

**Minutes**  
**City of DeKalb**  
**Human Relations Commission**  
**January 19, 2021**

The Human Relations Committee (HRC) held a regular meeting on January 19, 2021 in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

**A. Roll Call**

The following members of the HRC were present: Larry Apperson (Chair), John Walker, Norden Gilbert, Lisa King, and Joe Gastiger. Nadine Franklin was absent.

Other City officials/staff present: City Manager Bill Nicklas and Scott McAdams, Ward 5 Councilman and Council Liaison to the HRC.

**B. Appointment of Meeting Secretary**

Due to the City of DeKalb's Zoom license only allowing one Zoom broadcast at a time, the Planning & Zoning Commission also meeting tonight will be the commission broadcast. The HRC meeting is being video recorded. The Chair, Larry Apperson will also take minutes. *(Note: Unfortunately, the video camera did not record this meeting.)*

**C. Approval of Agenda – Additions/Deletions**

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Joe Gastiger and seconded by Lisa King. The agenda was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

**D. Approval of Minutes – November 10, 2020 Regular Meeting**

A motion was made by Joe Gastiger with a second from Norden Gilbert to approve the minutes of November 10, 2020. The Minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

**E. Public Participation**

There were no community members present.

## **F. Old Business**

### **1. Police-Community Relations**

City Manager, Bill Nicklas was present to update the HRC on several areas regarding police and community relationships.

City Manager, Nicklas first handed out a summary of HB 3653, titled "Statewide Use of Force Standardization Act." This act was passed by the Illinois Legislature on January 13, 2021. This bill was part of a package of legislation developed and introduced by the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus. In addition to municipal reforms, HB 3653 also covered several reforms within the Illinois State Police agency, correctional institutions, the state courts and county States Attorney offices. The city manager briefly reviewed the sections of the act that made reforms to municipal police agencies. He was pleased to report that the City of DeKalb Police Department had already made the changes for municipal police required in the act. The issue of changing the "qualified immunity" section currently included in most Illinois police union contracts with municipalities was referred to a Task Force on Constitutional Rights and Remedies appointed by the Governor.

City Manager Nicklas also updated the HRC on the status of applications for the next Chief of Police. There are currently 27 applications. The city has appointed a Police Chief Search Committee that includes 8 community representatives that reflects the diversity of the city. Two of the eight members include two from the HRC; Lisa King and John Walker. The first meeting of this search committee will be this Thursday. Alderman Scott asked if 27 was a typical number of applicants for a chief's position? Nicklas indicated that he thought 35-40 as typical. Norden Gilbert asked if there had been any screening of the 27 applicants to make sure they met the minimal qualifications to apply? The city manager indicated that this had not yet been done with today, Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>, being the deadline for applications. The city manager also said the timeline for hiring is before the April upcoming mayoral election.

The city manager also updated the HRC on police cameras. He indicated that all DeKalb police are either wearing one now or are in process of completing their camera training.

Chair Apperson asked how the use of our part-time social workers was going. City Manager Nicklas indicated that officers are now taking the social worker with them on appropriate calls. The DeKalb County Mental Health Board and Northwestern Behavioral Health division are both recommending that the city use at least two full-time community mental health workers instead of 3 part-time workers. This step will take some additional funding. The idea

received support from those present.

Joe Gastiger asked if any changes from the state bill concerning the use of projectiles by police and would this apply to the National Guard? City Manager Nicklas stated that the bill only applies to state and local police forces, not the National Guard. The use of projectiles or tasers is based on only using them when needed to avoid the use of lethal force. The city does have tasers said City Manager Nicklas. However, he was not sure if the city has any type of projectiles.

The city manager concluded that he believes the City of DeKalb has grown a lot in the past 10 months with the many changes made in the police department.

## **2. Landlord-Tenant Review (Continued)**

### **a. Tenant Legal Services**

Chair Apperson handed out a list of potential legal services that may be needed by DeKalb tenants. He requested that HRC Commissioners review the list and let him know if they have any additions of services. The DeKalb Tenant Association has also been given this list of services. Once any updates to this list are made, the plan is to have the DeKalb Tenant Association met with the NIU Legal Services Clinic to review this list of needed services and determine what assistance the clinic can provide. It will be up to the tenant association and the legal services clinic to formalize any agreement on legal services.

