

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

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MAUREEN MILLER BROSNAN
MAYOR

**HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
STUDY MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, June 30, 2020 – 7:00 PM
Via Zoom**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair R. Glover called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. Present are:

Chair R. Glover
Treasurer K. Aoun
R. Zuckerman
H. Fakhouri
W. Dinaro
D. Jordan
J. Kandalaft

City staff:

J. Sabo
T. Davis—Director, Parks & Recreation

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda unanimously approved.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the June 23, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.

IV. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Jessica Kandalaft has been appointed by Mayor Brosnan to the Human Relations Commission. She is welcome to the Commission and briefly introduces herself.

IV. BUSINESS

a.) Conversation with Livonia Parks & Recreation Director Ted Davis regarding the Unity Project

Ted Davis, director of Parks & Recreation for the City of Livonia, is present to discuss the UNITY Project. The Commission previously recommended changes to the “identifiers” in the activity, which the Parks & Recreation Department is implementing. T. Davis thanks the Commission for its recommendations and incorporated those identifiers into the final product.

The event has been shared via the Parks & Recreation Department’s email list and social media channels. The e-blast went to over 18,000 email addresses. T. Davis reports that the project will stay up as long as it can, given the materials it is made out of. He estimates potentially as long as a month, depending on the weather.

T. Davis notes that this the project is largely an adult experience, but that young people can still do it. However, it does have some “identifiers” like, “I Vote” that are only applicable to adults.

H. Fakhouri asks if a version specifically geared towards younger people could be conducted. T. Davis reports that it could, and that once you have the materials to do this for the first time it should be more easily replicated.

D. Jordan asks about the facilitation of the project. T. Davis notes that there will be Parks & Recreation staff present for it, but notes that the project is largely self-driven and that staff are present merely to facilitate access to the supplies needed to participate. T. Davis will consider using type of board that participants could also write on to express their thoughts.

Members of the Commission discuss opportunities to provide additional context or engagement around the UNITY Project. R. Zuckerman asks if there is a follow up opportunity if there aren’t individuals facilitating the project from a specifically DEI oriented perspective. T. Davis says that they would be open to facilitators.

D. Jordan points out that this is not the venue to necessarily have the most meaningful conversation on identity given that you often want to prompt people in advance, but this can be a chance to spark new ideas. He recommends the P&R department do some kind of social media follow up or have a chalkboard nearby to let people jot down ideas or reflections as they complete their participation.

b.) Conversation with Livonia Parks & Recreation Director Ted Davis regarding diversity, equity and inclusion

Chair Glover zooms the conversation out to ask T. Davis about his Department’s DEI strategies more generally. T. Davis admits that he wishes the Department was doing more. He highlights the Department’s recent focus on ADA compliance across its facilities. He discusses the Healthy Livonia initiative that creates a scholarship fund to participate in Parks and Recreations programming. Youth are eligible for scholarships if they participate in the free or reduced lunch program. The fund gives out \$2500 annually and this year quickly reached that limit.

Chair Glover points out that having a Department or staff that “don’t see color” is often times problematic because it means that that program might not be properly strategizing its outreach to more

diverse audiences or making itself accessible to everyone. He points out that we “see” gender all the time and use respectful language accordingly.

R. Zuckerman points out that it would be a good idea for the Mayor’s office to coordinate building a list of people who are facilitators for these kinds of events and conversations more generally. H. Fakhouri asks about the HRC having a presence at the Kirksey Recreation Center when it reopens. T. Davis thinks that more than that can also be done, including having a presence at the next Rec Center open house.

T. Davis looks forward to additional coordination and collaboration with the HRC. He notes that the Commission has skillsets, expertise and reach that the P&R Department doesn’t have, while the P&R Department also has capacities that the Commission doesn’t have.

H. Fakhouri recommends that the Commission builds up its own social media channels to be able to better reach people. He also updates everyone that he is putting together new logo ideas for the Commission.

c) Debriefing the Partnerships for Progress Listening Tour event in Livonia and Reflections on presentation from Livonia Police Chief Curtis Caid

Regarding the Partnerships for Progress event, H. Fakhouri notes that it was a good opportunity to hear both sides. The speakers did seem ill-prepared. There was not clarity on what either side wanted, and one side seemed more defensive than focused on providing solutions.

K. Aoun notes that he wanted to hear more from the audience that he believed this to be more of a listening tour. He would like the opportunity for people to speak directly to the police chiefs and mayors.

D. Jordan felt that it did not meet the tone of the moment.

R. Glover thought there wasn’t a lot of synergy between the questions and that led to no sense of resolve or clear takeaways.

R. Zuckerman was blown away by how people are not acknowledging the issues, noting that one presenter did interpret the word “perception” in an important way that leant credibility to residents’ experiences instead of “perception” being framed as everyone else’s problem.

H. Fakhouri agrees, but acknowledges that police chiefs are in an unprecedented position where they are struggling to find officers and that leads to not getting the best candidates.

D. Jordan asks H. Fakhouri about Chief Caid’s response to the story H. Fakhouri told at the previous meeting. D. Jordan felt that Chief Caid’s response lacked empathy and understanding of the social issues happening in the community. Chief Caid’s response made many excuses for officers, assuming they are in the right.

H. Fakhouri responds that he felt like Chief Caid didn't understand what he was saying. But on reflection he realizes how many disturbing things officers see on the job and sometimes tough love is the best they can do.

d) Next steps

W. Dinaro shares that as a committee, we should set some goals and push the police department to improve their data collection practices, which seem like a huge gap for the department and the city. R. Zuckerman and R. Glover agree, with Chair Glover noting that the data is a key part of understanding the truth of how the LPD functions.

D. Jordan and R. Zuckerman discuss writing a letter to Chief Caid summarizing their concerns and requesting data. R. Zuckerman is tasked with drafting a letter, for review at the next meeting. The Commission also discusses creating an online form for Livonia residents and visitors to share stories and experiences.

D. Jordan moves to adjourn the meeting. K. Aoun seconds. The Commission votes unanimously to adjourn at 8:22 PM.

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION IS TO BE DETERMINED.

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