

Regular Meeting

Thursday, February 11, 2021, 5:30 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

Present: Chair, Eric Olson; Vice-Chair Franco Webb; Secretary Semone Pemberton; Commissioner Eileen Hatch; Commissioner Mark Kendrick; Commissioner William “Bill” J. Milton, II; Commissioner Dwight Palmer; Commissioner Peter Pappas; Commissioner Donna Pelham; Commissioner J. Vernon Peterson; and Commissioner Myahtaeyarra Warren

Absent: Commissioner Milette Harris and Commissioner Tammy Six

Guest: Jay Toland

Staff Present: Dr. Anthony Wade, Director; Yamile Nazar, Manager; Stephanie Lorenc, Administrative Specialist; and Janet Beaudry, Office Assistant II.

The meeting was called to order at ­­­­5:35 p.m. by Chair Eric Olson, followed by a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Olson spoke to the fact that General Austin, a popular Commander of the 18th Airborne on Fort Bragg, is now the U.S Secretary of Defense.

Motion to approve agenda was made by Commissioner Pemberton, seconded by Vice-Chair Webb; vote was unanimous.

Motion to approve the January 14, 2021, Zoom meeting minutes was made by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Hatch; vote was unanimous.

Chair Olson asked for an update on the Human Relations Scholarships. Ms. Nazar said that there are two confirmed scholarships through Cumberland Community Foundation, and asked about the five thousand dollars being donated by Starbucks. Commissioner Palmer also said there was one scholarship being sponsored by Patriot Outreach. Vice-Chair Webb said he would get in touch with the new manager at the Ramsey Street Starbucks this coming week to see about the funds for the five scholarships. Chair Olson stated that there are a possible eight scholarships available.

Chair Olson spoke about the Executive Order signed by President Biden protecting gender identity and sexual orientation. He states that this was a topic of discussion in 2018 and it is now being brought up again due to the Executive Order. Dr. Wade spoke about the Executive Order. He stated that they are applicable to fair housing and fair employment laws as well as other laws. In 2018, then Chair Cuffee brought this issue to the City Council on behalf of the Commission. He asked if the Commission wanted to bring it up to the City Council again. He also suggested a committee be appointed. Commissioner Pappas asked about the issues that the Commission has talked about, but not taken action on, such as the Market House and community engagement. He also asked about the survey company and if the survey on community engagement has been made public. Dr. Wade spoke to his concerns saying that the Commission can act on its own and also receive direction from the Council. He said the Council appointed two committees, one internal and the other external in regards to race relations, police and community engagement, and the Market House. ETC Institute, the survey company, decided to step away from the process. Therefore, the second step, where the Commission comes into play, was delayed. Dr. Wade also noted that the Commission is a board of the Council. Commissioner Warren added that to survey 800 people would cost between $15,000 to $20,000 and that was restrictive. Dr. Wade said again about a small committee of Commissioners who would decide on the language and a plan of action. There followed further discussion on the topic. Commissioner Palmer stated that the Market House is a National Historic Monument and is federally protected.

Commissioner Palmer asked about the COVID vaccine and the disparity between people of color and white people getting the vaccine. Dr. Wade said that discussion would have to be with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

Next was an appeal to the Commission to set up a committee to decide on the language and a plan of action on the Market House and community engagement. The committee make up is Commissioner Pappas, Commissioner Webb, Commissioner Peterson, and Commissioner Pemberton.

Discussion ensued about the Executive Order and the military.

Chair Olson brought up the Fayetteville State University flier everyone received: Our Voices.Our Votes.Our Vison. It is a discussion called “Let’s Talk: Being Black in America in 2021.” It will be held February 18 from 3:00 p.m. – 4:30p.m.

Dr. Wade shared that the Commission and the City were represented through the department’s support of the Fayetteville Cumberland County Ministerial Council’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Brunch on January 18. He said that on January 30, there was an Affordable Housing workshop and that Ms. Nazar had participated in the planning meeting for the workshop. Commissioner Semone Pemberton also attended this workshop. On February 3, the Department and the Fair Housing Board teamed up for a Fair Housing training. It was for Alliance Health which covers several counties in North Carolina. Dr. Wade also let everyone know that former -Commission Chair Sheila Cuffee is now part of the North Carolina State Human Relations Commission. He also shared that the 82nd Airborne Division has asked him to speak to their group, an executive level group, about racism and extremism.

Chair Olson then encouraged everyone to turn in their shirt sizes for the new logo shirts. Dr. Wade introduced the Commission to Stephanie Lorenc, the new Administrative Specialist with the Department.

Chair Olson said the next Executive Committee meeting would be February 25, 2021, at 5:30 p.m., via Zoom.

The next scheduled Commission meeting will be Thursday, March 11, 2021, at 5:30 p.m., via Zoom.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Pappas. No second motion. Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Approved\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Semone Pemberton, Secretary