

City of Tampa
Human Rights Board
Meeting Minutes
December 11, 2013

The City of Tampa Human Rights Board held their annual meeting on Wednesday, December 11, 2013 at 10:00 a.m., in the Mayor's Conference Room of City Hall, 306 E. Jackson Street, Tampa, Florida.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Laila Abdelaziz
Anthony Carswell, Chairman
Amy Mandel
John Perry

Anna Ramos
Jeffrie Van Loveren
Clinton Paris, Hearing Officer

CITY OF TAMPA REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Bob Buckhorn
Maritza Betancourt
Rebecca Cortes
Margarita Gonzalez

Deborah Marshall
Karen Sinnreich
Jake Slater

GUEST:

Anna Stracey, Graduate Student, USF

Call to Order

Anthony Carswell, Chairman, called the meeting to order and then presented Mayor Buckhorn. The Mayor passed out copies of a pamphlet, prepared by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, on the 2013 Municipal Equality Index. It highlighted Tampa as #1 in Human Rights.

Mayor Buckhorn's Comments

The Mayor continued by saying that he thinks the City is coming out of recession, is in good shape, and that the economy and job creation is picking up more jobs created in Tampa than any other place in Florida. Tampa is leading the state out of recession and that is good news. There are three quarters of a billion dollars' worth of work coming out of the ground, which means property tax revenue. In addition to that, on the human infrastructure side, he thinks a lot of progress has been made. He said that some of the members may have read about the index. It speaks volume as to who we are in the city, where we're going, and how we value the contributions of everybody. We are a city that is setting the standard on how people should be treated fairly. The index basically says, in terms of LGBT issues, is that the City of Tampa is number one in the state of Florida, and beat Orlando and Miami, as a result of steps taken. Tampa was third last year. He met with representatives of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and asked what could be done better to make Tampa more competitive, and they told him. Whether it's the Domestic Partner Registry, as a result of what Tampa did, almost every other jurisdiction, except Hillsborough County, has implemented it. He thinks that the pressure was put on without saying anything, and just leading on the issues, caused them to reverse their long health position on recognition of any gay-related festivities. What hurt Tampa competitively, was during the recruitment process, companies did not want to come to a place where their employees may not feel welcome. The Mayor highlighted the fact that he marched in the parade, when the mayor of St. Petersburg wouldn't. Again,

Tampa did not have to say a word, just show up. This is good for us and this helps tell the world we honor everyone's contributions.

Ms. Mandel provided the Mayor a copy of a letter on equality that was sent to his office for his signature. She hopes a photo could be taken of the Mayor signing the letter. The Mayor had not seen the letter, and she said that it would be a huge step for him to join four hundred other mayors on an issue. He said he told Nadine he generally does not join big national groups, because he cannot control what they do, even though he's a huge supporter of common sense gun violence reduction strategies. Potentially that group may make a law that he is not comfortable with. He is a gun owner and has been for many years and wouldn't deny anybody the opportunity to not purchase one, but there's a common sense strategy for gun ownership. He told Ms. Mandel he wanted to see what the letter says, and he will forward to Ali Glisson, Public Affairs Director, for review before signing it.

The Chairman asked the Mayor if there were any issues or challenges he was proud of outside of this. The Mayor said that the most fascinating and takes most pride in over the last 2- 2 ½ years, is not much the bricks and mortars, even though that's important, but it is the sense of optimism of the City's future. You feel that people are excited about where the City is going, they see the vision, and they bought into the idea that this is Tampa's time. People from all over the world ask him what's going on, what's happening in Tampa, why is Tampa doing so well, and what's the buzz about this place.

