

DOVER HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

The Dover Human Relations Commission (DHRC) met on June 17, 2025, at 6:10 p.m., with Vice Chair Mishoe Sudler presiding. Members present were Mr. Fleming, Mr. Lott, Ms. White, Ms. Mullen, and Mr. Faust.

Staff members present were Ms. Walls and Ms. Wheeler.

OPEN FORUM

The Open Forum was held at 6:00 p.m., prior to commencement of the Dover Human Relations Meeting.

Lachelle Paul, expressed concern regarding the escalating gang violence in Dover stating that the city's lack of preparedness is "mind-boggling," especially given that gang activity became an issue as early as 2000 and significantly resurfaced in 2013. By 2019, gang tags were rampant across the city, highlighting a growing problem. Ms. Paul, who works with at-risk youth involved in gangs, emphasized that Dover is severely lagging in its approach to combatting this issue. She stressed that effective intervention is impossible without proper education and understanding of the problem, a task the Dover Police Department and the city as a whole have yet to undertake.

Ms. Paul highlighted the devastating impact of this inaction, particularly when innocent lives are lost or harmed due to gang-related crimes like shootings. She questioned when the City of Dover would finally step up to address these critical issues and adequately serve their community. She implored the police department to take necessary action, reiterating that they cannot effectively address what they do not understand.

Ms. Paul further elaborated on the severity of the situation, noting that Dover is now dealing with legitimate, "sanctioned" gangs that have migrated from northern areas, including sanctioned Bloods and Crips chapters. She criticized the city's apparent ignorance regarding the specific gang chapters operating within its borders, as well as its failure to differentiate between sanctioned and "unsanctioned" (self-proclaimed) gangs. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for developing effective strategies to protect residents. She stressed the urgent need for the city to identify gang territories and develop comprehensive plans to ensure community safety.

Ms. Paul stated that she came from Georgia up here to one of these meetings when this became a big problem. She was born and raised here, her mother was still here, and she has had siblings that were here that were in the midst of this. This was an issue that the Human Relations Commission had tackled, had taken on, and then it kind of dissolved because the commission in itself was basically dismantled, if she is not mistaken. So, she needs the commission to pick the ball back up. Number one (1), because they have a lot of issues that have not been addressed. The Commission took on the responsibility with this commission in February 2013, and when they took on that responsibility, now it is right back in their face. She needs them to not only take on the responsibility, but to educate themselves on what is going on. There is no reason that the City of Dover does not know what chapters of gangs are in their neighborhood. They cannot combat it because they know nothing about it. There is a Briggs gang, a Briggs chapter, an actual sanctioned chapter in the third district. It is a blood chapter, and it is a sanctioned chapter they have right now. They have actual gang members that are sanctioned, that are here operating in the city. you understand what's going on, the people that are getting shot and actually killed, they are actually being killed by the sanctioned section of these gang

members. They cannot combat it because you did not educate themselves on it. They have people that are coming from the actual chapters from up north, because remember, they migrated here. They do not know what they are looking for. They cannot identify the shooters because they are not seen here every day, and they are not going to miss their shot. So, when they are sitting here and they have their chief making statements, "Oh, it is just we have an increase in shootings because it is the gangs." They do not even know that they are dealing with the ones that are not getting shot. It is because they are coming from the unsanctioned gangs, and they just form their selves. When they talk about OGs, they cannot get through to these children and they call them "Yns" because they're unruly. Even the OGs, which are the original gang members, OGs are 10 year tenders. Double OGs are 20 year tenders. Triple OGs are 30 year tenders or more. They have to be able to identify and know what they are dealing with. They do not know because they are not educated to deal with it.

Ms. Paul asserted that Dover should already be informed about the ongoing gang crisis but it is not. She dismissed claims of the city having the situation "under wraps," calling such statements a bunch of bull that have been repeated for four (4) years without any tangible results. She criticized the city's reactive policing, stating there is no proactivity in combating gang violence across all districts. As an alarming example, she cited a shooting in Cannon Mills where police allegedly compromised a homeowner's anonymity in front of gang members due to their lack of training. Ms. Paul also highlighted persistent shootings in areas like Stoney Creek and Cherry Hill, questioning why the city's cameras are not being utilized, particularly in Cherry Hill, an unsanctioned gang area. She stressed that this is an ongoing problem that has been repeatedly brought to the city's attention, yet officials seem to lack a fundamental understanding of the issue. Ms. Paul explained the critical need for comprehensive training for the Dover Police Department and the mayor, arguing that officers are currently unprepared to effectively address gang violence or even identify what they're trying to deter.

