



Commissioners Present: Lauren Bonner, Joseph Brown, Peg Falcone, Jerrold Hennrich, Eric McMillan, Faith Miller, Karriem Shariati, Dora Weaver

Commissioners Excused:

Commissioners Absent:

Study Circle Staff Present: Sarah Heyer

Guests Present:

Staff Present: Acting Mayor Don Monty, City Councilwoman Jessica Bradshaw, Administrative Services Director Deborah McCoy

Introductions/Listening/History/By-Laws

Chair Hennrich began the meeting with introductions and asked the Mayor and Councilwoman to share their expectations for HRC. Mayor Monty stated that his expectation of the HRC is to do those things that are set forth by the City Ordinance. That involves a variety of things. The HRC is advisory to the City Council and he encouraged them to forward suggestions and recommendation. The City Code contains quite a bit of information about educating and assisting persons regarding their rights and opportunities, and helping them to reach the appropriate agency. The HRC is to receive specific reports from the Carbondale Police Department and other law enforcement agencies, evaluate and offer comments. Mayor Monty commented that the current HRC dates back to 2003, but he has observed Commissions in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, and the duties and functions have pretty much stayed the same.

Mayor Monty stated that he takes HRC's role of advisement seriously and suggested that a memo be written to the City Council and ask that the City Manager put it on a Council agenda.

Vision/Goals/Priorities

Commission to operate as outlined in the Ordinance

Meeting agenda revised to align with areas of the mission

Commissioners to serve on other committees when possible; HRC can facilitate and be a catalyst

Find opportunities and figure out strategies

Promote good will and understanding

Goals – One Year

- Sync data (Commissioner Falcone – will send to Mayor & Councilwoman Bradshaw and copy the City Manager) – available and in line with what Council wants
- Request from Council complaints that have been submitted against officers
- Increase HRC visibility
- Establish relationships and linkages

- Web page/website (Commissioners Falcone and Weaver)
- Agenda items for Council meetings – action taken at each HRC meeting to decide what is to be placed on the agenda, who will present the item, and sending correspondence to the City Manager informing him that the item is to be placed on the Council agenda
- Revision of the current HRC agenda (Commissioner Falcone)
- Strengthen and formalize committees, e.g. Communications, Education (Human Rights – Commissioner McMillan; Police & Community -, Housing Issues- Resident/Neighborhood Associations)
- Public education

Committee Work/Relationship to Open Meetings Act

Chair Hennrich commented that it appears the Freedom of Information Act is being used to keep information the public. Chair Hennrich spoke about the anger and how requesting information is treated as a threat or an attack. Mayor Monty stated that if the HRC gets to the point where there is no response or traction with an entity within the City, then it should be brought to the Council to see if the City Council wants to intercede. Mayor Monty spoke about bias and reporting and indicated he has requested information that he is waiting to receive, that was not able to be retrieved from the old system. Commissioner Falcone expressed that she was interested in receiving data on repeat offenses and complaints. Commissioner Bonner commented on the article that appeared in the Chicago newspaper where the City of Chicago was ordered to release records.

Commissioner McMillan commented that he does not understand why it is so difficult to get reports of complaints –the kinds of complaints and how they are handled. Commissioner Bonner commented that when this kind of information is released, it alleviates the tension between law enforcement and the community. Commissioner Brown stated that in the Mayor’s introduction and the mandate of the Charter and the beginnings of the HRC in 2003 with the concerns of the City, the community, and students. If the Charter starts off with “to study the problems”, the perception and response is you are attacking us all the time. Crime, race, age, socio-economic backgrounds are all intertwined. The HRC has been brought into existence to study problems. Studying problems will always involve some level of antagonism. People have been told that the HRC is going to be attacking them and this might explain the reason for some of the resistance HRC has experienced. It appears there is a defensive group waiting for what is perceived an attack. Commissioner McMillan suggested that perhaps being aware of the problems would be a more appropriate phrase.

Commissioner Shariati expressed that there is a human element, and he has noticed how people get emotionally involved. He observed the same kinds of opposition in the meeting where District #95’s proposal was discussed. He mentioned the letter written by then Carbondale NAACP Branch President Steven Haynes to Attorney General John Ashcroft in 2001 regarding the misuse of policing powers.

Commissioners discussed the police complaint form and process. Commissioner Falcone recommended reviewing the form to see if there are ways to make it less intimidating. Commissioner Miller inquired about the ability to file anonymous complaints, and whether there is a way to know if complaints are addressed. She commented that efforts to engage in community policing help to build a bridge with the community. Commissioner McMillan suggested that HRC’s work should be prevention-oriented. Commissioner Weaver commented that individuals who come before the Commission, expect for HRC to help solve a problem. Commissioner Brown stated that there needs to be a context for public discussion and discourse, and that the HRC may not be expected to do anything in each instance, but listen. Commissioner Falcone stated that she sees the HRC as a place where an individual can bring their grievance and point them in the right direction, and to improve the community in a broader way.

There was discussion regarding agendas, items on the agenda, and amount of time for individuals to speak. Mayor Monty stated that discussion can take place at meetings, but action cannot be taken unless the item is on the agenda.

Commissioner Shariati was charged to put together a list of organizations and committees.

Chair Hennrich shared a recent experience with the Carbondale police.

The Retreat ended at 8:30 p.m. as scheduled.

Notes recorded by: _____