Ms. Betancourt asked the Mayor for a brief summary on the Mayor's Neighborhood University project. He said that Mr. Slater was coordinating that project. When he ran for office, he realized that this was one of the disadvantages or advantages for having been around for as long as he's been around. When he started in 1987, some of the same neighborhood leaders then are the neighborhood leaders now. Some are 70, 80, or 90 years old and are not versive in modern technology. They've been fighting a good fight for about 25-30 years. The Mayor realized that one of his legacies should be to build a conrail for the next generation of neighborhood folks, institutionalize what we're trying to do here, and to carry on that tradition. The Mayor's Neighborhood University was set up with a new curriculum to hopefully teach the next generation of neighborhood leaders to take the places of the Margaret Bizzies and the ones who have been doing this for a long time. Two classes will be held annually; Jay Kelly will be trained, and the class size is about 150 persons. At the end of this, he said you could conceivably have about 1,000 new neighborhood activists empowered to be successful for their neighborhoods, and that makes a better city for all of us, particularly in areas that need reorganization.

The Mayor joked that Davis Island is going to be fine. They have high maintenance folks, some who would like to put a bridge or barrier on Davis Island, because they do not want any of those people, whoever those people are, going to the island. He hasn't figured out who those people are yet, but he has a good idea. He continued by saying that there are some tougher neighborhoods that need that grass root support, and thinks that the Mayor's Neighborhood University is going to be very helpful to them, and that our future is pretty bright, if we keep going the way we're going.

The Mayor and the Chairman asked if anyone had other questions.

Ms. Stracey asked the Mayor what he was doing to engage young people in Tampa, since downtown was changing, and she feels that persons under 35 years of age are pushing for change. She also asked what he was doing to make sure they're part of the process that Tampa is being shaped into.

The Mayor said that there's been a significant trend around the country on in migration to the urban core versus the suburban out migration from the city. It's largely driven by young professionals and some of the empty nesters who want to give up the house in the suburbs and move to downtown. This explosion in the downtown population is largely young professionals who can afford to live in high-rise condos at \$2,000 per month rent and want that urban experience. When City Council members hold discussions on approval of high-rise buildings, a group of young professionals come to the rescue and tell City Council members what they think and why density is needed in downtown. He thinks that that the Chamber of Commerce recognizes that as the City heads down a discussion on rail mass transit, it's partially fueled by some of the young folk that are part of a group called Connect Tampa Bay. He's trying to get them engaged to recognize that when he leaves office, he may pass on to one of them, and they will have to be prepared. If we're going to compete with those folks, stuff like this matters, because those folks are largely gender-blind and want to come to a place where they know people are going to be treated fairly. That's why what the Human Rights Board does is important. It sends a signal and that's a big deal for us.

Ms. Van Loveren asked the Mayor a question about wireless in downtown. He said that he was reviewing a proposal by Bright House in response to a Request For Proposal (RFP). He wants to make Tampa a hip, cool place.

The Mayor said that Tampa was just named as the second best place for a food truck. They are part of making this a destination for them young bright people and most cities' food trucks go against the grain of every ordinance that you could possibly imagine. The same holds true in Tampa. St. Petersburg has been trying for two years and we did it in one week and set the Guinness Book of World Records for the largest food truck parade with about 99 food trucks. The word spread and young people like that stuff.

Ms. Abdelaziz asked the Mayor a question on mass transit that obviously the state government hasn't given us much of a core into it and if the East coast was doing private development. In terms of connecting and developing Tampa as an urban core, she said mass transit would be something to look forward to.

The Mayor said Tampa is the only jurisdiction of our size in the country that does not have mobility options, not just mass transit, but Rapid Bus as well. He thinks that because there's a lot of pressure, it has started to bare on the issue of mass transit. Pinellas County has a light rail initiative coming to the ballot in 2014, on mass transit. He plans to contact the legislature and ask for the ability for cities to have the authority to have a referendum within the city limits and not needing to do it countywide. If he can do it in the city, he thinks it could pass. Assuming that it doesn't happen, the fallback position would be, in the Spring of 2015 for his re-election, that they put on the ballot, a referendum for a sales tax increase of one-half or one-cent increase. Then the County adds it on, and not too many county folks will vote and what they will perceive is a city election. He thinks the voters will be from the city and if things go the way they seem to be going, he will probably not get serious opposition. If he does, he will deal with it. It doesn't look like it, and at least he's not hearing anything, which frees him up to do campaigning for it, and there's a chance this could be won, but need to be done in phases. Back in 2010, there was a problem with a big plan that no one understood. The routes were not flushed out, what the cost was, and the type of units they were going to be running on it. If you did a route hypothetically from the airport, especially given all of the airport's expansion, to downtown, where people could see it, touch it, feel it and recognize that it's going to work, then he thinks we can pull this off. He would like to present while the President is still in office, because that's where our friends are and they're supportive of rail and have told him in as

much. The new secretary of transportation, former mayor of Charlotte, is a good friend of his. He said we've got to get our share of the money to the table, which means we've got to get the referendum passed. It would be a great legacy for all to have over the next five years to bring baseball to downtown Tampa and mass transit.

