mr. Jaques said diversity is considered for security assistants, noting it helps with relationship building with students.

Referring to the increase to five total SROs, Police Department Commander Steve Lekkas said covering the number of calls with three officers was overwhelming. He said while it is too early to have statistics, teachers have shared that the school environment has improved and with additional SROs, there is no longer a need to bring in patrol officers. SROs need three years of experience and undergo SRO training. Mr. Lekkas said few interactions with SROs lead to charges and students receive social services and community service instead of fines; however, he said there are times with more serious crimes when SROs need to act as police officers. He



said SROs can assist with abuse investigations, victim sensitive interviews and missing juveniles and they participate in community events to build relations in a way a patrol officer responding to a school cannot.

Chief Byrd said the goal of the SROs is to build trust and change the perception of police if students have a negative view of officers. He said all five SROs have the right heart to be life coaches for students and the program is the right thing for the City and School District.

Asked by Ms. King if students assess the program, Ms. Garcia-Sanchez said students complete surveys and teachers and staff are already detecting a positive change.

Chair Gastiger said his concern was SRO programs have not gone well in other communities. Mr. Nicklas said this is not other communities, and while some may bring generalized ideas from past experiences, DeKalb's program is working to bring down barriers and is transparent. Ms. King said she does not believe there is a school-to-prison pipeline in DeKalb. Mayor Barnes said while often times national concerns are applied to the local level, the City is its own community and hopes people walk away impressed by DeKalb's program. Ms. Garcia-Sanchez said the program's goal is not to get students in trouble but to support them.

Chair Gastiger asked if there is anything the community can do to support the schools. Mr. Nicklas said there are social service agencies that offer support, and Chief Byrd said the community needs to offer assistance to families.

Resident Mark Charvat asked if tickets have been issued by SROs. Chief Byrd said while it would be disingenuous to say tickets never happen, that is not the goal of the SROs and they try to avoid the use of fines through community service. Commander Lekkas added the Early Risk Assessment Project (ERAP) is a social service-based program operated through the Probation Department to divert students from the court system.

Resident Lynn Fazekas said she had no doubt ticketing has gone on because of a ProPublica/Tribune report and FOIA requests and that she heard things are changing because of state pressure.

Mayor Barnes said there was not pressure from the state and that the City and School District came together so students feel safe. Mr. Wett commended the program for using ERAP. Mr. Powell said the program made sense. Chair Gastiger said he was grateful for the work being done by the City and School District.

G. Adjournment

Mr. Wett motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Gilbert. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 7:43 p.m.