

# **BEREA, KY Human Rights Commission**

## **Regular Meeting**

**August 5, 2013**

## **Meeting Minutes**

The Berea, KY Human Rights Commission held its regular, monthly meeting on Monday, August 5, 2013, the meeting was attended by:

Attendees: Lisa Vaughn, Jon Rogers, Carla Gilbert and Rich Bellando

Absent: Bryan Thomas, Paula Dunson

Guests included Mayor Connelly and two members of the public.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Lisa Vaughn at approximately 6:35pm and the Agenda was delivered. A review of the minutes from the June meeting determined that the minutes needed a correction with respect to the adjournment of the July 8 meeting. A correction was made to indicate that member Richard Bellando made the motion to adjourn the meeting and not Bryan Thomas who was not in attendance. The correction was made and the revised minutes were adopted following a motion by Carla Gilbert, a second by Richard Bellando and a unanimous affirmative vote.

Lisa noted a Bereans for Fairness reception which she and Carla attended since our last meeting and that it was well attended.

Carla suggested that the HRC do some outreach in advance of the rebel run event which has provided complaints of discrimination in the past. Lisa said she would check the dates which are typically in late winter. A question was asked by Lisa if there are other groups in the area that the HRC should reach out to and partner with in an effort to provide education on the topic of human rights. Mayor Connelly mentioned that he had previously spoken to an official of the Carter G. Woodson Center at Berea College about any interest that they might have in working with the HRC and possibly the cities of Berea and Richmond and ECU to determine what issues may exist regarding human rights in the community. Other potential partners to discuss with are the ACLU and the successor to the black student union at Berea College. Jon mentioned that the Berea Housing Authority is a possibility given their role in enforcement of housing rights. Another mention was made of the Leadership Madison County organization that is sponsored by the two Chambers. Lisa said she is looking for a long-term, continual education process.

The topic of the budget of the HRC was raised by Lisa and the question was asked of the Mayor if the HRC got a line item in the budget as it had in previous years. The Mayor checked the budget and reported that it was unclear as the funding could be contained in the larger budget of a major department. He will check and get back to us. If there is not funding he stated that there could be a budget amendment to fund our activities. The Mayor outlined the process to get an event or need paid for.

There was discussion about a training session with KY HRC representative Juan Pena. The session is anticipated to be 2-2.5 hours based on a prior session. Discussion was held as to whether it should be held in place of a regular meeting and the consensus was that the HRC had too many issues to miss a meeting and that the training session should be held between meetings at a time convenient to the most people.

Mayor Connelly reported that he has offered the open seat on the HRC to a person he spoke to recently and was hopeful that the position would be accepted within 30 days.

Additional discussion regarding the partnering with other community organizations was held. The Mayor reported that his outreach to the Carter Woodson Center was in connection with his interest and concern over the recent US Supreme Court actions on major changes to the Voting Rights Act in *Shelby County v. Holder*. Lisa mentioned using the HRC website to prepare a survey of issues. Jon raised concerns about the credibility of an un-scientific survey and its ability to be challenged. Additional discussion about the HRC website occurred. It was noted that Lisa had done major work to it for which she was praised. It has a large amount of content now. The Mayor offered that it could be hosted on the City of Berea's site as an official site of the City and he would work on that. Discussion was held as to the possibility of compensating Lisa for her time as well as the monthly hosting fee of \$6.95. Lisa declined to accept any reimbursement and the Mayor pointed out that the HRC ordinance states that no payment be made to commissioners. Hosting the site on City site will eliminate any on-going costs to the HRC.

Discussion was held as to what the HRC would actually present to the City Council. Richard suggested that the HRC needed to get its house in order before going to the council with any major requests. Particularly Richard mentioned getting the complaint process in place. Carla noted that we should check the new ordinance and policies and procedure of Frankfort. This was supported by Mayor Connelly. Richard suggested that the completion of a budget could serve as a roadmap to where the HRC wanted to go.

Mr. David Shroyer, a member of Bereans for Fairness, made the offer that he would volunteer to provide support to the tasks that the HRC needs to complete. Examples were staffing a part-time office and any writing or research, etc. There was support among some members and Jon raised concerns that the HRC would be open to criticism from individuals and organizations with different positions than those taken by the Bereans for Fairness without making it known that the HRC was soliciting for volunteer labor. There was support for Jon's position.

Mayor Connelly said he had received a request from USDA Rural Development as to whether there had been any complaints received regarding their properties at Glades I and II and Silver Creek. Lisa reported that there were no such complaints received.

Richard suggested that Lisa consider appointing a budget committee. With discussion Lisa said she will work to determine priorities and appoint committees or bring issues to the full Commission.

Lisa noted that there were 4 action items from her perspective and that she was looking for 2 people to tackle each:

1. complaint procedures—Richard and Jon will work on
2. budget---- Richard and Jon will work on
3. identify outreach partners---- Lisa and Carla will work on
4. list of items and events HRC needs to respond to and take action on—Lisa and Carla will work on

Mayor Connelly reported that the city will be providing diversity training soon for all city employees that is coordinated by the Berea PD and provided by a Berea College professor. He also reported that soon the city would see the 45th anniversary of the racially motivated shootings in Berea and that there are two original members of Berea's Human Rights Commission from 1968 still living in town. Discussion was held as to the possibility of a remembrance of those events and recognizing them. Jon suggested that possibly they could be honored and recognized as part of the HRC's status report to the City Council.

The next meeting of the HRC is scheduled for Monday, Sept. 9 at 6:30pm at City Hall.

At Lisa's request Jon made a motion to adjourn and Richard provided a second.

Prepared by Jon Rogers

Secretary/Treasurer