

Approved



**CITY OF YPSILANTI
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, January 28, 2013
7:00 P.M.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioner Claudia Pettit	Present
Commissioner Mary Louise Foley	Absent
Commissioner Arika Lycan	Absent
Commissioner Krista Nordberg	Absent
Commissioner Glen Sard	Present
Commissioner Darlene Scott	Present
Commissioner John Shuler, Chair	Present
Commissioner Jennifer Symanns	Present

A quorum was present.

III. AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Shuler suggested adding the election of a new Chair and Vice Chair to the agenda.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No minutes for approval.

September minutes to be added, for approval, to the February agenda, along with minutes from tonight's session.

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Commissioner Shuler moved to continue his term as the Chair of the Commission for the remainder of the year. Commissioner Scott seconded this motion.

Commissioner Shuler moved to nominate Commissioner Symanns to continue her term as the Vice Chair of the Commission for the remainder of the year. Commissioner Scott seconded this motion.

On a voice vote the motions carried unanimously.

2. Review/De-briefing of November forum

Vice Chair Symanns distributed the results of the survey and briefly discussed the results and feedback received. She asked the fellow Commissioners what they thought about the forum and shared that she was pleased with the turnout.

Chair Shuler stated that the discussion was lively and engaging.

Vice Chair Symanns commented that she was appreciative of Ozone House and SOS for participating.

Chair Shuler asked if anyone took away anything that they might be able to study further, such as issues of discrimination related to homelessness.

Commissioner Scott stated that she didn't see anything relevant to the charge of the Human Relations Commission, however it was very informative.

Commissioner Sard suggested looking into job discrimination and how it is difficult to find employment when you do not have a permanent address, which turns joblessness into a cycle. He mentioned, however, that he wasn't sure if it was within the scope of the Human Relations Commission.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that whether or not the Commission is able to discover an issue to take action on, they are still doing their job by being proactive and making information available.

Commissioner Sard mentioned that forums help to educate the Commissioners and provide exposure that in turn allows them to be better equipped to address problems that may arise.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that she learned a lot and found some resources to reach the student population, through social networking. She shared that she was contacted about youth that are interested in getting more involved in the City and in politics.

Chair Shuler stated that getting those youth in touch with City Manager and the Mayor might be beneficial.

Commissioner Sard suggested encouraging the youth to attend City Council meetings.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that she would share both options for the youth to get involved.

Commissioner Pettit stated that City Council meetings are free and may count towards a public service or community activity that students are often required to do.

Commissioner Scott mentioned getting the youth in contact with the Council representatives from their Ward, along with the Mayor, as that would be their most immediate contact for issues they may be having in their neighborhoods.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that it was beneficial to make this connection and feels they have built a positive bond.

Commissioner Sard mentioned that he was in favor of more outreach opportunities and forums in the upcoming year.

Chair Shuler asked Vice Chair Symanns to send the electronic version of the survey to the Clerk, and to put together a list of contacts, for inclusion in the minutes.

Vice Chair Symanns stated she would provide the survey to the Clerk and would bring the list of contacts to the next meeting or provide them via email before the next meeting date.

3. 2012 Report to City Council

Chair Shuler asked for questions or comments from the Commissioners regarding the report to City Council.

Vice Chair Symanns referred to the second page of the report and offered a few grammatical changes to be made. She also asked about the number of participants.

The Commission mutually decided there were approximately 20 participants present.

Commissioner Sard stated that it looked good to him.

Commissioner Scott stated her correction had already been given, changing the name of the Delonis Center to Housing Alliance.

Chair Shuler stated that a corrected copy will be emailed to the Clerk.

Commissioner Sard moved to submit the report to City Council. Vice Chair Symanns seconded this motion.

On a voice vote the motion carried.

4. 2013 Goal Setting

Chair Shuler read the items and asked for any additions from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Sard mentioned that it might be wise to choose three goals per calendar year and he would like to see the Commission focus on helping people with disabilities, general issues that relate to youth and homelessness, and issues specific to the Hispanic community. He suggested March or April as the first date for a forum.

Vice Chair Symanns mentioned that April would be a good month and stated that June and July would be tough months for her to commit.

Chair Shuler stated that the end of August would be a hard time for a lot of people to commit but suggested September instead.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that April would be reasonable and November would be another good time for a forum, and then a potential third date could be added, if time allows.

Chair Shuler agreed that April was a good date and that completing two forums was a good goal, with the potential for a third forum.

Vice Chair Symanns shared that she could do some outreach regarding disabilities and may be able to find speakers to attend. She shared that, regarding youth issues, she would likely end up utilizing Ozone House again.

Chair Shuler added that schools are another good resource.

Commissioner Pettit stated that the Student Advocacy Center may be a good resource and she would be willing to reach out to them.

Vice Chair Symanns asked which issue the Commission would like to work on first.

Chair Shuler mentioned that it may depend on when speakers are available.

Commissioner Pettit shared that schools may be reluctant to participate in September as that is a very busy time for them.

Chair Shuler suggested pairing the Commissioners to work on specific issues.

Vice Chair Symanns mentioned that she feels better suited to work on disabilities and she is comfortable leading the Commission's efforts related to that.

