

City of Tampa
Human Rights Board
Meeting Minutes
October 13, 2015

The City of Tampa Human Rights Board held their regular bi-monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 13, 2015, at 8:30 a.m., in the 3rd floor east conference room, Development Services Center, 1400 N. Boulevard, Tampa, Florida 33607.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Laila Abdelaziz	John Perry
Anthony Carswell	Reginald Tim
Parker Homans	Elias Vazquez
Amy Mandel	Clinton Paris, Hearing Office

CITY OF TAMPA REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE:

Margarita Gonzalez	Karen Sinnreich
Vanessa B. McCleary	Thomas Snelling
Deborah Seigler	Justin Vaske

GUEST:

Connie Burton, citizen

Call to Order and Roll Call

The Vice-Chairman, John Perry, called the meeting to order. Chairman Anthony Carswell arrived later.

Introduction of New Board Member

Mr. Perry extended a welcome to Parker A. Homans and asked for a self-introduction. He represents the field of Real Estate Sales. Mr. Homans has been in Tampa for two years, employed by Smith and Associates since February 2015, and previous to Tampa, was in Baltimore for five years.

Approval of Minutes – August 12, 2015

Motion was made by Ms. Abdelaziz and seconded by Mr. Tim to accept the minutes as submitted. The **motion was accepted** unanimously.

REGULAR REPORTS

Mr. Snelling asked for staff reports first, because he would present an overview of the Human Rights Board via a PowerPoint.

Staff's Report

Ms. McCleary began her report by stating that Housing and Community Development (HCD) has been going through a re-organization. Community Affairs was assigned to HCD along with realignment of staff in the division, which means there are seven open positions. One position that is being broadcasted, is for Human Rights Investigation Supervisor, which closes around October 18, 2015. Ms. Mandel asked what kind of background is needed. Ms. McCleary responded civil rights, familiarity with fair housing, EEO, public accommodations, and HUD programs. Ms. McCleary requested copies for the board members to help refer someone for the position.

Ms. McCleary then provided case statistics and overview of Housing and Community Development (HCD). There are zero (0) Fair Housing cases, nine (9) EEO cases, four (4) local employment cases, and two (2) public accommodation cases. Of the nine, there was one (1) settlement by Ms. Gonzalez for \$15,000. In the last two months, the division has been working to blend Community Affairs into Housing and Community Development (HCD). She then described HCD's programs and current projects for the end of the fiscal year. Her office administers federal grants for the City of Tampa, such as housing rehabs, counseling, home buyer program, affordable housing construction, foreclosure prevention, and funding of non-profit agencies. This is the time of year when the staff is working to close-out one fiscal year and prepare for the new fiscal year contracts (Oct. 1 – Sept. 30), in addition, staff is preparing for the Mayor's Alliance for Persons with Disabilities Annual Awards Luncheon, which takes place on October 16, 2015, a job fair and Operation Reveille for homeless veterans in November.

Ms. McCleary mentioned that she had asked Ms. Gonzalez to look into the wage theft issue, which the County is also looking into. She recommended that this issue be deferred to Hillsborough County at this time, especially if an ordinance were to be passed by the City requiring additional staffing, there would be none available at this time.

ADA Coordinator Report

Ms. Sinnreich informed the members that the Mayor's Alliance for Persons with Disabilities' annual awards luncheon is scheduled for October 16, 2015. The speaker will be Dr. Elizabeth Perkins, a professor at USF. Awards will be given in the areas of media, Joe Sanchez leadership, employer of the year, and community service/volunteer services. A job fair for Veterans and persons with disabilities will be held November 12th at Port Tampa Bay, as part of Operation Reveille.

Administrator's Report

Mr. Snelling began by stating that he has met with most of the board members, and will contact remaining members. He then presented a powerpoint presentation on the role and responsibility of the HRB.

See attached, he concluded his report and asked if anyone had any questions.

Mr. Tim mentioned that it was unclear if issues such as the incident in Ferguson should be considered by the HRB and stated that the presentation was very helpful.

Mr. Snelling stated that as citizens, the board members have constitutional rights under the State of Florida to express their opinions as citizens. It is when the opinions are expressed as an HRB member that it is important to be careful and adhere to the ordinance, because it is the ordinance that is what gives the board power. Ms. McCleary commented that the presentation to the HRB was to help begin the new relationship/transition into the Planning and Development Department, Housing and Community Development Division. The same type of presentation was also done for the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee. The goal is to start with everyone on the same page and understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Mr. Paris said that when he receives cases, 80% of the analysis is technical and many cases come down to were the rules followed from what he's seen from Respondents, and whether or not the authority has been exerted and within the guideline and met. This is one board of multiple possibilities that some Respondents face, and are often times willing to work with this board than deal with another entity that has a lot more ramifications, if they are found in violation of some sort.

Mr. Snelling said another responsibility of the administrator is education and outreach. He referred to a comment from his discussion with Mr. Perry, where he asked why people discriminate and what is the root cause. Mr. Snelling offered that he thinks it is because people get away with it. By offering more education and people understand, they would stop doing it. Once HCD is fully staffed, they will work to provide more education and outreach. Staff is already starting with a table at the job fair for veterans, which will be a joint venture with the federal EEOC office here in Tampa.

