

North Carolina Human Relations Commission  
Minutes of Commission Meeting  
June 24, 2014

The North Carolina Human Relations Commission convened in regular session on Tuesday, June 24, 2014 at 10:02 a.m. in the Department of Administration Building, Raleigh, North Carolina.

The following members were present:

Norris Aikens, Chairman  
Guy Anglade  
Kevin Daniels  
Luke Farley  
Kevin Ferrell  
Laura Jamerson  
Immanuel Jarvis  
Torre J. Jessup  
Valerie Johnson  
Paul A. Lowe  
Sterling McDiarmid  
R. Tony McGhee, Sr.  
Dana Merck  
Gilbert Parker  
Mike Picarelli  
Ralph "Steve" Stevenson

Members Absent:

Nancy McAllister  
Brenda G. Mills  
Sheree Sampson  
Richard Walz  
Carlos Zukowski

Staff Members Present: Emily Williams, Executive Director; Richard Boulden

Also Present: Hon. Justice Paul Newby, Secretary of Administration, Bill Daughtridge, Jr., Deputy Secretary, Bill Bryan

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

Called to Order -- Chairman Norris Aikens

Prayer

## Pledge of Allegiance

## Welcoming Remarks – Secretary Bill Daughtridge

## Swearing in of New Commissioners – Hon. Justice Paul Newby, NC Supreme Court

## Introductions – Chairman Aikens

## Statutory Basis for the Commission – Richard Boulden

HRC Legal Counsel Richard Boulden explained the North Carolina Human Relations Commission functions and duties set forth in N.C.G.S §143B-391 (1)-(12).

Section 143B-391 sets forth the Commission's duties & authority. The Commission has broad authority to examine, report, educate, and advise upon statewide issues of race, diversity, discrimination, and equal opportunity. § 143B-392 sets forth the appointment, procedures, and compensation of the Commission.

## Open Discussion -- Commission

Chairman Aikens stated that the Commission has broad powers, and that he is open to all ideas. Different Commissioners can work on different areas. The Chairman recommended that Commissioners review a video, "Racial Taboo," for background and history of race relations issues. The Commission will send the link to all Commissioners so they can evaluate the video as a tool for improving race relations. He then opened the floor for ideas for the Commission.

Commissioner Johnson asked what had been done at the previous meeting. Director Williams responded that the staff were unable to locate the minutes of the previous meeting, which had occurred more than a year ago.

Commissioner Stevenson spoke about Fair Housing and other housing issues that he is involved in. He asked if the Commission could refer such issues to local commissions. Director Williams and Counsel Boulden explained that the Human Relations Commission is considered a Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP), designated as a substantially equivalent program by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to investigate fair housing complaints. There are five additional FHAPs in North Carolina, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, City of Winston-Salem, City of Greensboro, City of Durham and Orange County.

Ms. Williams described the process of receiving and investigating a fair housing complaint and jurisdictional issues relative to these complaints.

Counsel Boulden then described the Commission's duties under the NC Fair Housing Act. The Commission reviews Administrative Law Judges' proposed decisions and accepts, rejects, or modifies them. This task may be delegated to a three-member panel of Commissioners.

Commissioners Stevenson and Lowe discussed initiating formal dialogue with local HRCs. The Chair stated that Commissioners should interact with the local human relations commissions in their districts. Commissioner McGhee commented that Commissioners must be aware of community situations and bring insights to the NC Human Relations Commission. (NCHRC)

The Chair noted that whatever the NCHRC did would be attacked, so the Commissioners must make sure they are right. Commissioner Parker asked if NCHRC should contact the leaders of the Moral Mondays movement and the NAACP to initiate dialogue. Commissioner Lowe said that was possible; that the NCHRC has a responsibility to look at important issues affecting its constituents; and noted the wide array of issues where NCHRC could make a difference.

Commissioner Daniels suggested that the NCHRC set up parameters for its work, in order to focus on key issues. He voiced concerns that politics could infiltrate the NCHRC. Human Relations is more than just politics, but could work on issues of general concern and agreement. Commissioner Parker agreed, and asked what localities have HRCs. Commissioner Stevenson advocated examining other types of discrimination. He pointed out that a criminal record can injure a person's job and housing prospects for life. Commissioner Daniels said NCHRC should work with housing authorities and community colleges to help get people employed.

Commissioner Lowe asked the Chair to discuss his vision for the NCHRC. Chairman Aikens stated that his role is to facilitate action within the guidelines set by the statute. He stated that the Commission has leverage in choosing how to further human relations. He asked what the Commission could do regarding race relations and how the Commission could work to eliminate race problems.

