

**MINUTES  
CITY OF DEKALB  
Human Relations Commission  
June 16, 2020**

The Human Relations Committee (HRC) held a regular meeting on June 16, 2020, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Larry Apperson called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

Deanna Cada from the DeKalb County Mental Health Board was the facilitator of the Zoom feature for this meeting.

**A. ROLL CALL**

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

Members absent were: Tyrus Wright.

Other City officials/staff present: Mayor Jerry Smith, Alderman Carolyn Morris, Alderman Scott McAdams, Alderman Tony Faivre, City Manager Bill Nicklas, Acting Police Chief Bob Redel, Community Services Coordinator Joanne Rouse, Commander Craig Woodruff, Commander Jason Leverton, Management Analyst Jason Blumenthal, and Management Intern Adam Grubbs.

**B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA – ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Gilbert and seconded by Mr. Gastiger. Motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

**C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion to approve the minutes of March 3, 2020 was made by Mr. Gastiger and seconded by Ms. King. Minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

**D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Chair Apperson called for public comment and stated that anyone who would like to speak will have the chance to.

The first member of the public to speak was Maurice McDavid. Mr. McDavid said that he appreciated the ability to join the conversation. He is hopeful that this will be more than a conversation. He wants to make sure we are being active. There needs to be a standing and active citizen police relations advisory board separate from the police department. He wants an opportunity to see the diversity reflected where decisions are being made. He is proud of his former students protesting. There needs to be diverse voices and experiences at the table. Citizens need to be a part of the problem-solving process. There has been mistrust in government for awhile, but he is hopeful that we can build trust.

Next to speak was Sasha Cohen. Mr. Cohen said that simple reform is not the answer. There needs to be a rebuild of our system from the ground up. We should replace Police Officers with Social Workers.

Mr. Mark Charvat brought up finding a new police chief. He talked about continuing the interview panels that have consisted of members of the public to interview for the new police chief. He liked the idea of giving more power to the people for hiring the new permanent Police Chief. He hopes the recommendations of this meeting will go to the City Council. City Manager Bill Nicklas noted that they have been trying to recruit a new Police Chief since John Petragallo retired. The City was planning to have the citizen interview panels, but COVID-19 has stopped the hiring process.

Ms. Dory Berg said she does not want to see helpless people tortured by police officers. No room for tasing, or choking, this is a crime against humanity. As a town we need to work together to solve these problems. We are not Nazi Germany.

Ms. Amber said she went to some of the protests. She said she has seen changes in the last 15 years. She asked some of the protesters what are their suggestions. Some of the protesters told Amber they wanted to suggest the implementation of an oversight Citizen Review Committee, to reallocate funds and provide emotional response training, to have law enforcement and city manager meetings monthly, non-lethal training for police, monthly psychological checks, bias training, be more proactive about finding open positions to push diversity, not hiring police officers with past excessive force complaints. This brings on battery and murder to residents. Be proactive and not hire officers with past excessive force complaints. Hire top candidates. It starts with the officers we are bringing in.

Ms. Sarah Slavenas started with the suspension of Officer Weese. She talked about the training he had to enroll in due to the choking incident. She continued by saying that the chokehold was unnecessary and it left Elonte McDowell unconscious. She found out through FOIA that if Sargent Weese finished the training, his suspension would be reduced by 5 days. She wanted to know if these days were shaved off. If so, why are they being misled. She hoped through the HRC that these questions can be answered. She wanted to know if the police commission did an investigation or which party determined the 30-day suspension for Officer Weese, why he got the minimum punishment he could have received, and why he was not fired. She does not think a man who used unnecessary deadly force should still be working for the Police Department. She is worried how this Police Officer will react with residents with disabilities or other concerns. She does not think police have the proper training.

Mr. Gavin Jackson echoed what Sarah said. He said that the City of DeKalb and DeKalb County are not doing their job. He is disheartened to know killer cops continue to be on the Police force. He said that it is ridiculous the amount of money police officers are paid.

