

City of Tampa  
Human Rights Board  
Meeting Minutes  
August 12, 2015

The City of Tampa Human Rights Board held their regular bi-monthly meeting on Wednesday, August 12, 2015, at 8:30 a.m., in the 5th floor east conference room, Tampa Municipal Office Building (TMOB), 306 E. Jackson Street, Tampa, Florida.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Laila Abdelaziz  
Anthony Carswell  
Amy Mandel  
Elias Vazquez

**CITY OF TAMPA REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE:**

Maritza Betancourt	Deborah Seigler
Rebecca Cortes	Karen Sinnreich
Margarita Gonzalez	Thomas Snelling
Vanessa B. M <sup>c</sup> Cleary	Justin Vaske

**GUEST:**

Daniel Mc Donald, Police Officer, Tampa Police Department

**Call to Order and Roll Call**

The Chairman, Anthony Carswell, called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes – June 10, 2015**

Motion was made by Ms. Mandel and seconded by Mr. Vazquez, to accept the minutes as submitted. The motion was accepted unanimously.

**REGULAR REPORTS**

**Administrator's Report**

Mr. Snelling informed members that the staff in Community Affairs is now under his department, Planning and Development. He stated that the Action Plan mentioned in the previous meeting, was adopted by City Council and included programing that addresses fair housing and economic development. Also at the previous meeting, he mentioned scheduling one-on-one meetings with the board members. He will ask that his assistant Rosemary set them up within the next several weeks.

Mr. Snelling stated that the City was involved in an ADA lawsuit due to a City staff member not handling a service animal correctly. The City has agreed to train all City staff that has contact with the public and installing ADA signage. Ms. Sinnreich has begun the ADA Title II training sessions; the training is available in English and Spanish. Ms. Gonzalez assisted with presenting the session in Spanish. Ms. Sinnreich was commended for her service in providing the training.

Mr. Snelling requested a meeting venue change, to have meetings at the Development Services Center (DSC) at 1400 N. Boulevard. He also requested a date change to accommodate other meeting conflicts. This concluded his report.

The Chairman asked if it was written in stone that the board should meet on Wednesday. A copy of the ordinance was located and confirmed that the dates was not specified in the ordinance. The board members present agreed that Tuesday was a good day to meet. Therefore, the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, October 13, 2015. The Chairman will touch base with Ms. Cortes to have the next meeting date re-posted administratively. He then asked if Mr. Snelling was proposing that the DSC site be the permanent site for the meetings and Mr. Snelling responded yes. Unless otherwise noted the Human Rights Board meetings will be scheduled at DSC at 1400 North Boulevard.

### **Staff's Report**

Ms. McCleary provided the report on behalf of Ms. Betancourt. She said Ms. Betancourt was out on leave when the Community Affairs staff was moved and returned yesterday (8/11/15) to the new location. She continued by stating that since the last meeting, staff has been working on completing the merger and developing policies and procedures that are in line with the federal guidelines. An audit was conducted and feedback received was not good, where a number of changes needed to be made, and staff has begun to make the changes.

Both Ms. Sinnreich and Ms. Gonzalez completed Week 5 Fair Housing training and Ms. McCleary completed Week 1 Fair Housing training, which was quite intense and informative. Staff had the privilege of receiving on-site training from the HUD Monitor on Client Intake. Staff continues to process files and close cases with many being completed in the last quarter. This past year, ten cases were closed. Last year none were closed. She commended staff for working to get that done and stated that staff will continue to work on the timeline for processing cases, where 100 days is more consistent than what it was in the past. For employment, staff continues to process cases. Ms. Mc Cleary stated that a member from her staff, Ms. Qiana Daughtry, attended the EEOC training conference.

### **ADA Coordinator Report**

Ms. Sinnreich is conducting ADA Title II training for COT employees. She informed the members that she is the liaison for the Mayor's Alliance for Persons with Disabilities, and this group will be having their annual awards luncheon on October 16, 2015. She provided a copy of the invitation and stated that the luncheon includes nominations for different categories. For the program, Jack Harris will be the emcee, and the Mayor will give out the awards. She mentioned the Job Fair for Veterans and persons with disabilities will be held November 12<sup>th</sup> in connection with Operation Reveille.

Ms. McCleary suggested having the job fair the next day, after the Operation Reveille event, since everything would be set up. The Port Authority was secured for the job fair location, since there is more space. Ms. McCleary mentioned that last year Operation Reveille was held on November 11<sup>th</sup> on Veterans Day. The goal was to have fifty (50) vets and they ended up housing seventy-nine (79). This year, the president has an initiative that veteran homelessness would end by this year, and this year's goal is one hundred and fifty (150), based on point and time count. When working on homeless issues there is a lot of support and a lot of community collaboration which includes the Police Department. Ms. McCleary concluded her report by introducing Officer McDonald.

