

Mayor's Commission on Human Rights and Community Relations

July 19, 2017

The Mayor's Commission on Human Rights and Community Relations met in regular session July 19, 2017 in the Busch Building First Floor Conference Room. The meeting was called to order by Chair Todd Thomas.

Present

Christina Ryder, Pamela Hernandez, Brittany O'Brien, Heather Hardinger, Carlye Wannemacher, Angela Myers*, and Todd Thomas

*Angela Myers arrived at approximately 5:40 PM.

Absent

Larry Dinges

Staff

Bob Atchley, Planning and Development; Brendan Griesemer, Planning and Development, Nicholas Woodman, Law; Kris Wright, City Clerk's Office

Chair Todd Thomas noted Damon Duran submitted a letter of resignation on Tuesday, July 11, 2017, effective immediately.

Guests

Tim Havens, Eddie Thomas, Arthur Hodge, Abraham Clark, James Satterfield, James MacLachlan, Molly Havens, and Cynthia Rushefsky, Aliza Zhu; Springfield News-Leader

**Approval of
Minutes**

Brittany O'Brien moved to approve the minutes from the June 21, 2017 Commission meeting. Christina Ryder seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Todd Thomas stated each speaker's public comments should be limited to five minutes or less.

Mr. Tim Havens addressed the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights and Community Relations (MCHCR) and read a statement in its entirety, which is attached as Exhibit A.

Mr. Arthur Hodge, Mr. Abraham Clark, and Mr. Eddie Thomas appeared before the MCHCR. They expressed their concern for a lack of diversity on the MCHCR and ongoing discrimination within Springfield.

Ms. Cynthia Rushefsky appeared before the MCHCR and read a statement in its entirety, which is attached as Exhibit B.

Mr. James Satterfield appeared before the MCHCR. He expressed appreciation to the community for welcoming his family to the City of Springfield and to the Mayor's Commission for taking steps to listen to human rights grievances.

Chairman Todd Thomas declared the public comment period closed.

The following was discussed under Unfinished Business

**Outreach
Brochure**

The draft outreach brochure, with the law department's revisions and comments, was presented to the commission for review.

Nick Woodman, Assistant City Attorney, noted several elements contained in the brochure do not agree with current City ordinances. He stated the MCHCR's authority is limited to enforcement of City Ordinances and any references to State or Federal law enforcement must be removed. Several additional revisions were discussed.

Angela Myer moved to remove the definitions of the protected categories in the brochure, make a recommendation to the City Council to amend Chapter 62 to define the protected category term, and include the outreach brochure on the next meeting agenda. Pamela Hernandez seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

**Alberto Estrada
Discrimination
Case**

Pamela Hernandez, Carlye Wannemacher, Angela Myer, and Heather Hardinger expressed their appreciation to the citizens for expressing their views.

Heather Hardinger expressed her opinion the MCHCR should advise the City of Springfield to make a statement on events of this case and steps the City is taking to ensure employment is fair and equal for everyone.

Brittany O'Brien expressed her opinion if the City does have a policy of non-discrimination, they need to be transparent in promoting this policy and the MCHCR should make the City Council aware of the opinions expressed by citizens at this meeting.

Pamela Hernandez expressed her opinion the Commission should draft a letter to City Council requesting they publicly address the Alberto Estrada case and provide the current policy for preventing discrimination in the future.

Angela Myers expressed her opinion the MCHCR should send a letter to City Council requesting the City make a clear statement about non-discrimination policies.

Heather Hardinger expressed her opinion all members of the MCHCR should be involved in writing the letter and presenting it at a City Council meeting.

Nick Woodman, Assistant City Attorney, noted the MCHCR can designate a member to prepare a cover letter to be attached to the draft minutes of this meeting and forwarded to City Council.

Brittany O'Brien expressed her opinion a formal letter from the MCHCR should be presented at a City Council meeting.

Tim Havens asked if the finalized letter from the MCHCR would be available to the public. Todd Thomas noted the letter presented to City Council will be a public record of the MCHCR and available to the public.

Angela Myers made a motion to hold a special meeting on Wednesday, July 26, 2017 at 5:30 PM to prepare a draft letter for presentation to City Council, subject to location and staff availability. Pamela Hernandez seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Strategic Plan Review	Todd Thomas presented the Missouri Association of Realtors strategic plan as a sample for the Commission's review. The draft MCHCR strategic plan was discussed and reviewed.
August 16, 2017 Meeting	Pamela Hernandez noted the August 16, 2017 MCHCR meeting will be held in the Upper Community Room at Carnegie Library.
LGBTQ Survey	Christina Ryder noted PROMO has initiated a survey and she has contacted them to determine if a breakdown by Greene County can be obtained. She expressed her opinion if PROMO can provide Greene County specific data, there is no need to replicate the survey.
August 16, 2017 Community Listening Session	Pamela Hernandez noted the Community Listening Session at the Carnegie Library has been confirmed for Wednesday, August 16, 2017 from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM, when the library closes. Todd Thomas expressed his opinion all commission members should have a part in speaking at the event. Pamela Hernandez asked for the Mayor's availability to open the MCHCR Listening Session. Kris Wright, City Clerk's Office, responded a formal request needs to be made to the City Clerk to determine the Mayor's schedule and availability. Several elements of the Listening Session were finalized, including introduction of MCHCR members, volunteer opportunities, and a question and answer period for the public. Heather Hardinger expressed concern about publishing the event to the public. Pamela Hernandez asked if a press release from the Public Information Office is an option. Carlye Wannemacher responded Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement has stated she will promote upcoming events for the MCHCR. Carlye Wannemacher stated she will work with Mellissa Haase to promote the event on the City of Springfield's Community Calendar.
Promotional Items	Todd Thomas noted promotional supplies are running low. Several promotional items were discussed. Mr. Thomas asked members to come to the next meeting with a list of promotional items they would like to order.
Future Events	Todd Thomas noted the MCHCR has purchased a table and attended the NAACP Freedom Banquet for the past several years. He stated additional future events include the Black-Tie event on November 11, 2017 and the National Night Out on August 1, 2017. Brendan Griesemer noted the City of Springfield Planning and Development Department is attending the National Night Out and the MCHCR may share their space or have a separate space.
Adjourn	With no further business to come before the Commission, Pamela Hernandez moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Christina Ryder and the motion to adjourn was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:27 PM

Prepared by
Kris Wright

Mayor's Commission on Human Rights and Community Relations:
7/15/17

In our local Springfield society we seek to try to further our quality of life, prosperity and happiness of all our citizens. We seek to develop a society based on the high ideals of our historic political and religious leaders. We aspire to a local atmosphere where the full potential of all our peoples may fully blossom. We must pay attention daily to each detail of events as they occur. It is these daily events that are the building blocks of what kind of society we ultimately build for ourselves. It is fine to form committees, espouse ideals, and make lofty statements, but the reality is that action and only action makes change.

It is in this spirit that we ask you to address the recent discrimination against Corporal Alberto Estrada of the Springfield Police Department. Corporal Estrada sued the city for discrimination by the Chief of Police. This case went before a jury and the jury found the city, through the chief, had violated Corporal Estrada's civil rights and had discriminated against him. They awarded Corporal Estrada back pay. Subsequently, the city filed for a new trial, attempting to use new legislation that had just passed. A judge rejected the city's second effort and awarded Corporal Estrada's attorneys their fees.

The city mayor and city management have so far remained silent, and have not offered any explanation or clarification, or justification. It is this situation of discrimination that the city is ignoring which is an issue of prime importance for every Springfieldian, and all the citizens of the surrounding towns that look to Springfield, as the dominant area city to set the example. This issue is one of those daily building blocks that cannot be left unanswered by our city leadership.

Knowing that employment discrimination because of gender, race or ethnicity, or age, is a misdemeanor by federal, state, and our own city code, we are asking the mayor and city manager, in conjunction with your committee, to address thoroughly, honestly, clearly, and in simple language the following questions:

- . The city of Springfield has said that it wishes to increase the diversity on our police force. How is this consistent with having a police chief who was found by a jury and a judge to be a person who discriminates against his own officers?
- . What does having a police chief who discriminates illustrate to the outside world about Springfield's willingness to move into the future and leave our bad racial relations history behind?
- . What does this say to outside industries that may consider locating here, but are already questioning Springfield's lack of diversity?
- . Does this mean that minority people will not be given equal opportunity willingly, by the city according to law, or will they need to retain legal counsel to have the same opportunities as someone in the majority? Does this, especially the city's attempt to file for a new trial, indicate the city is ok operating in bad faith?
- . Why did the city not figure out a way to take a pro-active and aggressive action to show it cared about this issue, why the silence?
- . We know that citizens' interaction with the police department can be some of the most meaningful events in their lives. How can you justify leaving in office, a police chief, who has been proven to have such bad judgement, and proven in court to be someone with social bias.

- . Has a personal apology been issued to Corporal Estrada by the city and the police chief? If it has, please make it public.

We feel the answers to our questions are of the utmost importance in facing the challenges of our ever growing city. We request your answers in a timely manner.

Thank you,

Tim A Havens

TO: Mayor's Commission on Human Rights

FROM: Cynthia Rushefsky

DATE: JULY 19, 2017

RE: Corporal Alberto Estrada

I have worked with the Springfield Police Department for over 20 years, as a prosecuting attorney, instructor at the Police Academy, and then as a City Councilwoman who ran with the strong support and endorsement of the SPOA. I am proud of that association and believe that the Department is one of the finest and most professional law enforcement agencies in the country.

I have also worked with both Chief Paul Williams and Corporal Alberto Estrada over a course of years. Based on my experience with them, I believe both are good men and competent, intelligent, and highly professional police officers who try to do the right thing. I was therefore highly disturbed when I learned that Corporal Estrada felt it was necessary to seek legal redress for unfair treatment. I was even more distressed when a jury apparently agreed with his allegations.

As a Jewish woman, I am very familiar with the type of prejudice that is so deeply ingrained that it is all but invisible to those who hold it, and so long held that it is accepted as truth. But while understandable, it is not acceptable, particularly when it affects public institutions. Discrimination is insidious and destructive of both people and institutions and cannot be tolerated.

Equally destructive of a community is a perception of discrimination where none exists. I was greatly relieved to learn today, that the Court judgment issued in this case clearly states that there was no finding of discrimination by the Springfield Police Department or Chief Williams.

So why am I ^{here} ~~hear~~. Just as it is the duty of this Commission to bring cases of discrimination to public view, it is equally the duty of the Commission to dispel mistaken perceptions of discrimination that undermine public confidence in City government and leadership. I am therefore asking the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights, as the conscience of Springfield, to urge the City and the Chief to make a public statement, reiterating their commitment to fairness and equality. It must be made clear that discrimination is NOT the policy of the City or the Police Department and will not be tolerated at any level. The limited nature of the Court's findings need to be made public and understood so that the perception of unfairness and prejudice can be swept away.

It is essential that the Police Department continue to recruit candidates whose faces and attitudes reflect our changing society. It is not enough to say that the Department welcomes minority recruits. They must be convinced that once they are hired, they will be treated with respect and fairness and held to the same standards as any other employee. One case, like the one involving Corporal Estrada, can destroy the best recruitment campaign for years to come. Left unexplained, it can destroy the heart and soul of the City.

Cynthia Ruskey