

**DOVER HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF JANUARY 25, 2012
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Present: Chair, Roy Sudler, Jr., Dawn Allen-Pyne, Justina H. Brewington, Dr. Linda D. Hackett, Dr. Kim Warfield, Ellen O. Wasfi, Faye Della White.

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Roy Sudler, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

2. **Moment of Silence** was observed.

3. **Agenda:** The Chair acknowledged a quorum and the agenda was reviewed and approved with no additions or deletions.

4. **Comments/Presentations from Members of the Community:**

Rev. Rita M. Paige of 355 Rita-Wilma Road, Dover, DE 19904, addressed the Commission to express her concern about a flyer which had been distributed on Division Street during the month of December 2011. The 3x5 index card flyer, a copy of which is attached to the minutes, pictured a lynched African-American male hanging from the limb of a dead tree with a large swastika beside him. The depiction was accompanied by the phrase, "CLEANING UP THE STREETS ONE NIGGER AT A TIME." Rev. Paige described the flyer as a symbol of hate and urged the DHRC and the Dover Police to conduct a thorough investigation of the incident.

Chair Sudler indicated that unbeknownst to the Commissioners, discussion of the incident was originally on the agenda of the January DHRC meeting, but had been removed by the City Clerk as "not in the purview of the Commission." On the recommendation of the City Solicitor, the intake form dealing with the issue had been forwarded to the Dover Police.

Commissioner White expressed her opinion that the DHRC should have been given the opportunity to comment.

Rev. Paige added that a small article covering the incident appeared in both *The State News* and *The Dover Post*. She then contacted the President of the Delaware National Action Network who spoke with Dover Police Chief Hosfelt and informed ministers in the local area. Rev. Paige stressed the need to find out who originated the hate items.

Chair Sudler asked Rev. Paige if she had contacted other agencies.

Rev. Paige responded that she had not, but that the President of the Delaware National Action Network did. She added that the Dover Police had instructed them to turn over all flyers found in the area to the local police. She interpreted that action as an effort by the

police to hush up the situation, and she wanted to know what the police were doing to investigate.

Commissioner White suggested that police surveillance tapes in the area should show who distributed the flyers.

Rev. Paige asked about the role of the DHRC now that the Commissioners have been made aware of the incident.

Commissioner Wasfi stated that the DHRC should request an explanation from the City Council as to why the Commissioners were barred from discussing what is clearly a human relations concern.

Dr. Hackett questioned the purpose of the DHRC if not to discuss such issues.

At that point, Rev. Paige distributed copies of the 3x5 index cards with the hate message to the Commissioners for inclusion in the record.

Commissioner White added that she did not understand why an issue that affects the public cannot be discussed. The DHRC should not be silent about something that is distributed in the community.

Dr. Hackett referred directly to Part B of the Preamble to the DHRC By-Laws which stipulates that “The City of Dover has granted the Dover Human Relations Commission the power(s).....to Inquire into incidents of inter-group conflicts and disputes within the City and take such actions as may be designed to alleviate such conflicts and disputes.” Discussing such issues, therefore, is clearly within the Commission’s jurisdiction. Commissioner Hackett felt that the DHRC should request that a member of the Dover Police Department appear before the Commission to respond to questions about the incident.

Dr. Warfield agreed and drew on her background as a police investigator to point out that this was a hate crime, and the police should share information on the case with the DHRC.

Commissioner White asserted that while the police should undertake their investigation, the DHRC should be allowed to conduct its own inquiry and not wait until a more serious infraction occurs.

Commissioner Allen-Pyne agreed that the incident should not be “swept under the rug.”

Commissioner Wasfi made a motion that the Chair should draft a letter on behalf of the Commission to the City Council with a copy to the City Solicitor requesting an explanation of the removal of the item from the January 2012 DHRC meeting agenda. The letter should quote the relevant sections of the DHRC bylaws indicating the jurisdiction of the Commission in matters of intergroup conflict. The motion passed.

Rev. Paige thanked the Commissioners for their concern and concluded with an announcement that on February 6, 2012, a community forum would be held at the Calvary Baptist Church on Queen and Fulton Streets. The topic of discussion is the renaming of a street in Dover after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The meeting will be hosted by the Interdenominational Ministers' Alliance (IMA).

Also in attendance at the DHRC meeting accompanying Rev. Paige was Mary Johnson who expressed her appreciation to the Commissioners for their interest and suggestions.

5. Chair's Report: The Chair's report, which is attached to the minutes, covered the following items: 1) An intake form concerning police brutality; 2) distribution of hate index cards in Dover neighborhoods' 3) the Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Breakfast; 4) the January 18, 2012 e-mail from the City Clerk indicating that the intake forms regarding police brutality and the hate index cards had been referred to the City Solicitor who removed both items from the DHRC agenda and directed them to the Dover Police; and 5) the need for clarification from the City Council of the duties of the DHRC regarding the issues under discussion and submitted through intake forms.

6. Committee Reports:

A. School Programs: Commissioner Wasfi reported that the Study Circles on Racism and Race Relations project at Dover High School is still in the planning stage.