Ms. Shrestha Singh and Reverend Eric said that this time has a lot of opportunities. Ms. Singh stated police reform cannot wait. Even though there are some reforms, there are still problems with police brutality. She wonders what the alternatives could be. The City of San Francisco is replacing police officers with trained social workers to respond to nonviolent calls. She talked about creating safety and security in our community. We need to be proactive to do this. She

talked about the money for Community Development and CDBG funds. We are spending roughly ten times the amount on Police. Public Safety is different from Police, and resources should be allocated in different ways. Reverend Eric said how we spend the budget shows what we value. The budget shows us what we value. Instead of all these categories falling under the police, can these operations be reallocated into different departments. With a process of reprioritizing where the funds in the general fund go. Reimagine how to structure the budget based on serving our community, especially the most vulnerable.

Ms. Shirley Lassiter wanted to raise awareness for Kela Moss. Kela Moss is a woman who lived in DeKalb County that was in an abusive relationship and did not get the help she needed. She said it was the type of situation where it was “kill or be killed”. Kela Moss killed her abuser, she turned herself in at the DeKalb Police Department, she was arrested in 2016, and is still incarcerated. Ms. Lassiter wanted to raise awareness to get Moss’ charges dropped from murder to manslaughter.

Rev. Linda Slabon shared a report from 2019 that promotes and protects civil rights. She thinks we can learn from them. It is from the Citizen’s Community Council, and it speaks on citizens having direct power with leadership. She also noted that psychological and trauma screenings should be required for officers regularly.

Ms. Amber came back and asked if police will commit to the policy of not hiring officers that have had complaints with excessive force because there are officers with past excessive force complaints. We have seen how police sweep complaints under the rug. She asked how the officer got past this process if it is in place, and she wanted to make sure she emphasized recruitment and training.

Mr. Peter Gerlach wrote a letter in which he spoke to the commission and the public. The letter noted that American policing is a racist system. African American officers are conditioned to be biased against black people. Another large problem with the policing system is the continued militarization of the police. We should focus more on de-escalation and non-lethal tactics. There should be no use of excessive force, the officer who performed the chokehold should be fired immediately. Police should wear Police uniforms, not body armor. We also need to get the cops out of school. He also added that DeKalb police officers do not need to carry tactical weapons and do not need to carry the amount of ammunition they do. We need to get rid of the us vs. them mindset. More officers should be on foot and get to know the community instead of just policing it.

Ms. Jen wanted to talk about public safety, and how there should be zero tolerance for excessive force. This should be a policy. Also, before hiring new officers, they should check into their previous employment.

Mr. Tom proposes that there could be an unarmed partner trained in human relations to help take care of the situation if it is a nonviolent call. There need to be measures of supervision and keeping each other accountable.

Mr. Steve Kapitan asked about police collective bargaining and if there are in policies in there about this. He also said Governor Pritzker might introduce licensing officers, or individual liability insurance.

Mr. Peter Lindsay said he has been hearing a lot about reimagining the police. If police are committed to prevention instead of solving crimes, the police department should be getting smaller and not larger.

Ms. Anna Wilhelmi said that we need to address the hiring policy. It is not ok to harass people for small violations. Police need to be a part of building community trust. She thinks it would be valuable to have a tracking system to see where, when, and who the police are stopping and why. She does not think the problem is a lack of training, she believes the problem is in the individual person.

Ms. Jessica Lyon does not want to speak about the police. She wants to talk about having the community hire the Police Chief and revising the hiring process. She says there should be education for everyone, including the City Council. We need to assure accountability. DeKalb, IL has double the poverty rate of the entire country. We need to think about poverty when solving problems. We need to reallocate resources to help the black community.

Ms. Bessie Kronopolus said it is great to see everyone coming together. HRC has a long history of civil rights advocacy. She strongly suggests that the public and commission look at past minutes to look for solutions. She said that policies and practices need to be put into place to resolve these issues, and we as residents need to assure that this happens by staying involved. We cannot be lazy anymore. We should not be trying to reinvent the wheel, let us look at what has been working, and what we can utilize, or create new initiatives to foster trust and change.

