

Minutes of Meeting
Human Relations Meeting
July 18, 2013

A meeting of the Human Relations Commission was called to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 5th Floor of City Hall, 6801 Delmar Blvd., University City, MO 63130

Members in Attendance: Kathy McGinnis, Jackie Womack, Meg McClelland, Charmaine Glenn, Matthew Nosko, David Olander

Members Absent: Angeline Hayes

Other in Attendance: Elaine Williams-Board Secretary
Paulette Carr- Council Liaison
Katie Forster, City Attorney

Agenda

The agenda was approved.

Minutes

The June 20, 2013 meeting minutes were accepted as amended and approved.

Conversation with the City Attorney

A motion was passed by City Council for Katie Forster, the City Attorney for University City, to meet with the Human Relations Commission and to go over their roles.

She said that although the minutes of the Human Relations Commission in May had indicated that Mr. Olander was authorized to continue in his contact with Schnuck's, the audio from the meeting did not contain actual approval. The meeting with Schnuck's should not have happened without the whole Commission knowing about it and without direct approval from the Commission.

An individual cannot act on behalf of the Commission. From now on, the Commission cannot contact Schnuck's without approval from the City Council. The Commission acts in an advisory role to the City Council. Any item or project that affects the city as a whole must go to Council for approval. Whenever members of the Commission are together and there is a quorum, it is considered the same as a meeting. No Human Rights Commission business can be discussed unless it has been announced 24 hours ahead of time, and all members of the Commission know about it and it has been posted. The same is true for an email or online meeting or conference call. Everything voted on must be in the minutes.

If the Human Relations Board wants to set up mediation meetings between two groups, the Commission may only assist, but Ms. Forster recommended that the Commission use the services of an outside mediator. The Commission would need Council approval to initiate a mediation meeting.

She provided information for a meeting concerning the Roberts Rule of Order that will convene on Tuesday, July 30, 2013. She recommended that all members have a copy of the Roberts Rule of Order and the Sunshine Law.

Mr. Womack said that he has trouble hearing conversations at the meeting. For future meetings, Council Member Carr will ask Joyce to set up microphones and a receiver for Mr. Womack.

Mr. Womack said if the Commission votes on something, it must be on the minutes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. SCHOOL DISTRICT AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE ORTHODOX JEWISH COMMUNITY

There was discussion on continuing this effort. Ms. McClellan reiterated the reasons for the potential mediation/discussion between the two groups. Mr. Womack felt it would not be beneficial.

A motion was made and it was decided that Ms. McClelland would put together a proposal to be brought to the City Council.

B. CONVERSATIONS ON RACE -DISCUSSION

A group from the Commission met with Dr. Billie Mayo to discuss having a public forum four times in the next twelve months on conversations on race. She is skilled in facilitating this type of work. Dr. Mayo drew up a proposal with cost for all four meetings totaling a little under \$5000.00. It will have to be taken to the Council for budget approval.

Mr. Womack, Ms. McClelland and Ms. McGinnis spoke in favor of this. Ms. Glenn raised the question about what the anticipated outcomes would be for these conversations. After some discussion, the Commission decided to ask Dr. Mayo to come to the next meeting to talk about her group, Educational Equity Consultants, to talk about results from prior workshops the group has done, and to provide expected outcomes for what the Commission is planning.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to invite Dr. Mayo to a meeting to discuss all of this.

C. FURTHER SCHNUCKS DISCUSSION

Mr. Womack felt the Commission went at the situation in the wrong way, City Council approval or not. He felt the Commission should let the situation cool a little bit, and then do something like a petition for the people who shop there.

Mr. Nosko stated the Schnuck's story is not different from a number of other Schnuck's stores in the metropolitan area. He did not think it was race-related and is not sure what the Commission's end goal is. He does not think the Commission should pursue this and believes this came up about the quality of the food, not the building. He feels maybe we owe them an apology and should approach it from a different point of view.

Ms. McClelland was internally applauding the contact with Schnuck's about making some changes in the store. She shops there and, for example, has been frustrated about not being able to find fresh spinach in the store. She stated after our discussion with the City attorney, perhaps it would be best to approach it differently.

Mr. Olander addressed Paulette Carr and stated that he was frustrated that she did not express any concerns at the Commission meeting, and didn't recheck with the Commission before bringing it to the City Council. The meeting with Schnuck's was a cordial meeting and everyone left happy. He felt the documents should not have been given to the Post-Dispatch and that a City Council member supplied the recording.

Ms. Carr informed the Commission that she received a call from Mr. Womack after the meeting, who expressed his concerns about the meeting with Schnuck's. She stated she listened to the audio and ascertained that there was not a vote taken that authorized Mr. Olander to continue with his contacts with Schnuck's. At the Council meeting she said she did not believe there was a vote taken and was concerned about the issue going out to the community because she feels we are trying to maintain a business community on Olive. She went on to say that City Council meetings are open to the press.

Ms. Carr also informed the Commission that Mr. Olander has caused her to not feel comfortable in this Commission in terms of her input during the meetings. She also state that Ms. Williams had a question, and turned off the tape recorder. She said that once the meeting is adjourned, then that is it. She closed her remarks by saying the Commission did not have the vote of the Commission and anything that was decided appeared to be agreed outside the meeting.

Ms. McGinnis agreed with Mr. Olander's analysis and believed the Commission can ask a private business to do something like this. She felt it was a good idea to be in conversation with Schnuck's; for example, talk about the ambiance in the store. People who shop there should feel respected and valued as customers. She said that the process that was used with Schnuck's may not have been the best process.

If we pursue it, now we know what to do.

MOVING FORWARD WITH SCHNUCKS

Does the Commission wish to get permission from the City Council to proceed with setting up a second meeting with Schnuck's? Mr. Womack suggested letting things cool down, and then approach the Schnuck's issue in a different way. He felt the City had no real way to change things at Schnuck's, and that Schnuck's will not be open to conversation since it went to the Post-Dispatch. Mr. Olander stated that Schnuck's got TIF considerations when building it. U-City could work with them to upgrade this Schnuck's.

Motion was made by Mr. Nosko to send an apology to Schnuck's, and do nothing more.

The motion did not get a second.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Jan Adams (7151 Cambridge Avenue). Spoke as a citizen. What happened makes the Commission look negative. We want people to come to U City. If we look bad, or if it is perceived differently, it will make them want to go elsewhere.

The City has no ordinance to inspect produce, etc. What is the subjective test to insure it is not different than any other store? Any communication will go to Post-Dispatch. How we word the any communication with Schnuck's is important. Review it so that it cannot be misinterpreted in the press.

Ms. Glenn stated the process used may not have been the best process, but the Commission needs to continue the conversation. She may choose to shop elsewhere, but others who live in this community do not have that option.

A motion was made by Ms. Glenn to send a letter to Schnuck's acknowledging what had happened and encouraging some kind of follow up in a way that leads to overall improvements for the betterment of the community.

The motion passed.

It was decided that the communication with Schnuck's should be submitted to Mr. Walker in terms of its potential public relations impact. He would decide whether or not to have the public relations firm look at it. Then he would communicate with the Chair. After approval from the whole Commission, the letter would go to the City Council for approval.

COUNCIL LIASON REPORT

Ms. Carr also reported on the ongoing conversations with MSD about the parts of U. City that deal with flooding during the June storm.

Meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting Date
August 15, 2013