B. Assessment: Commissioner Dr. Edamatsu was not present to provide a report.

C. Community Programs: Commissioner Allen-Pyne reported that the next DHRC community outreach meeting would be held on Wednesday, February 22, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. at Star Hill AME Church on Voshell Mill Road (Directions: South on DuPont Highway to Shore Stop Mart before Walmart. Make a left onto Voshell Mill Road. Church with red metal roof is on left).

D. Intake: Since there is currently no Intake Chair, Commissioner Dr. Warfield volunteered to take on the Intake Form portfolio. She also agreed, in light of her police experience, to act as DHRC liaison with the Dover Police Department.

7. Unfinished Business:

A. Review of Bylaws, Articles I-III:

Commissioner Wasfi pointed out that in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), advanced public notice of all DHRC meetings should be added to Article III, Sect. 2 of the bylaws in order to ensure complete transparency of DHRC proceedings. The motion carried as it applied to "Special Meetings" in addition to regular monthly meetings.

Commissioner Brewington asked whether DHRC community meetings are advertised in utility bills. Commissioner Sudler responded that occasionally they are.

Commissioner White suggested using the Comcast Community Channel to announce all DHRC meetings. Commissioner Wasfi advised that meeting notices to the Comcast Channel had to be provided three weeks in advance of the event.

Commissioner Wasfi made a motion to change to the wording of Article III, Sect. 3 from “emergency meeting” to “meetings to discuss personnel issues,” in order to avoid the appearance of holding closed meetings on substantive issues. The motion passed.

Commissioner Allen-Pyne mentioned previous difficulties with Article III, Sect. 6 dealing with the consequences of Commissioners’ failure to attend three consecutive regular meetings without reasonable cause. Commissioner Wasfi indicated that she had the amended text that had been approved at a previous meeting and would provide the Commissioners with the revised version.*

*[Any member of the Commission who fails to attend three (3) consecutive regular meetings without the Chairperson finding that there was reasonable cause for being absent or fails to attend at least half of all regular business meetings during any calendar year shall be considered insubstantial neglect of duty and in violation of Sec. 58-32(d) of the City Code, Ordinance of 2-11-2002. The Chairperson shall promptly notify the Mayor and City Council President of the situation and recommend terminating that individual’s tenure on the Dover Human Relations Commission.]

8. New Business:

Commissioners Wasfi and Dr. Hackett reiterated the importance of discussing the hate index cards distributed in Dover and the need to obtain clarification from the City Council of the letter instructing the Chair to remove the item from the DHRC meeting agenda.

Commissioner Dr. Hackett inquired as to possible DHRC response to the recent shooting in Dover. Chair Sudler responded that the incident was considered by the City Council and the City Solicitor as not within the purview of the DHRC. The person who filed the Intake Form was an innocent bystander who indicated the name of the officer involved. Commissioner Dr. Warfield asked whether the incident was being investigated by the Police Department of Internal Affairs.

Commissioner Brewington informed the DHRC of the existence of grant entitled “Make Communities Safe.” In order to qualify for the grant, the DHRC would need to have a dialogue in place with the Dover Police to deal with community issues, such as youth anger prevalent today in many cities. Chair Sudler gave examples of other problems such as graffiti on the McKee Road bypass and community gang formation in Dover. Commissioner Brewington added that there were 27 gangs in Dover.

Commissioner White brought up the issue of identifying children as having ADHD and automatically medicating them at an early age. She indicated that often parents are penalized if they do not follow recommendations to medicate their children. Dr. Hackett pointed out that such medication often slows down children's thinking process and added that teachers are sometimes threatened by school administrators if certain children in their classrooms are not medicated. She stressed that over-medicating children can have adverse developmental effects, and advised that these issues should be referred to relevant agencies for review and oversight.

9. Scheduling of the Next Regular Meeting: The next DHRC community outreach meeting would be held on Wednesday, February 22, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. at Star Hill AME Church on Voshell Mill Road (Directions: South on DuPont Highway to Shore Stop Mart before Walmart. Make a left onto Voshell Mill Road. Church with red metal roof is on left).

10. Announcements: Commissioner Dr. Warfield announced that a Free Luncheon would be sponsored by the Delaware Minority Outreach Committee on February 11, 2012, at the Dover Park Recreation Center (copy of flyer attached to the minutes) . The theme of the meeting is "Bridging the Gap Between Community Leaders and the Minority Community."

Chair Sudler announced that several applicants had responded to the advertisement for a new contractual assistant. They will be informed of the time and location of the next meeting and Commission members will have the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the minutes submitted in order to make a decision on appointing a new contractual assistant. Chair Sudler concluded by welcoming the new Commissioners and expressing his appreciation for their input and enthusiasm.

11. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen O. Wasfi
February 14, 2012

Attachments:

1. Copy of Agenda of January 25, 2012 DHRC meeting
2. Correspondence from Assistant to the City Clerk about DHRC jurisdiction over recent Intake Form
3. Copy of flyer distributed in the downtown area in December 2011
4. DHRC Chair's Report of January 2012
5. Announcement of Delaware Minority Outreach Committee Free Luncheon, distributed by Commissioner Dr. Warfield