Joe Gastiger recommended that the N.I.U. International Student Office be involved with knowledge of these legal services. These students have a history in DeKalb of not getting their security deposits returned. In addition to their ability to access the on-campus legal service for NIU students, the additional services from the NIU Legal Services Clinic may be advantageous for international students.

### **b. Landlord-Tenant Ordinance, Chapter 10**

Chair Apperson handed out the latest draft (1/18/21) of changes to the City of DeKalb, Chapter 10, Landlord-Tenant Regulations. This is the second draft, the first of which was reviewed at the October 6, 2020 HRC meeting.

The chair requested that HRC Commissioners review this 2<sup>nd</sup> draft so we can finalize the sections for which we want to recommend changes to the City Council.

Chair Apperson also said the HRC still needs to discuss and decide about requiring all rental properties to use a common lease or only display a recommended model lease as is the current case. Secondly, he said the HRC still needs to investigate the legal difference between the city's current registration of all rental units versus the city moving to licensing rental properties. He said that the City Attorney may be able to tell us more about licensing laws of rental properties. Chair Apperson will ask the City Manager about having the City Attorney review the laws and authority of licensing rental properties.

Next there followed a number of suggestions and reactions from the commissioners and alderman present.

John Walker in response to the topics already discussed commented that he felt it was time to get the ball rolling. Alderman McAdams indicated agreement and mentioned his friend had not gotten back her security deposit. Joe Gastiger wondered if the new special TIF district dollars could help staff to manage the multiple Zoom needs. However, the city in this latest TIP agreement has pledged not to use TIP dollars for any salaries.

Next Lisa King and John Walker both reiterated the importance of having the landlord at Gideon Court attend an HRC meeting. Lisa King mentioned that Katherine Crews at Gideon Court has made great strides and has some type of legal association and University Village has also made progress. The HRC should know what was done to turn things around. Joe Gastiger thought we should consider recognizing these landlords at a city council meeting. These various comments ended by the HRC Commissioners reaffirming their decision to invite the Gideon Court landlord and a representative from DARA to attend our February 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. Alderman McAdams urged the HRC to get a request in for the additional staff to enforce aspects of the Chapter 10 Ordinance and to cover Zoom meetings well before the November Council Meeting scheduled to make decisions on the new budget. He said a mid-summer submission is best. He also commended that there are two landlords in DeKalb that have been problematic and he believed there are maybe as much as 50% of DARA members who would support a common lease.

John Walker thanked Alderman McAdams for coming to the HRC meetings and he appreciated what Alderman McAdams had done for the town.

Concerns about the city's Zoom license were next made. There was agreement from those present that our license only allows for one commission meeting to be broadcast if two are scheduled at the same time. Lisa King felt this was a "crazy" situation. Chair Apperson stated that this may also occur if the city does not have enough staff to be the host to more than one meeting. Joe Gastiger felt we need to do better to make sure the community can access the meeting virtually. He wondered if he could be the Zoom host, if no staff were available at the city. Commissioner John Walker has a meeting with Bill Nicklas tomorrow. He will ask about the city Zoom license and what about resolving these discussed Zoom issues. John will email Larry and Lisa what he finds out about the city Zoom situation.

#### **G. New Business**

##### **1. Human Relations Commission Meeting Schedule**

Chair Apperson reviewed the upcoming HRC meeting schedule stating that we once again conflict with the Zoom broadcasting for the Planning and Zoning Commission on our Feb. 16<sup>th</sup> meeting date. Also, our next meeting is March 2<sup>nd</sup> which is only two weeks after the Feb. 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. Therefore, he recommended we cancel the February 16<sup>th</sup> meeting and meet next on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Most of the HRC members felt the urgency to meet with the DARA representative and the Gideon Court landlord needs to occur sooner than March. It was decided to still meet on February 16<sup>th</sup> in hopes the two invitees could attend.

#### **H. Adjournment**

Hearing no more questions or announcements, Norden Gilbert made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Joe Gastiger. Adjournment was approved by a unanimous voice vote at 8:24 pm.

**\*PLEASE NOTE\* Due to video camera problems, these minutes are the only record of this meeting.**

Larry Apperson, Chair HRC

Minutes approved by the Human Relations Commission on 02/16/21 .