Responding to Ms. Paul, Mr. Fleming thanked her for coming and stated that he had absolutely no clue about the gang situation here in Dover. He had no idea what a sanctioned gang versus an unsanctioned gang is, and he really learned a great deal from Ms. Paul this evening.

Responding to Mr. Faust, Ms. Paul stated that if she is not mistaken, the most recent shooting and death occurred either the past Friday or Saturday morning. However, she stated that she wanted to bring up the 2001 murder of Reginald Hannah, which sparked the formation of the Dover Human Relations Commission. She noted that Commissioner Lott is familiar with this tragedy. Reginald Hannah grew up here and at the time of his death, he had just been released from jail and was working. He was a passenger in a car, simply catching a ride home, when he died in the custody of the Dover City Police Department. She can actually say that she witnessed that because she was actually standing across the street from the McDonald's at the time of the incident. The facts that were reported were not the facts that actually took place. She can say that because she witnessed it with her own eyes. If they look up the incident, they can see where the whole City of Dover, the whole highway was shut down because this was one (1) of the times that people actually stood up because they actually realized what their city had come to and never had gotten to a point where it was that brutal. He was unrecognizable at sight and remember, he was in the hands of City of Dover Police Department and there was no reason for person to die that was not in custody. She requested that the Dover Human Relations Commission get the ball rolling on the property things that they need to do so they can go back and get the teeth put back into this commission they way it was initially formed. Right now, people in this city are not happy and they just do not feel like they are getting or going to get the safety that they need.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Mr. Faust moved for approval of the agenda, seconded by Mr. Lott, and unanimously carried.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Mr. Faust moved to adopt the minutes from the Dover Human Relations Commission (DHRC) meeting on March 18, 2025. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fleming and unanimously carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES**Assessment**

Dr. Mishoe Sudler stated that the Assessment Committee is waiting for the training, and they will be doing the training with the State of Delaware Division of Human Relations. Dr. Mishoe Sudler stated that he and Mr. Faust have already attended one training session, which provided an overview of the State of Delaware Division of Human Relations, its connection to the Dover Human Relations Commission, its responsibilities, and how it operates. Dr. Mishoe Sudler explained that in regard to the assessment, it will be based on the goals that they aim to achieve and how they plan to report the outcomes of their efforts within the community.

Responding to Ms. Mullen, Dr. Mishoe Sudler stated that the training is tentatively scheduled for August.

Responding to Mr. Faust, Ms. Walls explained that training needs to be set up through the City Clerk's office.

Community Programs

Mr. Faust stated that at their last meeting, he had handed out a sample information card with important phone numbers on it. He has been working on it, but his computer received a virus, and he is not having to rebuild it from scratch. He will have a sample of the card at the next meeting.

Responding to Mr. Faust, Dr. Mishoe Sudler requested a price if they are going to have the important phone number information cards printed.

Dr. Mishoe Sudler stated that they had also talked about having a community relations event during the span of a weekend that they choose, and they did not want to rush it right away. They wanted to take the time to thoughtfully plan this event. With the summer season upon them, it is important to pay close attention to the events and activities happening around the city whether hosted by the city itself or by outside vendors using city facilities. While he is not entirely sure what is currently on the City's calendar, they need to be mindful of these events when scheduling their own. Our goal is to ensure that the timing benefits not only the Commission, but also the participating vendors and the community members attending. They are aware that other events take place at certain times, and it may even be advantageous to align theirs with them to increase engagement. As they consider which weekend to hold the event, they want to be intentional about selecting the most effective time. So, as they attend and observe various events throughout the summer and into the fall, let them use that insight to help plan carefully and strategically.

Ms. Walls stated that she had found out about the liability insurance and if they are just handing out brochures and everything, they do not need anything as they will fall under the city's umbrella policy. If it is a bouncy house, they should have their own liability insurance and then if it's a food truck,

they have to be inspected by the fire marshals and have a sticker from the city. They will also need a special event permit.