Ms. Abdelaziz said she has heard comments for a while regarding department understaffing and asked if people are turned away. Mr. Snelling and Ms. McCleary responded no, that the caseloads are low for the current staffing. Ms. Mandel asked if people are turned away when asking about the positions. Ms. McCleary responded that the positions were just posted, due to the Re-Organization and Maritza Betancourt's retirement, which was recent; she just left her position. Ms. Mandel asked if job descriptions were available for the seven positions and Ms. McCleary responded she would send them to her. Ms. McCleary said the positions are technical requiring specific skills and the link in the City website contains full job descriptions. Mr. Perry said the board has been encouraging more outreach, even though there is limitation in funding and staffing. However, if there is more work to do, there would have to be more fund allocation. Ms. McCleary said \$50,000 was allocated for outreach to support activities of Community Affairs.

A citizen from the public was in attendance and asked when she could make a comment. Mr. Perry said he would let her know, since public comments were not included in the agenda. Mr. Perry gave the floor to the Chairman, and the Chairman thanked Mr. Snelling for the presentation. Mr. Snelling said Ms. Gonzalez assisted him with preparation of the presentation.

OLD BUSINESS

Board Roles and Responsibility – Mr. Vaske reminded the board that they had previously received a copy of the final draft of the Standard Operating Procedures and asked if there were any comments or concerns. Mr. Snelling said topics include standard things like what is a quorum and how are things adopted. **Motion** wade made by Ms. Mandel and seconded by Mr. Vazquez to accept the Rules of Order for the Human Rights Board. **Motion passed** by all members present.

Ms. Abdelaziz made a **motion** to accept public comments under New Business. Mr. Vaske made a suggestion that a motion be made for the board to direct staff to add Public Comments to future agendas. Ms. Abdelaziz restated her motion to add Public Comment to future agendas. The Chairman added that Public Comment be put in the beginning of the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Perry and the **passed** by all members present.

NEW BUSINESS

The Chairman opened the floor for comments from the public. Ms. Connie Burton stated that she was not aware of this board, and was searching the issue of human rights. She began by saying that there is something troubling the African community as it relates to housing developments in East Tampa. Low-income people are being moved out and having to seek housing elsewhere. Biggest problem developers partnering with HUD for all types of subsidies and found a back door way to discrimination using peoples criminal history to put a lifetime ban on housing. She is asking the board how can this be for persons who have paid their debt to society. Some have access and others do not. She has two example of admission policies and has forwarded a complaint to Congresswoman Cathy Castor. When construction was taking place, young men seeking employment were told there were no opportunities. One of the concessions in housing is that persons with no criminal history get higher scores. An example for housing are young people approximately 18 years of age applying as first-time renters obtaining housing versus 40-year old persons with past transgressions being denied housing. She would like the City to review her information to see what position the City can take, if any.

Ms. McCleary said that it was a housing violation and her complaint would be looked into. She just returned from a conference that included the topic of disparate impact on discrimination, based on criminal history and criminal history not being related to housing and how many years should be covered. She said that if anyone heard people talking about such issues, to refer them to the City's website and to type human rights to get to the correct web page regarding the filing of complaints. Mr. Snelling accessed the computer and showed everyone how to access the website.

Mr. Perry commented that institutional discrimination is based on racism.

Ms. Abdelaziz attended a Florida Chamber Policy conference recently. Prisons are now looking at failing reading grades of students to determine number of prison beds. A question was raised about inviting the public to meetings. Ms. McCleary clarified that the meetings were open to the public, however, the HRB should not wait to refer someone to the staff to address their issues in a timely manner. If a person waited until a board meeting, time could have passed, and their claim be outside the statutory time frame.

Mr. Snelling announced the City of Tampa's Hispanic Heritage Celebration. It takes place at the Tampa Theater on October 27, 2015 at 11 a.m. Copies of the flyer were passed out.

With regard to meetings being held quarterly, Mr. Snelling said to keep the date for the annual meeting with the Mayor for December 8, 2015 and the meeting for February 9, 2016. The Chairman asked what would happen with cases. Mr. Snelling said he read the rules and the Chairman could ask for a meeting at any time business dictates. From Mr. Snelling's perspective, he would notify the Chairman of cases and for the Chairman to report back. The Chairman would agree and notice would be sent. Ms. Mandel asked if the schedule could be changed today. Chairman proposed to keep the meeting date for December

2015 and February 2016, and subsequent meetings in 2016 be held in March, June, September, and December.

A **motion** was made by Ms. Abdelaziz to hold quarterly meetings, and the motion was seconded by Ms. Mandel. The **motion passed** by all members present.

Mr. Snelling proposed tri-fold brochures for education and outreach and Ms. McCleary said they were working on it.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, December 8, 2015, at 10:00 a.m., Tampa Municipal Office Building, 306 E. Jackson Street- 1st Floor, Mayor's Conference Room.

Adjournment

A **motion** to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Mandel, seconded by Ms. Abdelaziz, and the **motion passed** unanimously.

Respectfully submitted