Ms. Van Loveren asked if there were any other developments that might change dynamics.

The Mayor said three towers are coming, two in Channelside, both 30-story residential rental and the Straz Tower, a 36-story building, which is being sued and hopefully the delay will not kill the deal, which is between the Straz Performing Arts Center and the Tampa Museum of Art. In the Spring of next year, the old federal courthouse will open as a 100-room boutique hotel. There will be a loft on Kennedy and Ashley, and the Riverwalk is to be completed by Thanksgiving next year. Richard Gonzmart's Ulele Springs Restaurant on the north end of the waterfront and the spring is being re-done. It served as a spring for the City for about forty years and got clogged. It has been dug out and the park next to it is being re-done. Mr. Gonzmart wants to take the spring water and create a craft beer specific to Ulele Springs Restaurant. Ms. Abdelaziz said she has seen more businesses in downtown, not places where you work, especially a new grocery store and Rock The Park. The Mayor said that two remaining parcels on Harbour Island have been purchased for a residential high-rise. Jeff Vinik has acquired all of the land around the St. Pete Forum and there are three quarters of a billion dollars of work coming out of the ground, like Post Properties apartments in north Hyde Park and The Crescent on Bayshore. Also, if you put baseball downtown, it's going to be a game changer. Channelside is slowly coming out of bankruptcy.

Ms. Stracey mentioned that the Straz Tower is going up and asked if there was any effort to combine private money from the developer with maybe the County and re-do the John F. Germany library, which needs refacing. The developer could maybe put the library on the bottom and the tower on top.

The Mayor said there's a master plan for the future of that library, since the nature of libraries in this era is not all books, it's technology and much of the traffic are folks looking up genealogy. He thinks a new library could be built to reflect how libraries are being used now and be architecturally significant and keep Judge Germany's name on it and relocate it. The City owns the land and leases to the County, but the City could get the property back and put a tower there and park in between the tower. She also said there is a need for more bike racks. The Mayor said he was trying to get more sponsors for the bike rack project.

Ms. Marshall asked what the proposal was for the riverfront on the west bank. The Mayor said that the City has, for decades, turned its back on the waterfront, largely because it was a working waterfront and the phosphate industry was big here. The ships used to come up the river. The docks were all along the river, and the City as opposed to looking at the river as its best asset and destination point, sort of looked the other way. That's how Franklin Street Mall was built. To him, the waterfront is an absolute mission and should be the main focus of everything that is done in downtown. That's what makes us different in having the waterfront. Hopefully at the end of his tenure years, the river will be the center of urban experience. He said if you've noticed, Tampa has always looked at the river as a barrier and you rarely see people or students from the University of Tampa walking across the bridge and looking at it as just another part of downtown. There are 148 acres from the University of Tampa up through and behind Rick's on the River, that generate only \$150,000 in property tax, and there is a master plan to re-create

that environment, specifically, from Riverfront Park, which is a vastly under-utilized park. You can't see the river from N. Boulevard, because there are some bumps or mounds in the middle, like a 1960's design, really inefficient. He said if you look at the success of Curtis Hixon Park, it attracted people downtown with programming of the Funk Fest to the Irish Fest, and you could do the same with Riverfront Park. The land is owned by The Tampa Housing Authority, the school system, and the City. Fifteen acres are used to park trucks and it's a colossal waste of property. He's going to contact the Obama administration and ask them for a choice neighborhood grant, like what he did with the old Central Park Village and ONCORE, similar to what was done with Ponce de Leon and College Hill. The environment was changed, and the North Boulevard Homes have to come down and eventually Robles will have to come down and be re-built. If he can take the 148 acres and re-create the environment to have subsidized housing with market rate housing that doesn't look any different, you can create a live, work, and play environment, mid-rise development with the amenities mixed in with residential and retail, just imagine the retail corridor the main avenue used to be, and could be again, all on the water and all focused on the water. It would really turn around old West Tampa, dramatically change the way the city looks. Then the values of the properties in North Hyde Park will increase and open up for potential rail corridors. The old armory will become a Jewish community center, which will be a tremendous asset for the neighborhoods, and everything from Howard Avenue and Armenia Avenue to the river will be transformed.

