



GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes

Committee of the Whole

March 6, 2018

5:00 p.m.

County Square – Conference Room D

Council Members

Mr. Butch Kirven, Chairman
Mr. Willis Meadows, Vice Chairman
Mrs. Xanthene Norris, Chairman Pro Tem
Mr. Joe Dill
Mr. Mike Barnes
Mr. Sid Cates
Mr. Rick Roberts
Mr. Bob Taylor
Mrs. Liz Seman
Mr. Ennis Fant, Sr.
Mr. Lynn Ballard
Mr. Fred Payne

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place and agenda was posted on the bulletin board at the County Square and made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned Citizens.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Joe Kernell, County Administrator
Mark Tollison, County Attorney
John Hansley, Deputy County Administrator
Regina McCaskill, Clerk to Council
Shannon Herman, Assistant County Administrator
Paula Gucker, Assistant County Administrator, Public Works

OTHERS PRESENT

James Speed, Human Relations Commission Chairman
Yvonne Duckett, Human Relations Director
Angelia Reeder, Human Relations

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Butch Kirven

INVOCATION

Councilor Sid Cates

Item (3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

ACTION: Councilor Norris moved to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2018, Regular Committee of the Whole meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

Item (4) HUMAN RELATIONS PRESENTATION

Presented by: Dr. Yvonne Duckett, Director
 James Speed, Jr., Chairman
 Human Relations Commission

- Human Relations Commission has historically been known to just assist with housing
- The Commission recognized a need to change that impression and were now dealing with a number of issues in Greenville County
- The Commission now provided financial literacy classes and have plugged into the GHS system helping first-time home buyers learn about free medical classes that are available
- In 2017, 1363 people were reached through one-to-one counseling and workshops; that number has increased each year Dr. Duckett has been in charge by approximately 25%
- Fair Housing Workshops were facilitated throughout Greenville County and a total of 21 were conducted in 2017
 - 11 Fair Housing Complaints were submitted to HUD
 - 6 Disability
 - 3 Race
 - 1 Sex
 - 1 Familial Status
- A number of workshops were scheduled
 - Fair Housing 2018 scheduled for April 26
 - Workshops will target landlords, magistrates and apartment managers
 - The program has been approved to earn 3 credit hours of Continuing Legal Education
- The Human Relations Commission received a national award from Bloomberg Philanthropy for establishing Financial Empowerment Centers
- The award will translate to approximately \$500,000 in matching funds
- Human Relations has been recertified as a HUD approved agency for 3 years
- Human Relations has created a "2nd Chance Program" which was in its infancy stage
 - Designed for children who were homeless and were enrolled in the Greenville School District
 - Ten landlords have agreed to participate in the program
 - During a recent evacuation of an area hotel, Greenville Codes immediately contacted the Human Relations Commission for assistance
 - In order to qualify for the program, the applicant must have a child and a job

Councilor Payne stated he had been very disturbed about the recent articles regarding Miracle Hill and the fact its faith-based position to place foster children in homes with Christians had been challenged. He stated he did not know if the Human Relations Commission took a position on faith-based services as opposed to governmental-based services. Mr. Payne stated if people or agencies provided answers perhaps the County should find a way to make them work.

Mr. Speed stated he did not believe neither Dr. Duckett nor the Human Relations Board took religious preference into account at all.

Dr. Duckett stated she agreed with Mr. Payne but was unable to address the issue at this time.

Councilor Ballard stated Mr. Fant had told him on many occasions that it was just not acceptable for children to be picked up and dropped off at a hotel by a school bus. He asked if the Human Relations Commission had a feel for the magnitude of children living in hotels.

Mr. Speed stated Dr. Duckett spent an entire day with a homeless family living in a hotel and the situation was very disconcerting. He stated it was estimated that approximately 800 children are currently living in hotels in Greenville County.

Dr. Duckett stated there were many moving parts as to why families chose to live in hotels and it was very difficult to help those families obtain a stable living environment. She added it was very difficult to help people with several evictions to find housing. Dr. Duckett stated landlords would naturally look at an individual's background before renting to them; multiple evictions, multiple arrests and a history of drug abuse were a few deterrents to renting. She added that the bottom line was money management and that was why they were working to establish Financial Empowerment Centers all over Greenville County. People from all walks of life have used the services provided by the centers. The children were the ones to suffer and the school district was often unable to get a grasp on the number of homeless children in the county as many families would not provide the information. She added that there were a number of agencies that were trying to help.

Councilor Norris stated she was very pleased with the direction of the Human Relations Commission and she was very sad to see Mr. Speed leave. She commended Dr. Duckett, Mr. Speed and the board for all their hard work.

Chairman Kirven stated he was interested in the number of staff members and the resources available.

Dr. Duckett stated there were volunteers from various agencies, banks, realty offices, and mortgage offices. In regards to the classes that were offered, the intent was to bring in experts in the field. She added there were currently 7 staff members.

Mr. Speed stated recently the commission approached Sheriff Lewis about providing information regarding neighborhood watch programs as part of the First-time Homebuyers' Education classes and he willingly obliged. A deputy was given the task of providing the information which in turn made people more vested in their community and the community became safer.

Councilor Roberts stated he had worked closely with Dr. Duckett and praised her for all her efforts. He asked if there was any way to motivate landlords to rent to some of the individuals with background issues.

Dr. Duckett stated that everyone made mistakes and that was the reason for the name "2nd Chance Program." She stated she had worked with a family that was living in a hotel room with 6 children. It was a hard struggle and it took 8 months to get the family in stable housing. Dr. Duckett stated a transition place was desperately needed for homeless families. She added that the families needed to be taught that there were certain things that they needed to do in order to help themselves.

Councilor Ballard stated contact had been made with people around the state to find transitional housing for the homeless.

Dr. Duckett stated the businesses and industries moving into Greenville County should be interested in contributing to the cause as it would help prepare employees for them.

Councilor Dill stated he spent a number of years on the Human Relations Commission and it was an eye-opening experience. He asked if the situation with the homeless was worse now than a few years ago.

Dr. Duckett stated the situation with the homeless was much worse now. She added that there was no way to end homelessness; but, there were ways to help through education, transportation, etc.

Chairman Kirven thanked Mr. Speed and Dr. Duckett for the information provided and stated Council looked forward to working with the Human Relations Commission.

Item (5) **ADJOURNMENT**

ACTION: Councilor Dill moved to adjourn.

Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Regina G. McCaskill, Clerk to Council