

City of Tampa
Human Rights Board
Meeting Minutes
June 12, 2013

The City of Tampa Human Rights Board held their annual meeting on Wednesday, June 12, 2013 at 8:30 a.m., in the 2nd floor conference room of the Department of Neighborhood Services, Division of Community Affairs, 2105 N. Nebraska Avenue, Tampa, Florida.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Laila Abdelaziz
Anthony Carswell, Chairman
Amy Mandel
John Perry

Reginald Tim
Jeffrie Van Loveren
Elias Vazquez

CITY OF TAMPA REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE:

Maritza Betancourt
Rebecca Cortes
Margarita Gonzalez

Allison Singer
Karen Sinnreich

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Anthony Carswell called the meeting to order and took the roll.

Approval of Minutes – April 10, 2013

Chairman asked members to review the minutes for April 10, 2013 for corrections (the minutes had been mailed to members and copies were also available at this meeting). **Motion** was **made** by Elias Vazquez and seconded by John Perry, to accept the minutes as submitted. The **motion** was **accepted** unanimously by all members present.

Regular Reports

Administrator's Report and EEOC/Employment, Public Accommodations and /Fair Housing/HUD Reports - The Chairman said that Ms. Betancourt would be providing a joint report.

Ms. Betancourt reported on behalf Jake Slater, who was not able to attend this meeting. She reported the following statistics: 2 open Housing cases and 13 open Employment cases; 12 closed Housing cases and 13 closed employment cases. Ms. Betancourt stated that Ms. Singer is assisting with a cause case and that correspondence would be sent to the Complainant and Respondent today. She asked that Ms. Singer provide an update on the Lucian Knotts reasonable cause case. Ms. Singer said that the Complainant accepted to conciliate and that when the parties agree to conciliate and work things out amongst themselves, the case will not go before the Human Rights Board. However, if the parties are not able to work things out, the case goes before the Human Rights Board.

Ms. Betancourt also informed the board members that she and Mr. Slater have been working with Mercury Productions on a PowerPoint presentation and believe it will be helpful as a training and outreach tool. A few edits were made and the video will be presented at the next meeting.

On behalf of the board, the Chairman thanked Ms. Betancourt for all she has done for the board, especially during this difficult time in her life and said that the board is with her. The Chairman then asked Ms. Sinnreich for her report.

ADA Disability Rights Coordinator - Karen Sinnreich

Ms. Sinnreich stated that she attended the annual fair housing consortium on April 19, 2013. With regards to the Paralyzed Veterans 33rd annual wheelchair games, the downtown partnership sent an announcement to businesses, and 150 flyers were prepared with announcement asking for volunteers, and a card with links on accessibility was developed for volunteers. The games will take place from July 13-18, 2013 and about 700 veterans have registered, and about 1100 volunteers have signed up.

She recently visited Davis Island and there is a garden area where sand sinks in and near the fountain, there are narrow concrete walls, about 28" or 32" wide. She called and spoke to someone at the Parks and Recreation department and when inquiring about accessibility, she was told that there is a special entrance to the tennis court. During her visit, she did not see any space for people to go between the buildings. However, she saw that there's room for a lift on the side of the deck of the building, to get down to the tennis court. She mentioned to the person in the Parks and Recreation department that a ramp was being built at Centennial Park to replace the existing ramp, and that she attended a meeting last January where final plans were presented. She suggested that they check on bids, mentioned that there is something called a mobi mat that is rolled on the grass and sand, and made a suggestion to widen and make a path, and the person accepted her suggestion.

Ms. Gonzalez mentioned that Ms. Sinnreich continues to publish the newsletter and that she assists with edits.

Ms. Betancourt informed members that Ms. Gonzalez settled an employment case for \$14,500.00 and that Ms. Gonzalez had received an award. Ms. Gonzalez said it was an award for public service and received it from the Hispanic Professional Womens Association (HPWA).

Old Business

(Closed Board Business) Update on Reasonable Cause Case – Ms. Singer said that the board approved the investigative finding of reasonable cause. The current update is that some issues were removed from the administrative hearing process, because the parties wanted to talk amongst themselves again. The Hearing Officer, Clinton Paris, has been re-appointed and has asked for a continuation date.