Mr. Paris asked about Central Park and displacement and said often times, you will have human rights issues that come up. He asked the Mayor what would be some proactive steps that could be taken to prepare to deal with on the front side as opposed to the back side, and scare off potential investors that would participate.

The Mayor said we have learned from mistakes going back to HOPE VI days in College Hill and Ponce de Leon. He said there will be temporary dislocation, since you have to move people out, in order to build. Short-term, like Central Park, now ONCORE, when you demolish a building, people are given vouchers to seek other places to live. The commitment is, for those people who want to come back, they will be able to come back, but will have higher standards to live by. What evolved in Central Park, Ponce de Leon, and College Hill will not happen in the new projects. There will be higher standards that people will be held to, particularly if you put affordable housing, subsidized housing and market-rate housing. Someone will not buy a \$150,000 condo, if the next door neighbors have their car pulled up in the front lawn up on blocks. It's not going to happen and it doesn't work. People have to be held up to standards in terms of cleanliness, maintenance, and not having people that are not on the lease that aren't allowed to live there, no drugs, just normal stuff. In ONCORE, the first building is for seniors who were in Central Park and moved back into the facility. The same will be true for the North Boulevard Homes. Will there be some bad actors that won't be allowed to move back? Yes. What you see happens unfortunately is, the 1/10 of 1% of folks that are intent on causing mayhem, when they are evicted from public housing, that same mayhem follows them to wherever they go. When they knocked down College Hill and Ponce de Leon, and gave folks vouchers and dispersed them temporarily, the crime rate in the University area (suitcase city) and Progress Village rose and those bad folks caused problems wherever they ended up. We can't let that happen, and got to give people a good quality of life.

Mr. Paris made a comment that he wants to make sure that Tampa gets ahead with the key factor to get the private investor Servatus to scare off some of the people who do not want to participate and ways we might have thought about and take advantage. But if they see it's going to be a public relations issue and

things of that nature, it can become controlling. Folks in West Tampa want to protect the old Weaver house over at the Boys and Girls Club, and it is still boarded up.

The Mayor said that there is a need to give people tools needed for their success. Some times that means taking the time to help them learn what they don't know. He continued by saying that what he has seen is, if you set a level of expectations and set of standards, the vast majority of people would want to live up to that standard. They don't want their neighborhoods to fall into disrepair, and they don't want the knuckleheads and gang bangers living next to them. They want a nice and peaceful safe existence, where they can raise their families. If you ask a lot of them, they will step up.

Ms. Betancourt asked the Mayor if there was going to be any public relations campaign dealing with that, so that the general public that would be willing to move into these areas, would know there are restrictions and those who like to play the game, would know this is out of their league.

The Mayor said that the bad ones won't be allowed back, because there's a thorough screening process that they need to go through to get back into public housing. It's always a challenge to overcome to convince people that you can have mixed neighborhoods and that everyone get along, and the value of the property is not going to diminish because interspersed into market rate and is not subsidized housing. He saw what was done in Charlotte, in the fourth ward, where they mixed neighborhoods and it was tremendously successful. Again, it gets back to holding people to standards, not letting those standards diminish, punishing those that choose to violate the standards, and people will rise to the occasion. There is going to be potential for those 148 acres. It is exciting, especially if we can link it to mass transit.

This concluded the Mayor's comments.

At 10:45 a.m. the meeting was put on hold so that a group photo could be taken. A suggestion was made for all to receive a copy of the photo.

