



## **Minutes**

### **City of DeKalb Human Relations Commission October 4, 2022**

The Human Relations Commission (HRC) held a regular meeting on October 4, 2022, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 pm. The following members of the HRC were present: Joe Gastiger (Chair), Norden Gilbert, Lisa King and JJ Wett. Nadine Franklin joined the meeting at 6:08 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. It was motioned by Mr. Gilbert and seconded by Mr. Wett. Chair Gastiger proposed adding a second item under Old Business to give an update on HRC members attending City Council ward meetings. Mr. Wett said he would like to discuss a rise in homelessness in DeKalb and Transdev fees and vouchers, which were proposed as new items under “Future Considerations for the HRC.” Chair Gastiger proposed announcements as a second item under new business. Mr. Wett motioned to approve the amended agenda, seconded Mr. by Gilbert. The amended agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

#### **C. Approval of Minutes – August 2, 2022 Regular Meeting**

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

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

Chair Gastiger gave resident Lynn Fazekas permission to make her comments later in the meeting under item F-1.

Resident Mark Charvat said the agenda for the HRC meeting on the City’s website changed at noon and he was concerned about an Open Meetings Act violation. Mr. Charvat said he did not have contact information for Ms. King and asked how he could contact her regarding HRC issues. Ms. King said she would think about it. Mr. Charvat said he was concerned the policy for the License Plate Readers (LPRs) was not published on the City’s website until September after the LPRs were being used. He said he would reserve the rest of his comments for item F-1.



Ms. King asked how Mr. Charvat, as a member of the public, knew about the LPR policy. Mr. Charvat said the policy went before the HRC in draft form but the final policy was not published until Sept. 20. Ms. King asked how he knew the policy wasn't published until then. Mr. Charvat said he checked weekly and it was posted after he sent several e-mails.

Mr. Zak said that the final version is now published. There were questions regarding the policy going to the City Council. Mr. Zak noted the HRC and the public were given opportunities to provide input and that department operational policies do not go to the City Council for approval.

Ms. Fazekas said there is the option for operational policies to go before the Council. She said this one should have since it is a liability. She said LPRs are a potential weapon of mass surveillance that could result in lawsuits.

Chair Gastiger said the issue is beyond the Commission's purview since there is no action that can be taken now that the policy has been published.

Ms. King asked Ms. Fazekas if she brought her concerns to City officials. Ms. Fazekas said she had not and only made her comments since the topic was raised during public comments. Mr. Charvat said he felt it was appropriate to discuss the LPRs with the HRC since the Commission had dealt with the policy.

Mr. Zak noted the LPRs were not purchased without the City Council's knowledge and there were multiple opportunities for public input on the policy. Regarding the agenda on the website, Mr. Zak said the date of the meeting on the website was correct but the agenda for August was mistakenly posted. He said that was corrected when brought to his attention by Ms. Fazekas and the City Attorney advised the HRC could proceed with their meeting since the agenda postings at City Hall and the Police Department were correct.

## **E. Old Business**

### **1. Progress Report on the Redevelopment in the AGN Neighborhood**

Regarding the annexation of Suburban Estates and Apartments into the City, Chair Gastiger asked if there has been effort to educate the residents about the services that will be available to them. Mr. Zak said he would check with the Community Services Coordinator but expects that the annexation is on the radar of the local nonprofit agencies.

Ms. King noted there have been water quality problems in Flint, Michigan and Jackson, Mississippi and asked about water quality in DeKalb. Mr. Zak said the City has a Water Division that must take water samples and meet federal and state standards for water quality and an annual report is published to the City's website. Mr. Gilbert noted a water quality report was formerly sent by mail.

### **2. Response from City Council Members about Attending Ward Meetings**



Chair Gastiger shared he had contacted City Council members to ask if Commission members could join future ward meetings to introduce the HRC to those attending and explain their work and said he had heard back from some.

Chair Gastiger shared options for increasing the visibility of the HRC. He said the Commission could hold its regular meetings in various locations and see if people show up. He feels a more effective option would be to hold listening sessions on the Commission's off months at locations such as nursing homes, schools and Parent-Teacher Organization meetings. Mr. Wett said non-profits should be added to the list of possible locations. Mr. Zak reminded that Commissioner attendance would have to be limited to less than a majority of a quorum, otherwise the Open Meetings Act requirements would need to be followed. Ms. King said she is concerned about hearing the voices of those not connected to government. Chair Gastiger said this would be a good start. Mr. Gilbert said he doubted people would come out to a meeting just to talk with the HRC. Chair Gastiger said that's why the Commission would ask to be invited to existing meetings. Chair Gastiger asked for a motion on the listening sessions. Mr. Zak advised that since the item was added to the agenda at the start of the meeting and not published beforehand, the Commission should not take formal action.