Commissioner Johnson suggested going to the local HRCs and discussing potential issues and options for resolving them. Commissioner Daniels said that the Governor's priorities are to identify problems and find solutions. Commissioner Picarelli stated that there will always be politics, and the best way to help would be to form committees that addressed specific subject areas. Commissioner Jarvis said there are so many issues, they should pick four issues to focus on. Commissioner Farley agreed that it was necessary to focus on three issues.

Commissioner McDiarmid stated that the Commission has a clear slate and a great opportunity to start fresh. Commissioner Anglade said they should set the agenda for the next meeting now. Commissioner Jarvis said they should appoint committees today because there is a lot of work to be done and committees will focus need to focus on these subject areas.

The Chair asked how often the Commission meets. Director Williams stated the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission meets on a quarterly basis; and that there has not been an annual retreat. Commissioner Stevenson inquired about the option of having meetings by teleconference relative to requirements for face-to-face meetings.

Commissioner Jarvis advised the Commission to move quickly to set up committees. Commissioner Picarelli stated that all commissioners are liaisons to their communities, and suggested establishing committees on housing and employment; Commissioner Jarvis agreed. Commissioner Stevenson said there should be four main topics, to which the committees could apply the statutory mandates.

Commissioner Parker moved to set up bi-monthly meetings, rather than quarterly; the motion was seconded. After discussion, Commissioner Jarvis amended his motion to be for bi-monthly meetings through 2014, then quarterly thereafter, if the budget can accommodate extra meetings. Commissioner Stevenson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Director Williams informed the Commission that teleconference meetings were an option; and they comply with the Open Meetings Act. They are less costly than face-to-face meetings and are time effective for Commissioners, especially those who have to travel a long way. Also, Commissioners can attend face-to-face meetings by speakerphone. Commissioner Jarvis asked if members attending by phone could be counted as present for a quorum. Director Williams confirmed that attendance by teleconference is allowable for quorum. Commissioner Johnson reminded the Commissioners to complete their ethics training.

The Chairman asked how the Commissioners want to address the issues raised. Commissioner Picarelli made a motion to form committees based on commissioners' interests and backgrounds. Commissioner Stevenson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The Chairman asked what committees should be formed, and whose backgrounds and interests suited each committee. Commissioner Picarelli said that there are local HRCs in each district. He suggested committees on:

- Fair housing,
- Education and youth,
- Public safety, and
- Employment/ job training.

Commissioner Jarvis asked what was meant by public safety. Commissioner Picarelli answered that it would include police issues with the public, incarceration rates, etc. He stated that Greensboro police have received complaints. He noted that there seems to be a disconnect between police and public in several communities around the state.

Commissioner Merck asked to add a Youth committee. Commissioner Johnson said people want to be heard, to know that someone cares about their concerns. Many are frustrated. The Commission wants to solve problems.

The Chairman stated that they should concentrate on four subject areas. Commissioner Jarvis said they should promote racial equality. Commissioner Stevenson said the committees should analyze each problem and report back. Commissioner Picarelli suggested considering an international community advisory board for recruiting volunteers from the various communities. Commissioner Jessup suggested using the term “diversity.” Commissioner Jarvis noted that the committees were starting to overlap. Commissioner Picarelli said that the education committee should examine public instruction. He wanted attention on closing achievement gaps. Commissioner Jarvis said they were forgetting their twelve statutory mandates. Commissioner McGhee said they should consider all twelve mandates as they relate to each specific committee subject.

Commissioner Lowe made a motion to establish the committees suggested by Commissioner Picarelli. The Chairman announced that the committees would be as follows:

1. Fair Housing,
2. Public Instruction,
3. Public Safety, and
4. Employment/Job Training.

Commissioner Stevenson noted that a criminal record causes discrimination in all aspects of life. The motion was seconded, and passed unanimously. The Chairman asked for volunteers for the committees. Commissioners volunteered to serve, as follows:

- Fair Housing – Commissioners Farley, Farrell, Jessup, and Stevenson

- Public Safety – Commissioners Farley, Farrell, Johnson, McGhee, and Parker
- Education – Commissioners Anglade, Jamerson, Jarvis, Picarelli, and Parker
- Employment/Job Training – Commissioners Anglade, Johnson, Lowe, McDiarmid, Merck, Picarelli, and Stephenson.

The Chairman noted the time, and stated that it had been a very productive meeting. He reminded all Commissioners to take the ethics training. He promised to send everyone a link to the video “Racial Taboo.”

9. Adjournment

Chairman Aikens adjourned the meeting at 12:05 pm.