Ms. Chiara Fox, of 420 East Wind Drive, stated that she is a resident and parent in the City of Dover. Earlier this year, she joined with other concerned parents from Dover and the greater Kent County area to explore ways they could more effectively engage with city, county, and school district representatives to advocate for the needs and interests of their children, whether they live in the City of Dover, elsewhere in the county, or attend schools in the Capital or Caesar Rodney school districts. They have been meeting for about two (2) months. Dr. Sudler and Councilman Sudler recently attended one (1) of their meetings, where they spoke about the role of City Council and how everyday citizens can engage more effectively with local government beyond simply voting. She also reached out to friends and other community members, emphasizing the importance of civic participation. She noted that while many people across Delaware are aware of the issue, voter turnout, especially in the City of Dover, for local elections such as City Council, Levy Court, and school board races remain extremely low.

Ms. Fox stated that attendance at City Council meetings, school board meetings, and Levy Court events by everyday citizens is generally quite low. She conducted a small survey, which had a limited response, but still provided valuable feedback from residents across the City of Dover. Many parents shared that they feel hesitant to engage with local government because they feel uninformed. They also expressed that the meetings often are not family or child friendly. Since meetings are usually held in the evenings, when parents are busy with after school routines, dinner, and preparing for the next day it becomes difficult to attend. Additionally, they feel uncomfortable bringing their children to the meetings. Some noted that meetings do not always run efficiently; what is scheduled as a one (1) hour meeting may stretch to two (2) or three (3) hours, which many families simply do not have the capacity to sit through, especially with children in tow.

Ms. Fox stated that many people also feel they are not fully informed about the issues and topics discussed at meetings. In response, they have come together to form a sort of coalition aimed at gathering information from various local government bodies, distributing it within their group, and sharing the responsibility of ensuring that families and parents are represented at different committee meetings. They are grateful to Dr. Sudler and Councilman Sudler for generously taking the time to share valuable information with their group. They are also established connections with the local NAACP, the League of Women Voters, and former Judge Jane Brady to discuss state and General Assembly matters. They appreciate the city's continued support. Their next meeting will be held in person on Friday, June 27th, location to be announced. During that meeting, they will continue planning and exploring ways to educate the community about local government, because as the saying goes, all politics is local.

Responding to Dr. Mishoe Sudler, Ms. Fox stated that their working name is "Our Voices". They are currently in their strategic planning phase, so that is their working name that could change in the near future as their group grows and strategically identifies areas of focus that they want to continue to work on.

Nika Taylor, representing Restoring Central Dover, shared that they are currently working through their strategic plan and are in phase three of the process. This phase is resident-driven, as the initiative is led by community members who are actively involved in local revitalization efforts. These efforts include beautification projects, community gardens, and events such as an upcoming

summer kickoff. While the organization is federally funded and also receives some local grants, they operate on a limited budget. Ms. Taylor expressed concern about the lack of support from the city, noting that she personally handles much of the groundwork. She emphasized the need for greater city involvement and support. She also acknowledged and thanked Dr. Sudler for attending several of their advisory committee meetings.

Ms. Taylor stated that she has not received any follow-up, just a report, and she feels defeated, like no one is listening or offering help. She even called the office to ask about a possible transfer because she is unable to sleep due to the stress. When it comes to residents in the Dover and Kent County area, there is a real need for more support, especially when it comes to access to space. Sometimes, it is simply about having a place to hold youth activities. They are finding that to be difficult as everyone wants to charge, and it is hard to find anything in the Dover area that is affordable. She has reached out to many people, and the common barrier is always cost. They are hoping the City of Dover can support them by offering access to space at little or no cost. They are working within a tight budget, and they need to stay within those financial limits. She has reached out to several council members and rarely gets a response. In fact, the only person who got back to her was Ms. Walls, on behalf of Councilman Anderson, and she truly appreciate that but overall, they are just not hearing back. What she is really asking for is more support from the City for the residents and the organizations that serve them. They need access to more resources. If they are aware of any funding opportunities, please let her know so she can begin reaching out and applying. She knows the funding is out there, but it does not seem to be reaching them. Restoring Central Dover operates as a separate entity from Neighborhood Partners, so their budget and access to funds are different.

Ms. Paul stated that in the beginning of every fiscal year, city council members receive an allotment of discretionary funds. This particular program, run by a dedicated young woman, greatly benefits from these funds. She can attest to her commitment because they have worked together on the streets, directly engaging with the community. Her organization is actively involved in local efforts, such as cleaning up neighborhoods and addressing residents' concerns door-to-door. Community work like this cannot be done alone. While Ms. Paul has been advocating for the South her entire life and funding her own organization personally, this young lady has put in a tremendous amount of effort to secure this funding, which speaks to the vital work she does.