### **Tampa Police Department Homeless Efforts**

Officer McDonald thanked the board for the invitation to the meeting. He stated that he and Officer Sandra (White) Phelps are liaisons for the homeless. Their job is to work with the homeless and try to get them off the street. He helped with Operation Reveille and will work with that group again this year, in order to get veterans off the street. He has been working with the homeless for three years. Efforts are going very well and homelessness count is down about 33% in Hillsborough County. He helps persons obtain I.D.'s, and it was found that birth certificates cannot be obtained without an I.D., and an I.D. is needed to get a house, and one cannot get an I.D. without a birth certificate. There is a church that donated ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for birth certificate services, which is administered by THHI. That was one gap that was identified and for which they found a solution. He added that for persons who are mentally ill, they work together with the Crisis Intervention Team. They continue to find better ways to serve the community and solve problems.

The Chairman asked Officer McDonald what was the focus area in the city. He responded that he and Sandra (White) Phelps covered the whole city. Officer McDonald stated that he relied on trust, and that was why he did not specifically arrest someone. He calls someone else if a person has a warrant or issue. Assuming there are no issues, they conduct a housing survey for people that they see on the street and THHI checks against their master list, and provide him with a tablet to use in real time, to add people to a housing waiting list. Persons are prioritized according to vulnerability and in dire need, and it helps identify them a lot quicker. Service is also provided to someone who needs help on the spot. Some other services include referral to Grace Point for mental health care, or a hotel room for a night. It has taken him a couple of years with some persons and still working with others now.

Mr. Vazquez said that Officer McDonald does a good job and that was why he invited him to this meeting. It is a long process and it is going to be effective. Mr. Vazquez stated there were other officers that are trained and are dealing with homeless persons' issues and he has provided assistance recently, and it worked out well. He commented that the mission is not only to reduce crime, but to enhance quality of life. The Chairman stated that hopefully there was awareness of this service, because he was not aware of this service. Mr. Vazquez said that it was included in their social media section as well as newsletters and the newspaper. Often people miss the good news stories and focus on negative ones.

Ms. Mandel asked that when persons are placed in housing, if there was a cost to them for the remaining time in the house. Officer McDonald said it is on a sliding scale. People that were most vulnerable and at risk with the most extreme mental illness, were placed in supportive housing and assigned a case worker or case manager. The housing model called Housing First has shown housing people first was

less expensive than the alternative of consuming emergency room and police resources. There were other people that could be placed in the Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) housing program. Mr. Snelling said it was similar to a Section 8 voucher for a two-year period. Ms. Mandel asked if the City was paying for this program and Ms. McCleary responded yes, and that it involved agreements with different agencies. Once you get them housed, now they have an address and may be eligible for social security or other benefits, and they start looking for a job. The TBRA program allows them eighteen months to become stable, and that is when the City stops paying and decrease payment as they stabilize and are able to take care of themselves. There are a few clients who have moved on in less than one year.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

The Chairman stated that the topics under Old Business are to be removed from the next meeting's agenda. Discussion has taken place on increase in board members and the adoption of by-laws will be tabled.

Mr. Vaske said he saw this on the agenda, and he took the liberty to prepare a draft on Rules of Order for the board, for review and discussion. He followed the format for Hillsborough County. He asked everyone to review to discuss at next meeting. The Chairman highly encouraged the board members to review the draft for discussion at the next meeting.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

The Chairman stated that discussions have taken place this year regarding the fair wage ordinance or fair wage discrimination. Ms. Mc Cleary requested that this item be tabled as staff had not had a chance to confer with Mr. Vaske and prepare a report. Mr. Vaske said the ordinance would have to be reviewed to determine the board's jurisdiction and mandate. If the board wanted to expand the mandate, the code would have to be amended to expand the mandate. Ms. Mandel asked if it was appropriate for the board to have a public opinion on an issue. Mr. Vaske stated he would research the issue. Ms. Mc Cleary will meet with Mr. Vaske prior to the next Human Rights Board meeting to clarify the role of the board and their authority and prepare a formal report for the next meeting.

### **Parker Alexander Homans**

The Chairman asked for the status of new board member, Parker Alexander Homans. Mr. Homans has completed the appointment process but was unable to attend the meeting today, due to prior commitment. He plans to attend the next meeting in October. Ms. Mandel asked what category does he represent and the response was Real Estate Sales. The Chairman said that the category of Property Leasing remains vacant.

The Chairman asked if anyone had any other items/topics to cover to open the floor for discussion. There being none, he thanked Mr. Vaske for the information to be reviewed and thanked Ms. Sinnreich for her work with the Mayor's Alliance for Persons with Disabilities. He asked that she continue to send him e-mails with information, which he also shares.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, October 13, 2015, at 8:30 a.m.

**Adjournment**

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

Respectfully submitted