Ms. Slavenas wanted to speak again, She said there should be a consideration that none of the other officers were punished in the Elonte McDowell case. She spoke of the George Floyd incident and how Officer Daniel Chauvin was fired. The other police officers involved were disciplined. She suggests policy makers need to consider how to fund police liabilities, residents should not have to do that.

Mr. Tom wanted to speak again. He said when job offers open for police, military receive preference. He thinks this should be abolished because a soldier has a different mentality and different skills than a police officer should have.

Mr. Mark Charvat wanted to speak again, He mentioned the police chief is present and some city council members. He wanted to hear comments from the police chief, the mayor, and the city council members.

Acting Chief Redel stated they are trying to work with the community as best they can and trying to keep everybody safe. There have been points that have been brought up he has not thought about. He will think more about this going forward to make this a better community for its residents, and to make DeKalb a better city.

Chair Apperson said before closing the public comment portion, the public can still send recommendations to City Hall or the Police Department. He asked for comments to be as specific as possible. He wants to use recommendations that are clear, and he thanked everyone that was involved in the Zoom meeting and public participation. He hopes that we can make this a model city for police and citizen relations. We will now go into old business.

Management Analyst Blumenthal told the public that they can send recommendations to his email at [Jason.Blumenthal@cityofdekalb.com](mailto:Jason.Blumenthal@cityofdekalb.com).

## **E. OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. Police-Community Relations/Building a Better Community**

Mr. Gastiger started by thanking the new Police Chief. He said the Police have been doing a great job with the protesters. Police have been taking a lot of verbal abuse and they have been practicing a lot of restraint. He referenced the video with the looting and stated having the Rev. Joe Mitchell talk to the looters was a great idea. He said the City should try to start a database of excessive force violations. This is not currently in existence. He also wanted to create a policy stating that DeKalb Police prohibit police maneuvers that block oxygen and the use of excessive force, no use of federal programs that militarize police, require counseling services, better education, better mental health services, healthier police officers, and to keep officers accountable.

Ms. King wanted to thank the members of the community for the suggestions. A lot of these ideas and notions are covered now because of the media. It is important to reiterate that police officers have training, racial bias training, culture competency. Officers need to know who they are serving. It needs to be a budget priority to have regular training. There needs to be a public shared value. Officers need to get to know the community. The first interaction a resident of DeKalb should have with the police should be a positive encounter. When officers have a heightened encounter, they need to take a pause. Officers should meet with social workers. We need to have younger people be more involved with the police and get them to know each other.

Mr. Gilbert talked about Campaign Zero recommendations. He said it would be interesting to know what extent the DeKalb Police Department matches the recommendations. Recommendations that are being made should line up with best practices from 2020.

Mr. Barrow thanked Deanna for moderating. He said a police department that succeeds should get smaller and not larger. He talked about reallocation of funds to services as opposed to policing. The best police department would be able to reallocate the maximum amount of funds to fix the root problems that create police calls. The police use a lot of the budget, so how can we relocate funds to make the police department more effective. This could redefine what a police officer is, adding different professional, unarmed officers.

Mr. Gastiger noted from Mr. Barrow that Police are doing a lot of tedious jobs that should not necessarily be done by them. Ms. King mentioned the small amount being spent in community development compared to the police. Mr. Barrow and Ms. King pointed out that there is an imbalance in spending. Ms. King continued saying that a lot of the training is dependent on funding the City does not have. There needs to be way for a better balance. Mr. Barrow talked about having a professional body chosen by the community to oversee actions. Ms. Franklin said that she supports what has been said, but more needs to be done. Many of these solutions are only band aids. If someone files a report, it needs to go to the end. There needs to be accountability, and there needs to be answers given.

