



**Minutes
City of DeKalb
Human Relations Commission
February 16, 2021**

The Human Relations Committee (HRC) held a regular meeting on February 16, 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, Nadine Franklin, and Joe Gastiger.

Other City officials/staff present:

- Bill Nicklas, City Manager
- Scott McAdams, Ward 5 Councilmen and Council Liaison to the HRC.
- Joshua Boldt, Assistant City Manager and Staff Liaison to the HRC

Local Landlords and Property Managers invited to the meeting:

- Kristine Crews, Gideon Court Manager
- Will Heinisch, DeKalb Area Rental Assoc. member and Rental Unit Owner/Landlord
- Mike Pittsley, Pittsley Realty, and DeKalb Area Rental Assoc. member

B. Approval of Agenda – Additions/Deletions

Larry Apperson communicated he wished to add a Zoom Licensing update to the Old Business Section under (E3; See below). A motion was made by Norden Gilbert and Seconded by Joe Gastiger to approve the agenda with a Zoom discussion added under E-3. The agenda was approved by a 6-0 vote.

C. Approval of Minutes – January 19, 2021 Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Joe Gastiger with a second from John Walker to approve the minutes of January 19, 2021. The Minutes were approved by a 6-0 vote.

D. Public Participation

There were no community members present or virtually, besides invitees.

E. Old Business

1. Police-Community Relations

Bill Nicklas updated the HRC on the progress of the Police Chief search as well as how the Search Committee has done as a team. Bill Nicklas offered positive feedback and conversation ensued.



Larry Apperson asked about any updates on the House Bill being considered by the State of Illinois entitled, *Statewide Use of Force Standardization Act*. Bill Nicklas indicated that there was nothing definitive to report on the bill's progress, but the Task Force to consider some of the aspects of the bill is close to being formed.

Bill Nicklas introduced Joshua Boldt as Assist. City Manager and this is his first HRC meeting as the new city staff liaison to the HRC. Joshua Boldt related that he is a 2010 N.I.U. graduate with an MPA degree, from Stockton, Illinois and has been working recently with the Finance and Human Resources Departments along with assisting with the city budget development. Bill Nicklas also informed the HRC about Scott Zak (not present) who is assisting the city with marketing projects.

2. Landlord-Tenant Review (Continued)

a. Tenant Legal Services

Larry Apperson provided a description of the community and housing issues leading to this discussion. Larry Apperson provided all present HRC members and guests with a 3rd Draft of suggested changes to the Chapter 10 Landlord-Tenant Ordinance for HRC consideration. Larry Apperson discussed 10.06 (Code Violation Disclosure) and 10.07 (Tenant's Right to Lease) in the draft as examples of changes intended to provide tenants with more authority over their leases. Chair Apperson also updated the HRC that cooperation between the DeKalb Tenant Association and the NIU Legal Services Clinic for tenant legal services had been delayed. There may be a change in leadership with the DeKalb Tenant Association. If so, Chair Apperson and HRC Commissioner, Norden Gilbert, may need to schedule a meeting with the NIU Legal Services Clinic to review the list of legal services that the tenant association has indicated are needed.

Bill Nicklas offered that identifying the most egregious issues in the Chapter 10 ordinance would be helpful for a discussion with the landlord representatives.

Joe Gastiger offered the suggestion that Chapter 10 violations could result in quicker resolution by landlords if rental properties were licensed by the city. A rental property losing their license for not addressing code violations would mean losing rental income. Conversation ensued about the positive and negatives on the city licensing rental property.

Other Property Management issues were discussed. Suggestions and reactions were received from Commissioners, Staff, and Guests. Bill Nicklas provided a legal update regarding property city code violations.

After this update, Lisa King suggested to next hear from the DeKalb Landlord guests on the ordinance and their successes as property managers.



b. Discussion with DeKalb Landlords

Kristine Crews, Gideon Court Manager, provided before and after photographs of their property. Kristine Crews communicated property management best practices to the HRC. She believes the most useful initiative would be a push to better educate tenants.

Will Heinisch commented that putting more pressure on the courts and state's attorney to go after the problem landlords would be more effective than licensing property owners. The current registration of property owners accomplishes the important aspect of the city having the contact information of owners and landlords.

Kristine Crews mentioned that Gideon Court had formed a council of tenants. They purchased the property and in building relationships with tenants, the complex turned around. She felt building relationships between the landlord and tenants was the key. A management versus tenant attitude was no good for all. Larry Apperson asked Kristine if she thought providing more manager relationship training would be important. Kristine and others didn't believe more training would improve the attitude toward tenants by the poor managers.

Joe Gastiger asked about a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District in the Annie Glidden North area. He thought such TIF dollars could be used for more code enforcement employees. Joe Gastiger further commented that the community lacks an understanding of how much the derelict property management costs us.

Bill Nicklas related the recent history with TIF and the need to re-establish credibility with other taxing bodies before embarking on further TIF endeavors. Bill Nicklas commented that the most important point was to have a collaborative effort between HRC/City and the owners/landlords to identify issues to be worked on together.

John Walker believed we need to get something done given we have places like 808 Ridge that have been like a war zone.

Lisa King suggested the HRC produce a tenant's rights document for new tenants and the appropriate medium for distribution.

Norden Gilbert recommended that cars being towed for tenants being behind in rent is another issue that a combined group could work on. Norden commented that it makes no sense to tow tenant's cars so they can't get to work to earn money to pay the rent.

Joshua Boldt spoke about the value of property surveillance cameras to deter crime.



Joe Gastiger mentioned his concerns about renters and in particular NIU international students forfeiting their security deposits. International students leaving NIU to return to their home country don't always leave their home country address with their landlord or even if they do leave a home address, a few landlords simply keep the security deposit. Chair Apperson suggested that landlords without the home country address could talk with the NIU International Student Office about options to mail the legitimate amount of the security deposit to the departed international student.

Larry Apperson confirmed with Guest, Mike Pittsley, that Mike will find the appropriate Annie Glidden North committee for the HRC to collaborate with on these discussed issues.

3. ZOOM Licensing

Joshua Boldt discussed the cost of Zoom on a per license basis. Joshua Boldt deferred to Larry Apperson and HRC to communicate their preferences on how they wish to provide public participation and viewership. Larry Apperson stated the HRC would prefer participation and viewership to be remotely accessible. Bill Nicklas and Joshua Boldt stated they would present options at a future date.

G. New Business - None.

H. Adjournment

Before calling for a motion to adjourn, Chair Apperson asked the commissioners about still holding the March 2nd, 2021 HRC Meeting. Since in just two weeks there would-be little progress or updates on issues discussed tonight, it was moved by John Walker and Seconded by Norden Gilbert to cancel the March 2, 2021 HRC Meeting. This motion was approved by a 6-0 vote. The next HRC Meeting will now be April 6, 2021.

A motion to adjourn was provided for by Norden Gilbert and Seconded by John Walker. Approved by a 6-0 vote.

Joshua Boldt, Assist. City Manager & HRC Liaison

Minutes approved by the Human Relations Commission on 04/06/2021 .