The Commissioners shared different connections they have to the schools that could be used as resources for the youth forum.

Commissioner Pettit stated that she will help with the disabilities forum and that she has connections with youth also. She shared that she works mainly with youth with disabilities.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that most of her contacts are Ann Arbor-based.

Commissioner Scott mentioned that it seems there are no contacts with the Hispanic community and the Commission should think about resources.

Commissioner Sard mentioned that Commissioner Foley may have a contact through the church and that could be a resource. He shared that he is willing to do research on Hispanic organizations in the County.

Chair Shuler mentioned contacting the Hispanic churches and businesses as well that offer translation services.

Vice Chair Symanns suggested Dos Hermanos Market as a good contact.

Commissioner Pettit added that La Fiesta might also be a good contact.

Commissioner Sard stated that he would do some research and suggested a team retreat.

Commissioner Pettit stated that actual outreach may work.

Vice Chair Symanns suggested coming back next month with more leads and additional contacts to reach out to.

Commissioner Pettit asked which type of issues the Commission wanted to focus on in relation to disabilities.

Commissioner Scott suggested general discrimination based on disabilities.

Commissioner Pettit suggested there are county-wide groups that serve people from Ypsilanti that the Commission may think about reaching out to.

The Commission then discussed additional groups that could be asked to participate.

Commissioner Sard stated that it is important to keep it as local as possible.

Commissioner Pettit suggested adding substance abuse as a topic and a good resource could be First Step Referral, right in Ypsilanti.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that substance abuse seems like it might be its own issue.

Commissioner Pettit mentioned that substance abuse is often a dual diagnosis where the patient has an additional disability.

Commissioner Sard stated that substance abuse and mental health might be their own distinct issue.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that mental health is an interesting topic.

Chair Shuler stated that it could be another topic to add to the list.

Commissioner Sard agreed that these are separate issues.

Vice Chair Symanns suggested focusing on physical disabilities.

Commissioner Pettit stated that she can speak on that or get a representative to come and present. She added that she can take the lead on this topic.

Vice Chair Symanns stated she will assist Commissioner Pettit and take the lead on the youth topic.

Commissioner Sard added that another issue is seniors and suggested adding this to the list of possible topics.

Vice Chair Symanns suggested the issues to a survey and having people rank them, to see which ones the Commission should focus on.

Commissioner Sard suggested leaving space for respondents to list what other topics they might be interested in having the Commission explore further.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that she will follow up with her contacts regarding employment and accessibility barriers and challenges for those with disabilities.

Commissioner Sard clarified that the City Charter says the Commission should address patterns of discrimination.

Vice Chair Symanns suggested that they don't limit their scope, so that that is the only thing they focus on.

Commissioner Pettit stated that people with disabilities do not always feel as if they are faced with discrimination, rather they understand they have challenges. She suggested having someone speak specifically about ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act).

Commissioner Sard stated that discrimination, in his mind, has intentionality to it.

Commissioner Pettit added that discrimination is in violation of the law.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that there may not be a violation but other solutions could still be explored.

Commissioner Scott stated that a lot of groups don't recognize discrimination until there's a discussion about it and a forum will educate people who don't recognize discrimination. Vice Chair Symanns stated that a forum addressing the barriers and challenges of those with disabilities is more inviting for people to attend and said that discrimination is often associated with hostility.

Commissioner Sard stated that the focus can be reaching out to presenters who can address what the barriers and challenges are.

Vice Chair Symanns agreed on keeping the focus broad and suggested to let the presenters choose the angle they wanted to take.

Chair Shuler suggested Commissioner Nordberg and Commissioner Lycan focus on the youth forum for November. He also suggested taking the disabilities and Hispanic issues and doing further research on them prior to the next meeting. He further suggested that the February and March meetings be short so the Commissioners can break into groups to discuss the forums.

Commissioner Scott stated she will work with Commissioner Sard.

The Commission agreed.

Commissioner Pettit mentioned that she would not be present for the March meeting.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that they could email each other to work on the forum.

5. Approval of 2013 Schedule

Vice Chair Symanns moved to approve the 2013 schedule. Commissioner Scott seconded this motion.

On a voice vote the motion carried unanimously.

VII. NEXT MEETING DATE

February 25, 2013

Chair Shuler stated he would put together an agenda for a short meeting on February 25th.

The Commissioners reviewed the announcement from the City of Grand Rapids.

Chair Shuler suggested taking time to review the invitation and have it placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

Commissioner Sard stated that this was the second meeting Commissioner Foley has not attended and suggested calling her and mailing her the agenda and 2013 schedule. He also asked if anyone had heard from Commissioner Lycan.

Chair Shuler responded that her email had bounced back but mentioned that she was mailed the agenda. He suggested continuing to mail her the agenda as a back-up.

Commissioner Pettit suggested mailing the schedule to everyone.

Vice Chair Symanns asked if meeting attendance was an issue.

Chair Shuler stated that attendance is a matter of record and Mayor and Council decides.

Commissioner Sard thanked Chair Shuler and Vice Chair Symanns for continuing to serve as Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission. He added that he was glad to see City Clerk Frances McMullan as well.

Vice Chair Symanns moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Sard seconded this motion.

On a voice vote the motion carried unanimously.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.