Mr. Gastiger said that he wanted to pass on the tenents of Campaign Zero to City Council. He wanted these tenents approved. Mr. Gastiger moved to pass the Campaign Zero Tenants to be sent to City Council. Chair Apperson said he wants to get all recommendations together and then vote on them. Mr. Gastiger disagreed, saying he wanted to pass something that night to show they have acted. Management Analyst Blumenthal said there is a motion on the floor by Mr. Gastiger. Mr. Barrow seconded the motion to pass the Campaign Zero tenents. Mr. Barrow said he liked the idea of submitting something so the City Council can consider recommendations from the HRC. Mr. Gastiger withdrew his motion. Chair Apperson said he has 10 suggestions made, and some from John Rey. Chair Apperson suggested we go over what we have in writing, then approve the recommendations. Chair Apperson stated the Commission can leave here tonight with concrete recommendations.

Ms. King was concerned that they would not have all the recommendations of public by the next Council meeting. She wants to include the information from the community. She suggests that they should submit the recommendations from both the commission and public at the same time. Mr. Barrow said they should make a recommendation for Council to watch this video.

City Manager Bill Nicklas thanks the commission. He stated that the community is in the middle of an experience we have not seen since the 60's. We have an opportunity to get some lasting improvements. There will be a townhall meeting on Thursday, June 18, for more recommendations. Manager Nicklas wants to start making change, but also wants to have a comprehensive list of suggestions before the City Council. He suggested to wait for two weeks, and to create a stronger list. He said this is an important topic to take seriously. We need to have a lot of conversations?

Mr. Gastiger talked about creating a Citizen Advisory Board. He sees that things need time, but actions need to be taken. At the very least, he wants a press release saying that they do not condone excessive force. Manager Nicklas talked about the affirmative action and intervention policies they have when at the scene of a crime. Our Commanders and Chiefs are all in support for action being taken. Mr. Gastiger said if this already exists than this is alright. Chair Apperson said that if these things already exist why do residents not know about these, why are we keeping these from residents.

Mr. Nicklas said by the July 13<sup>th</sup> COW meeting we will get all the recommendations together and go forward with action then. Ms. King agreed that she wants to not just do it and get it over with, but to do it, to take time doing it, and do the best job we can to finding a solution. She wants to take all suggestions and then prioritize them. Manager Nicklas said that everyone needs to weight into this decision. This way all the facts come out.

Mr. Gastiger said if you have been following the feed, the people want us to act tonight. Mr. Barrow confirmed he had been watching the live feed, and that he sees the need to act, but also that we need to consider all actions before going forward. Chair Apperson said that they want to collect all recommendations, and to have a complete list of suggestions and recommendations, and at the July 7<sup>th</sup> meeting they will review them, and then pass them on for approval to the City Council.

Chair Apperson said everyone's recommendation will be reviewed, we just need a more complete list. He wants to still consider the recommendations that will be submitted in writing. Then July 7<sup>th</sup>, they will vote on the recommendations to pass to city council.

Chair Apperson said he is very appreciative that the public joined for the Zoom meeting. They have accomplished what they wanted to tonight. They have some recommendations, they want to receive more, and then once there is a comprehensive list, the Commission would vote on it.

Ms. Meade said that action needs to be taken now. Chair Apperson confirmed they want to wait for a complete list. Ms. Meade reaffirmed that action needs to be made tonight. Chair Apperson said he sincerely appreciates that; we are going to consider all recommendations. He reaffirmed that they would wait for the rest of the community for recommendations to make a final recommendation.

Chair Apperson said we need to be inclusive going forward with all the recommendations. He thanked everyone for participating, and we will have recommendations soon.

## **F. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

## **G. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 p.m. Motion by Mr. Gilbert, seconded by Mr. Barrow. Motion approved by a unanimous voice vote.

**\*PLEASE NOTE\* That in addition to these minutes are all public comments that were submitted to the HRC for public comment. This includes the chat feature of the Zoom**

**meeting, as well the link to the video of the HRC meeting at:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K572sFy5hxM&t=1s>.

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Jason Blumenthal, Management Analyst

Minutes approved by the Human Relations Commission on: