

MLK, Jr. Commission Meeting Minutes
10:00 am, September 14, 2017
3rd Floor Conference Room 3106T-2
DOA Building, 116 West Jones Street, Raleigh NC 27607

Present: Harshaw, Bailey, Jarvis, Jones, White, Partee, Smith, Jeffers, Futrell

Absent: Turner, Sturdivant, Posey

Newly appointed and awaiting swearing in: White, Goins, Huggins, Dinner

Guests: N.C. Dept. of Administration Deputy Secretary Christy Agner, Lamont Goins, Office of Administrative Hearings

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order by presiding Commissioner Harshaw at 10:10 am.

Invocation - Commissioner Harshaw led the group in prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance - Recited by all

Welcome/ Roll Call - Chairman Harshaw

Review of Minutes from the 3.23.17 meeting – The minutes were reviewed and due to lack of quorum for voting members, action on the draft meeting minutes was deferred to the next meeting (as long as there is a quorum).

Special Welcome by Deputy Secretary of Department of Administration, Christy Agner. Ms. Agner read aloud the “State Government Ethics Statement”.

Commissioner Harshaw welcomed Guest Speaker, Michelle Lanier, Director of the African American Heritage Commission at the NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources. Director Lanier shared a brochure, “African American Music Trails of NC” with the commissioners. Director Lanier gave a brief overview of how the African American Heritage Commission was created by the NC General Assembly in 2008. While the Commission launched in 2009 without appropriations, the operations moved forward through partnerships, federal grants and private donations.

Director Lanier shared information about the partnership their commission would like to have with the MLK Commission. Director Lanier pointed out that the MLK Commission, the Commission of Indian Affairs (Quality of Life), and the African American Heritage Commission (History, Arts and Culture) deal most closely with ethnic groups key to North Carolinas history and current affairs. She shared information on a Federal Project that still exists called the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, by the Dept. of the Interior. The Corridor reaches as far north as Pender, Burgaw and Brunswick counties. It includes North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida (four states in the Gulf Corridor).

An update was provided on the creation of a statewide underground railroad trail to tell the history of what they call freedom seeking in North Carolina [“Freedom Roads”.] The Commission is collecting data to populate an interactive GIS map. Under the Dept. of the Interior, there is a program called “Network to Freedom” that looks at the history of enslaved people who were brave enough to try to flee slavery and illuminate that story. In the Southeast region, there are many site designations by the Federal

government where there are known freedom seekers. NC has the first river in the nation to be designated as a route to freedom from slavery, the Pasquotank. In the US, there are only two districts that the Federal government has identified as Freedom Seeking Districts. One of those districts is in Indiana, because of a white evolutionist family called “the Coffins” who are from Guilford County. He was called the President of the Underground Railroad and he had to escape out of Greensboro and went to Indiana. The second site is Historic Halifax in Halifax County, NC, where the buildings help to tell the story of a freedom seeking district. Collaboration is needed to help illuminate this story.

Director Lanier stated their department has two upcoming celebrations. The first big event is in January 2018, the African American Celebration event on the last Saturday in January at the Museum of History. The Commission desires to work with communities around technical assistance when they’re trying to develop a cultural heritage plan for their community. We are working with the Museum of Natural Science with the RACE Exhibit that’s up. The Commission is working with the Museum of Art on the Fifty Years of Ebony Fashion Fair Exhibit and Program.

The Commissioner asked Director Lanier if her office had been affected by the current news coverage regarding taking down monuments in North Carolina? The NC Historical Commission has a certain authority over monuments on state capitol grounds and the Heritage Commission chair, Dr. Valerie Ann Johnson, is also on the NC Historical Commission. She’s a Professor at Bennett and is over Africana Women’s Studies. She brings a very strong voice to this historical commission. The Commission has been asked to identify a comprehensive list of historical African American monuments and memorials that could possibly be targeted so proactive precautions can be executed. Commissioner Harshaw thanked Director Lanier for her presentation.

Old Business: Commissioner Bailey stated on June 10th they had their “Content of Character” workshop at First Calvary Church. Commissioner Futrell, Jarvis and Jones participated in planning the event with her. There were 178 people who registered to attend and 132 attended. The parents stayed and children had an option of which workshop they wanted to attend. The keynote speaker was Dr. Telika McCoy, Bruce Farmer presented a workshop on “What does the music of today say about our character?” An additional workshop was about sports and integrity and how that plays into your character. Senator Mike Woodard and city officials attended, as well as mentors and clients. Commissioner Harshaw thanked Commissioner Bailey for her report.

Guest – Lamont Goins, Director of the Civil Rights Division, with the Office of Administrative Hearings introduced himself to the Commission members. He stated he was here as a guest to see how the Commission works. He is now overseeing the Human Relations office staff as they have merged with OAH.