Once the photo was taken, the Chairman thanked the Mayor for taking the time to meet with the board and told him he could stay for the remainder of the meeting. However, he was unable to stay and the Chairman thanked him for all he does and said his communication was huge with the issue that Mr. Paris brought up, that he was communicative and transparent, and that's all that's needed. The Mayor's final comment was that he had nothing to hide and that this was the people's government.

Before the Chairman referred back to the agenda, Mr. Slater said that was the Mayor's overall vision, which we hear every day. It's his time and he has worked for this, and he is going to change Tampa. Mr. Slater then thanked everyone for their questions to the Mayor.

Recall To Order and Roll Call

The Chairman then took the roll for the record.

Regular Reports

Administrator's Report

The Chairman then gave the floor to Mr. Slater, who thanked everyone for their attendance. He said there were great things going on in Community Affairs and informed members that the video produced by Mercury Productions, Inc. would follow in a few minutes. The video covers discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. When the video ended, Mr. Slater asked for input, and all agreed that it was short, informative, and to the point. He said that the video would be used at various community meetings, outreach meetings, organizations and fairs.

EEOC/Employment, Public Accommodations and /Fair Housing/HUD Reports

Ms. Betancourt reported that for fiscal year 2014, so far two employment cases had been closed. With only two investigators, they were able to collect \$45,000 in settlements for the two cases; one for \$30,000 and one for \$15,000. Current projects involve the process of negotiations with Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the fair housing testing program, which was put on hold in 2009, due to reduction of staff. In the past, 60 tests were conducted and maybe 60-65, due to re-testing. This year, a decision was made to conduct 30 tests on the bases of disability, familial status, national origin, and race. In the past, the fine for the first offense was \$5,000 and \$10,000 for second offense, and monies were donated to non-profit housing organizations. No decision has been made yet for this fiscal year, on awarding monies to non-profit housing organizations. The Housing Opportunity Projects for Excellence (HOPE), a Fair Housing Initiative Program (FHIP), has been awarded with a grant to take care of training, guidance, and overseeing the entire project.

ADA Disability Rights Coordinator

Ms. Sinnreich reported that over 200 persons attended the Mayor's Alliance for Persons with Disabilities luncheon on October 18, 2013 at the DoubleTree Hotel/Westshore. She helped put together a Request for Qualification (RFQ) and now there are vendors who provide deaf interpreter services for the City of Tampa. She is working with the housing consortium for an upcoming conference will take place in Clearwater. The Mayor's Alliance for Persons with Disabilities had a forum with Senator Jeff Brandes, regarding Hillsborough County's gasoline pump ordinance, where someone with a disability simply calls the gas station's telephone number to get someone to pump gas. There is a problem in other counties, where people honk their horn to get service. Senator Brandes is trying to get a statewide bill, which he has presented to the House and made assurance for passage. She and Connie Hayden-McPeak, Treasurer of the Mayor's Alliance for Persons with Disabilities, attended an evening county-wide network fair. It was a gathering of persons with disabilities, and she did outreach by passing out information on the Mayor's Alliance for Persons with Disabilities and Community Affairs, as well as slips on Accessible Tampa's web page. She is involved in two other areas that whenever she receives a call from someone who has questions, she refers them to both State and Federal programs/services, and to Veterans Affairs. She was contacted by Pricewaterhouse Coopers regarding employment for disabled persons.

Old Business

(Closed Board Business) Update on Reasonable Cause Case – The Chairman informed the guest, Ms. Stracey that the board needed to discuss a reasonable cause case outside of her presence and asked her to step out for about fifteen minutes.

Ms. Betancourt said that with regard to the most recent reasonable cause case, this week she received an email from Ms. Singer, that the Iglesias case was submitted to her for final review and determination as to

the next step to follow. She received an email with a letter to the Complainant, advising Complainant that the City of Tampa attorney determined that a lawsuit could not be filed on his behalf, and that the case was closed. That's the letter that she's preparing to be delivered to Mr. Iglesias, and a copy to be sent to the Manali family, who is the Respondent.

