



## **Minutes**

### **City of DeKalb Human Relations Commission April 4, 2023**

The Human Relations Commission (HRC) held a regular meeting on April 4, 2023, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

#### **A. Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm. The following members of the HRC were present: Nadine Franklin, Joe Gastiger (Chair), Norden Gilbert, Lisa King. Commissioner Powell joined the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Other City officials/staff present:

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

#### **B. Approval of Agenda – Additions/Deletions**

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

#### **C. Approval of Minutes – December 6, 2022 Regular Meeting**

Chair Gastiger asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Gilbert motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. King.

Chair Gastiger said he wanted to clarify a statement in the minutes that said, “Chair Gastiger said his concern was SRO programs have not gone well in other communities.” He clarified it is the American Civil Liberties Union that has raised concerns about police presence in school; although, he said was impressed by the presentation on student safety and School Resource Officers provided by DeKalb School District and City officials at the Commission’s December meeting.

The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

#### **D. Public Participation**

Resident Mark Cordes, who is retired from Northern Illinois University (NIU), introduced Telia Williams, who was hired recently as a professor at the NIU School of Law.

Ms. Williams said she moved from Nevada, where she had a home, a couple vehicles and lived in apartments in the past, so she did not expect any problems finding a place to live in DeKalb when she arrived in August. However, she said she and her husband have been living in a hotel because they have been unsuccessful



finding a home or apartment to rent. She has made 36 inquiries on rentals. Initially, Ms. Williams was told by realtors there was a tight market but when she applied for a rental in January, she was told she was not qualified. She said she met the income requirements, does not have a criminal background, and she does not believe she was denied because of her credit. Mrs. Williams said she talked with colleagues, who are also Black and said that they have had similar experiences. She said she believes there is a housing discrimination problem endemic to Illinois and possibly DeKalb. She has since been able to secure a rental through another professor.

Chair Gastiger said he was ashamed she had been treated that way. Responding to a question, Ms. Williams said she was not given a specific reason for the denials. Ms. King apologized for the situation and said while apartment complexes may be tight at the beginning of the school year, new housing has been built. Commissioners offered ideas for housing, but Chair Gastiger said that does not address the larger problem that could affect the recruitment of minority professors. He has encouraged an orientation for information sharing and there has been a guide in the past. Mr. Gilbert said the Illinois Department of Human Rights handles such complaints but the process is difficult. Mr. Zak suggested consulting with the DeKalb County State's Attorney's Office. Commissioners said the Mayor and local landlord organization should be invited to a meeting. Chair Gastiger said at a minimum, Ms. Williams should have been given a reason for the denial.

Resident Lynn Fazekas commented on the last Commission meeting on student safety and School Resource Officers. She said it is the policy of the Illinois Board of Education that students not be ticketed. She said she hopes it is not happening, but it is in the City's contract with the School District that School Resource Officers can issue tickets.

## **E. Old Business**

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

Mr. Zak reported that the City Council in January approved releasing a Request for Proposals for the vacant City-owned property at West Hillcrest Drive and Blackhawk Road. The RFP was developed with public input gathered through two listening sessions held by the City Council and a series of four focus groups held by Opportunity DeKalb. The RFP included a list of 12 uses the public would like to see on the property. Applicants must explain how their proposals meet community objectives. The proposals will be brought to the Council on April 10. Ms. King said the list of uses looked like good ideas, and Mr. Gilbert said it was exciting to see something happening.

## **F. New Business**

## **G. Announcements**

Mr. Zak shared requirements for boards and commissions recently approved by the City Council. New and reappointed members will have to complete Open Meetings Act training, the Mayor may remove a commission member with the support of 2/3 of the Council and public participation is limited to three minutes each. When asked the reasoning for three minutes for public participation, Mr. Zak said this is the practice of the City Council and brings consistency to how public comments are received across the boards and



commissions, so the public knows what to expect when attending meetings. He said lengthier discussions can be added to future agendas so the public knows in advance that a topic will be discussed. Chair Gastiger said he was not happy with the requirement and that time limits could be put into place if there was a large crowd. Chair Gastiger and Ms. King said a time limit would discourage from a give-and-take discussion with members of the public.

#### **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 7:00 p.m.

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**Scott Zak, Management Analyst & HRC Liaison**

**Minutes approved by the Human Relations Commission on August 1, 2023.**