Returning to ward meetings, Mr. Gilbert asked how they were publicized. Mr. Zak said a news release is sent out and the meeting is posted to the City's website and social media. Mr. Gilbert said those methods do not reach him and believes that is the same for most residents. Ms. King said post cards could be sent. Mr. Zak reminded there are postage costs. Mr. Wett suggested sending a message with water bills, but Mr. Gilbert noted that would miss renters. Ms. King requested that City Manager Bill Nicklas be asked if mailers could be sent out regarding ward meetings.

## **F. New Business**

### **1. Future Considerations for the HRC**

Mr. Gilbert asked for clarification on the topic to be discussed, noting moving meetings to every other month was discussed last time. Chair Gastiger said the item is a discussion of topics the Commission may take up. Mr. Zak clarified that the Commission's recommendation to meet every other month was approved by the City Council, and that the Mayor or members of the Commission could request special meetings in between.

Ms. Fazekas began her public comment. She suggested using the Next Door website to notify residents about listening sessions since the message can be targeted to specific neighborhoods. Ms. King questioned how people would know about Next Door to receive City messages, and there was a discussion on communications strategies. Ms. King suggested fliers on door and mailers. Mr. Zak noted there is a cost to producing the fliers and said no strategy will reach the point where everyone feels informed. Mr. Wett said there is apathy towards government, so mailers may not be as effective as connecting with people through word of mouth.

Ms. Fazekas continued her public comment. She asked the Commission if they were aware of the ProPublica and Chicago Tribune investigation on children receiving tickets in school. She noted the City and School District have approved an agreement to increase the number of School Resource Officers by two, with an option for a third. She said tickets written by the SROs could be costly, the administrative hearing process is not set up for children and schools are getting around a ban on fining students by making referrals to the police. She said she



has done FOIA requests to obtain local data and believes the practice is a liability to the City since it may result in civil lawsuits. She discussed the administrative hearing process, noting if fines are not paid up front and the hearing is missed, the maximum fines and court costs are assessed. She said someone should look into the administrative hearing process.

Chair Gastiger said if Ms. Fazekas' comments were substantiated by school officials, it would confirm his worst fears about School Resource Officers. He said the topic is something that should be given close attention by the Commission and he would ask Police Chief David Byrd and a school official to the next meeting. Ms. King said school superintendents came to HRC meetings in the past and this would be a good time for the new DeKalb School District superintendent to attend. Mr. Wett said the Commission may also want to look into the state of the diversion program. Mr. Charvat noted the Commission could call a special meeting for November. Mr. Wett said they may want to invite a representative from juvenile court services.

Mr. Charvat said he is concerned with the Commission moving to six meetings a year and asked for the rationale since he believes there are issues for the Commission to consider. He said the Commission also needs to educate the public on the role of the HRC. Chair Gastiger said that is why he wants to reach out to PTOs and neighborhood groups.

Mr. Zak questions if clarification was needed on whether the topic of SROs was the purview of the Citizens Police Review Board. Chair Gastiger said he did not believe so since the topic is not dealing with the behavior of an individual officer.

Chair Gastiger asked for a motion to schedule a special meeting for November. The motion was made by Mr. Wett and seconded by Ms. Franklin. It was clarified that the meeting would be on Nov. 1. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. Ms. King asked for clarification on the subject of the meeting. Chair Gastiger said it would be an opportunity to ask frank questions on the criminalization of bad behavior and who that targets. Ms. King said policy should be reviewed. Mr. Zak noted the agreement with the School District not only added SROs but also addressed duties and a Code of Conduct.

**a. Homelessness in DeKalb, especially though not exclusively among those with debilitating conditions**

Mr. Wett said he has heard concerns about a rise in homelessness and that there are times the Hope Haven homeless shelter is at capacity. He said an intergovernmental agreement between the City and Park District may be an option to provide more housing during the winter.

**b. Transdev fees and vouchers for nursing home residents**

Mr. Wett said Transdev is now charging for door-to-door service for the elderly and disabled. He said the Commission may want to investigate helping people get vouchers for the service.

**2. Announcements**

**a. This is My Brave performance at the Egyptian Theatre, Thursday, October 13, 7:00 P.M.**



Mr. Wett said he will be performing poetry on being a therapist and helping others with their struggles and there will be other phenomenal performances.

**b. Florence Price Concert, performed by the Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Saturday, October 15, 7:30 P.M.**

Chair Gastiger shared the KSO will be performing pieces by Ms. Price, the first African American woman whose work was performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

**c. Youth Mental Health First Aid Training, Friday, October 21, 8:30-3:30, at the Community Outreach Building**

Ms. King added NIU is celebrating their Homecoming and invited Commissioners to the game and events.

**G. Adjournment**

Mr. Gilbert motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. King. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

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

**Minutes approved by the Human Relations Commission on December 6, 2022.**