Ms. Paul stated that when someone is actively working in the city, they see firsthand what is happening on the ground. They are out there, for instance, picking up discarded syringes to protect children, and this kind of work is happening all over the city. They also organize and host youth events, which are crucial for their community, especially since many families are stressed thin and lack resources for their kids. However, they simply cannot fund these events alone. For example, they have an event coming up on July 19th and the costs quickly add up. They need to cover expenses for things like bounce houses, permits, insurance, and the various activities themselves. If she is looking to help, Ms. Paul can definitely assist them in drafting the necessary documents to request funding.

Councilwoman Hall stated that she just wanted to say thank you to Ms. Taylor for bringing her presentation. She actually had a conversation with someone right before her that they are looking to fill these empty seats and one of her passions is children. She is the mother of 10 beautiful ones, and she knows the struggles of raising the children here and she appreciates what they are bringing to the table. There is a process, and they will have to engage a little bit to find out what the status of

their business is.

Responding to Ms. Taylor, Councilwoman Hall stated that personally under her district, she is going to be pulling together a coalition of people who are like-minded individuals like Ms. Taylor to pull all these small orgs that if they could work together and she thinks they are mightier together than doing their own little thing.

Robert Mason, Prudence Lodge #6 Free and Accepted Masons Prince Hall affiliate, stated that their Motto: "Don't Just Throw Money, Throw Men." Our motto for the coming year is "Don't just throw money, throw men." There are many organizations doing incredible work in the community, but they often lack a clear relationship with the city. This leads to isolated efforts and unmet needs. At Prudence Lodge #6, located at 1412 College Road, they are continuously doing community outreach. For example, they are hosting their second annual community day on August 23rd. Last year and this year, they have partnered with fantastic organizations such as the American Cancer Society and the Delaware Prostate Society. They provide a variety of services, including sickle cell trait testing, free haircuts for children, backpacks, free vision screenings with access to eyeglasses, "Backyard Adventures," free golf lessons, and diabetes screenings. Last year's event had a fantastic turnout, and they were even joined by the Dover Police Department. The Dover Police Department and the Department of Corrections also have summer camps that invite children from the community to learn more about what they do. Mr. Mason is also proud to be a founding partner of the Dover CR Raiders Pop Warner program, which has become one of the largest Pop Warner programs in the state.

Mr. Mason stated that there are so many dedicated men in the community. They ask that the city continue to support groups such as Omega Psi Phi, various churches, and organizations like Prudence Lodge #6, as well as other community service partners. They believe it is crucial to create a hub where they can all connect and learn about what others are doing. While they have social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, a centralized city resource would be invaluable. Imagine a place where people could easily find out about the human resources available, such as the organization this system belongs to, Prudence Lodge #6, Alpha Phi Alpha, the Links, and many other programs operating within the state and city. This kind of hub would be a powerful solution, not just for addressing problems, but for adding to the successes the city is already achieving. As a member of Prudence Lodge #6, they are proud to offer their services, their men, their manpower, and their ideas to this city. They have been here for over a hundred years and are looking forward to celebrating a century of service right here in Dover. This is a significant legacy, and they believe these established legacies are not being fully tapped into or utilized. They sincerely hope the city will consider their proposal.

School Programs

Nothing to report.

By-laws

Mr. Faust moved to table the school programs committee report, By-laws committee report and the Finance committee report until the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fleming and unanimously carried.

Finance

Mr. Faust moved to table the school programs committee report, By-laws committee report and the Finance committee report until the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fleming and unanimously carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Commission Chair

Vice-Chairman Mishoe Sudler opened the floor for nominations for Chairperson.

Mr. Faust moved to nominate Dr. Mishoe Sudler to serve as the Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fleming and unanimously carried.

There being no further nominations, Vice-Chairman Mishoe Sudler closed the floor for nominations.

By unanimous consent, Dr. Mishoe Sudler was elected to serve as the Chairperson.

Election of Commission Vice Chair

Chairman Mishoe Sudler opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chairperson.

Chairman Mishoe Sudler moved to nominate nominated Mr. Faust to serve as the Vice-Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fleming and unanimously carried.

There being no further nominations, Chairman Mishoe Sudler closed the floor for nominations.

By unanimous consent, Mr. Faust was elected to serve as the Vice-Chairperson.

Open Discussion

There was nothing discussed.

ADJOURNMENT BY 7:00 P.M.

Chairman Mishoe Sudler moved for adjournment of the Dover Human Relations Commission (DHRC) meeting, hearing no objection, the meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

Travis Mishoe Sudler, I
Chair

TMS/aw