Status - Proposed Amendment Changes to Human Rights Ordinance – Ms. Singer said that out of the two changes to the ordinance, the one for definition of a quorum passed. The other proposed change regarding board composition did not pass, and has not been set for a future date. The Legal Department is to re-submit with new language. Julia Mandel, Acting City Attorney, will work with Ms. Singer. Board members can propose what they would like Ms. Singer to present to City Council, but the board's action will not define what City Council can approve. She reminded the board members that they can request a

special meeting, that they cannot discuss amongst themselves outside the meeting room, but can discuss during a meeting, which is public. The Chairman thought that it was a good idea to submit the amendments. Ms. Singer informed members that in the middle of the reasonable cause case, Clinton Paris' term for Hearing Officer expired earlier this year.

The Chairman asked the members if they had the current list with members terms and contact information, and asked members to review for accuracy. Ms. Mandel asked if changes could be made on copies provided. The Chairman asked Ms. Mandel what changes did she have and she said her phone numbers and email address. The Chairman then asked Ms. Singer if the list could be disseminated via email and she said yes, that the list was for information only, and he asked Ms. Cortes to send the updated list to members via email. The Chairman also stated that he is looking forward to seeing the video, and besides himself, he thanked board members Laila Abdelaziz and John Perry for completing the swear-in process for their re-appointment. He mentioned that Clinton Paris is back on board as the Hearing Officer.

Mr. Tim asked if the additional positions are pending or settled. Ms. Singer said this is not in the board's hands and that City Council will take the board's suggestions for position titles. She informed the board members that they could attend City Council meetings, since they are public and can ask her to present issues to City Council.

The Chairman asked the board members if there was a specific topic that they should discuss at a meeting. Mr. Perry commented that the board wanted to make sure there was diversity more than specific fields.

Ms. Van Loveren asked if board members had a right to withdraw. She mentioned that for the position of Real Estate, there should be two slots, one in residential and one in commercial. The Chairman stated that former Chairman Phil Dinkins suggested that the position of Property Leasing be removed. Ms. Singer said it is vacant and will remain vacant until City Council makes the change. Ms. Van Loveren suggested a motion be made to request to re-state the previous motion for Real Estate Sales to go before City Council, that Real Estate Sales be presented as Real Estate with preference for two slots: residential and commercial, and if not, to call it Real Estate.

Ms. Singer then reminded the board members of the the nine (9) *current* positions: Retail/Merchandise Management; Industrial Management; Real Estate Sales; Property Leasing; Law Enforcement; Labor Council; Mortgage Financing; and (2) At-Large. She then mentioned the *proposed* 15 positions: Retail/Merchandise Management; Industrial Management; Real Estate Sales; Law Enforcement; Labor Council; Mortgage Financing; Restaurant/Hospitality; Transportation; Healthcare; Architecture; Advocate for persons with disabilities; and (4) At-Large.

Ms. Van Loveren suggested deletion of (1) At-Large and adding Real Estate.

Ms Singer asked if it was the board's thought that the field specific positions are important to them. Ms. Mandel stated that she thought that they were representative of the community at large.

A **motion** was **made** by Ms. Van Loveren to reduce from four At-Large board members to three At-Large board members. **Motion** was **seconded** by Mr. Vazquez and the motion **carried**. The board will remove four At Large board members down to three and be more specific in Real Estate and add Commercial for

purpose of diversity. Question was asked when this would go before City Council. Ms. Singer responded that the amendment can go before City Council, when ready to be presented by the City Attorney's Office. The Chairman plans to attend a City Council meeting and suggested that board members attend a City Council meeting as well.

Update – Fair Housing Consultant – Ms. Betancourt reported earlier.

Update – Board Member Reappointments - Chairman Carswell, Ms. Abdelaziz and Mr. Perry have completed their reappointment process as mentioned earlier.

Update – Hearing Officer (Clinton Paris) Reappointment – has yet to make appointment for swear-in ceremony

Ms. Van Loveren asked Ms. Singer for recommendations for board members to go before City Council. Ms. Singer said the board could either put together a memo to the City Attorney and City Council, on the board's position why each of the positions are a good idea, and to think about what the board is trying to do and the long-term impact, since there's been no changes in twenty years.

For the next meeting on August 14th, the Chairman asked members to start thinking about the language to put in place. Ms. Mandel suggested that staff also bring ideas in writing to the next meeting, and to add input on types of charges dealt with and what are the hot topics.

New Business

Updated Board Member List -

Next Meeting

The next meeting has been scheduled for August 14, 2013, at 8:30 a.m., at the German American Club, 2105 N. Nebraska Avenue, 2nd floor conference room, Tampa, FL.

Adjournment

A **motion** to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Van Loveren, seconded by Mr. Vazquez, and the **motion passed** by all members present, to adjourn the meeting. This concluded the business of the Board at 9:30 a.m.

/rc