Commissioner Bailey asked about current year programming funds. She recommends the Commission use the “Brightside” link since it worked well, was quick and a useful tool. Commissioner Smith commended Commissioner Bailey on the wonderful job that was done with the Content of Character Workshop. Reverend Smith stated that he thought the Commission had planned to meet before the June event so that commissioners could have input and give their support with the planning of the event. Commissioner Bailey pointed out she was asked to lead the Planning Committee and emails were sent out to the Commissioners. Commissioner Bailey reminded commissioners to check their emails for news about upcoming planning meetings. The last MLK Commission meeting was in March and they

met every other week to plan the event. Everyone's invited to participate in planning the Content of Character event.

New Business: Deputy Secretary Agner introduced herself to the commission and distributed a copy of her email and a handout. She stated the Human Relations Commission office was transferred through legislation to the Office of Administrative Hearings, under the Civil Rights Division. The General Assembly also eliminated the HRC Director position as well as an administrative assistant as a part of the transfer, eliminating the staffing positions that served the MLK Commission. The MLK Commission has been assigned staffing through the DOA Secretary's office. Commissioner Harshaw inquired about the budget amount for the MLK Commission. Deputy Secretary Agner responded that programming funds and grant funds remain the same as the prior year. Deputy Secretary Agner stated the MLK Commission is expected to remain under the Department of Administration, unless new information arises.

Commissioner Jeffers asked about options to add more content to the website. Staff replied that the DOA website is currently being changed to allow more content expression. Under the prior guidance, there were limits due to uniform statewide web portal guidelines. To assist with more citizen awareness, the Department has asked if an Advocacy Portal can be created to further highlight minutes of meetings, agendas, etc. Perhaps the future will allow videos and more dynamic / interactive digital options for the Commission.

Deputy Secretary Agner shared the Department is available to receive applications for grants upon the Commission's guidance. There are at least \$3,000 in grant funds available for distribution.

The Governor's Office made four appointments to the MLK Commission. One of the appointments made was Reverend James White, present at the meeting. The other appointees are: • Ann Huggins, Pitt Co.; Carol Goins, Asheville; Rabbi Lucy H.F. Dinner

Commissioner Jeffers pointed out she had an opportunity to go to the Triangle Breakfast last year and Reverend James White was a phenomenal and inspirational speaker. Commissioner Harshaw asked Reverend White to introduce himself. Reverend White shared there's an opportunity for the work of a commission like this to have some real impact in ways that go beyond what we typically are thinking.

Deputy Secretary Agner reviewed travel reimbursement forms and new guidance from the IRS related to the optional \$15 per diem. If a Commissioner wishes to waive the per diem, a designation is desired to assist with record keeping. Parking vouchers were given to commissioners who requested them.

Group Discussion: A discussion was initiated regarding the MLK, Jr. Observance event that is held in January each year. The commissioners discussed having their own observance separate from the one held for State employees. Questions were asked about the funding in the MLK Commission's yearly budget and whether it's earmarked for the purposes of holding the MLK, Jr. Observance for State employees and Bell Ringing Ceremony. Thoughts were shared about prior year event planning. Deputy Secretary Agner shared that traditionally, some budget from the MLK Commission assists with partial expenses of the state employee event in January. The consensus by the MLK Commission members is to have a unique Martin Luther King, Jr. Observance from the annual state employee event. Staff agreed to relay the information to the Governor's office and seek feedback for the Commission.

A discussion was initiated regarding Commission activities besides the Content of Character event. Commissioners are interested in exploring using the web, tv spots and radio to bring together key

leaders from across the state for thinking and planning – similar to Dr. King’s strategy to bring people together. The consensus was some type of summit could lead to substantive outcomes. Commissioner Jarvis moved that the Commission begin the planning of a separate program from the one for State employees. A motion was made at the last meeting however, a quorum is needed to vote on it and discussion was tabled until a subsequent meeting. Commissioner White suggested the Commission create a template for a call to action for the Summit. Commissioner Jones made a recommendation for Commissioner Jarvis and White to work together and bring back ideas for the potential summit. Commissioner Jeffers was identified as a leader for further discussion on Workshop planning.

After some discussion, it was suggested that the next MLK Jr. Commission meeting be held on Thursday, Dec. 7, 2017 and feature a longer meeting to allow more discussion. Commissioner Harshaw asked if there were any announcements. Commissioner Jeffers reminded everyone to look at their email regarding when their Ethics Training is due. The training can be completed online or in person. The training is due by Dec. 11, 2017.

Dr. Harshaw recognized guest Lamont Goins who recommended the following ideas. Take on a leadership program such as the President of the Mega Si Phi Fraternity here in Raleigh and ask them to speak at the MLK Commission mtg. Dr. Harshaw thanked Mr. Goins for his suggestions.

Closing Prayer was offered by Commissioner James White

Adjournment was called by presiding Commissioner Harshaw

Next Meeting will be December 7, 2017.

Minutes approved December 7, 2017