Ms. Betancourt asked Mr. Paris and the board members if they remembered the Lucian Knotts case, a reasonable cause case as well. The Housing and Urban Development (HUD) continues to ask for the final outcome, because the system shows reasonable cause closure, but there's always something that needs to be done after the reasonable cause finding. She said that Mr. Paris can inform the members on his findings.

Mr. Paris said the case drug on for a long time and because the Complainant was represented by counsel, they along with the attorney for the Tampa Housing Authority, worked out a resolution with the Tampa Housing Authority, who was not overly excited about sharing information. So what happened was, they worked out a resolution and Complainant notified him via a Notice to Withdraw of the complaint, and that cut his authority to engage, even the counsel was apologetic about what could be done. Mr. Paris tried to circle back with the Tampa Housing Authority and they sent some information. Ms. Mandel said that if the case was resolved, it was possibly with inclusion that the Complainant couldn't say anything. The Chairman asked if HUD would not accept resolved with a NDA in effect. Ms. Betancourt said HUD originally wanted to see the actual agreement. Ms. Mandel said it should not matter, since the Complainant withdrew the complaint. Ms. Betancourt does not know if HUD would accept a statement whereby something is mentioned regarding this case was resolved amicably between the two parties and that Complainant withdrew the complaint. Ms. Mandel said that it was interesting that there's not any kind of statute that states that once you make a formal complaint and it's public knowledge, the resolution has to be public. The Chairman said that it's like Mr. Paris said, you don't have a Complainant. Mr. Slater said this would be something that Ms. Singer could comment about at the next meeting, since technical issues are involved. Mr. Paris continued by saying, so we lose the Complainant and do not have the ability to really be forthwith to HUD, saying here's what was done with the Complainant, because he's not exactly sure of what they did and they're not overly thrilled about sharing all of the information. Basically, when you lose a Complainant, then you do not have all information related to resolution, and he as Hearing Officer, cannot compel them to give him the information, and at the end of the day, the Complainant cannot divulge the settlement agreement terms. In the legal world, you also have confidential resolution of cases, but you do not want this and it's kind of a sticking point here. He wanted to get some information from the Complainant, as to stating we resolved it, but he thinks HUD wants more detail about what they did and of course, they do not want to set precedence for other violations that may come in the future.

Ms. Mandel asked if the Tampa Housing Authority was a government agency. Mr. Paris said it is a different agency, a legislatively created body within the Hillsborough County structure. It's not under the City or County. It sits on authority, and federally funded. Ms. Mandel said that in other words, they do not have to tell and Mr. Paris responded no and that unfortunately, in the world of disputes, you want to give the parties the option to work out a resolution, because you do not want it to have it pass judgment as fair or unfair.

New Business

None at this time.

Recall - Approval of Minutes

The Chairman then referred to the agenda and asked members if they had received the minutes for October 9, 2013, asked them to review for corrections (minutes had been mailed to members and copies were also available at this meeting). Mr. Perry accepted the minutes, but excused himself, because he had to report to work. **Motion** was **made** by Ms. Mandel and seconded by Ms. Ramos, to accept the minutes as submitted. The **motion** was **accepted** unanimously by all members present.

Ms. Abdelaziz asked Ms. Sinnreich if Pricewaterhouse Coopers had any specific program, if it was by recommendation and if they were looking for CPA's. Ms. Sinnreich said there were all kinds of jobs and would talk to her after the meeting, and that new regulations would go into effect next March 2014 for federal contractors to hire persons with disabilities.

The Chairman said that the remaining items on the agenda, under Old Business could be covered at the next meeting in February, because this meeting lasted longer than expected, but with good information. He thanked Mr. Slater and Ms. Betancourt for their updates and asked if anyone had anything else before adjournment. He reminded everyone to see Ms. Cortes for parking validation tickets and wished everyone a happy holiday.

Next Meeting

The Chairman announced that the next meeting has been scheduled for February 12, 2014, at 8:30 a.m.

Adjournment

A **motion** to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Van Loveren, seconded by Ms. Mandel, and the **motion passed** by all members present, to adjourn the meeting. This concluded the business of the Board at 11:15 a.m.

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