



Community Relations Commission  
~ Minutes ~

Thursday, June 11, 2020

City Hall, Second Floor  
Rockford, IL 61104  
<http://www.rockfordil.gov/>

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Todd Burton called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

**A. Roll Call**

<b>Commissioner Name</b>	<b>Status</b>
Todd Burton	Present
Eric Brown	Present
Jurea Crudup	Present
Victoria De La Rosa	Absent
Erin Hannigan	Present
Nikki Lynch	Present
William Martin	Present
Ricardo Montoya-Picazo	Present
Charles Prorok	Present
Jay Ware	Present

**B. Acceptance of Proceedings for the Community Relations Commission meeting held on May 14, 2020**

Chair Burton requested AMENDING the Meeting Minutes Section B to refer to him as “Chair” rather than “Chairman.” Chair Burton then asked for a MOTION to Accept the Journal of Proceedings as amended for the May 14, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Prorok MOVED and Commissioner Ware SECONDED the MOTION. CARRIED 9-0.

**II. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

1. Mayor McNamara signed the Mayoral Pledge from My Brother’s Keeper Alliance. The Pledge calls for the following: a review of police use of force policies, engaging the communities by including a diverse range of input, experiences, and stories in the review; reporting findings and seeking feedback; and reforming police use of force policies. The Mayor requested that the Community Relations Commission assist the City in this endeavor, including engaging City Council members, community stakeholders, City departments, and experts in the review of policies. Mayor McNamara asked that the Commission meet with staff and training officers to obtain the information needed to understand why the policy reads as it does in its present form, and to further consult with experts as needed. The Mayor indicated that the Rockford Chief of Police Dan O’Shea and his leadership team and the City Council are ready to make changes where needed to benefit the safety of everyone in our community as well as our police officers.

Mayor McNamara indicated that all of the City’s frontline officers have dash cameras and the natural progression would be to add body cameras. The Mayor stated that he has directed City staff to publish a Request for Information to begin the process of providing body cameras to all City of Rockford police officers. He requested that the Commission support the City’s efforts to analyze the use of body cameras—in particular,



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related to the effectiveness of police body cameras, their costs, and potential funding mechanisms.

Mayor McNamara asked that the Commission make a written report of its finding and recommendations regarding 1) its review of police use of force policies, and 2) effectiveness of police body cameras, their costs, as potential funding mechanisms. He asked that the Commission move forward with a thoughtful and deliberate process, but to move forward with its review expeditiously.

The Mayor and Human Services Director Anqunette Parham also provided an update on the City's partnership with a group of community leaders to seek out African Americans in our community to hear their voices and experiences so that we can improve the system and make sure that it is equal and just for all who call our community home. There will be a landing page, email address, short clip sent out, and a press conference has been held to raise awareness and encourage participation in community listening sessions. These will be one hour each with 3-5 speakers per session. The sessions are about the unheard being heard. Some sessions may be held privately and others will be public. The Mayor has committed to weekly sessions for the next 90 days. Sessions will start on Thursday June 18<sup>th</sup> between the hours of 1-2 pm. Initially sessions will be virtual due to COVID related meeting restrictions. We hope to move to in-person as soon as possible. We have asked City Leadership not to respond during the sessions—this is a time for listening only.

Commissioner Hannigan asked, in light of these community meetings being held for 90 days, will there will be no big decisions made until after these sessions have been completed? Mayor McNamara answered that we do not want to wait until the sessions have finished and that instead the Commission will receive updates on common themes emerging from the sessions as they begin their work immediately.

### **III. PUBLIC SPEAKERS**

No public speakers attended the meeting.

### **IV. INFORMATION ONLY**

As follow up to a topic of discussion from the May 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, Executive Director of Human Services Anqunette Parham provided the Commission with additional information about how the pandemic has impacted landlord ability to evict tenants and what assistance the City is able to offer in these situations.

Director Parham explained that Illinois landlords can proceed to file for evictions starting June 27<sup>th</sup>. Difficulty paying rent and mortgage has been a major issue. Human Services offer rental assistance for those who fall within 200 percent of the poverty line, have lost their job, or are unemployed. The department has received 811 requests for assistance since the beginning of the pandemic and has been able to assist with a majority of the people that call for assistance. The Human Services Department has spent \$361,250 in grant funds to help in these situations with 95% of requests being for rental assistance, 2-3% are for mortgages and the other small percent are other requests.

The Human Services Department can help with payment assistance until the judge signs the eviction order. It can take up to 6 weeks for the payment to be processed to the landlord. In order for that to take place, the landlord has to agree not to evict the renter during the time that the City is paying rent. If the landlord refuses, then City staff can assist the tenant with securing alternate housing. If the tenant qualifies for the resources, the department helps even in times where the landlord is uncooperative.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

Chair Burton explained to the Commissioners that it is proposed that two subcommittees be formed to address the Mayor's request: one on Police Use of Force Policy and one on Use of Body Cameras.

### **A. Resolution Accepting Mayor's Pledge**

Chair Burton MOVED and Commissioner Prorok SECONDED the MOTION to accept the Mayor's Pledge regarding review of Rockford Police use of force policies. CARRIED 9-0

### **B. Resolution Creating Committees to Review Police Use of Force Policies & Body Cameras**

Chair Burton MOVED approval and Commissioner Brown SECONDED the MOTION to create subcommittees to review police use of force policies and use of body cameras . CARRIED 9-0

Chair Burton asked that Commissioners send him an email indicating which subcommittee they would prefer to sit on. Chair Burton stated that a CRC Special Meeting would be held next Thursday, June 18, 2020 at 5:30 pm at District 3 police station location, when police would present information on the Use of Force Policy.

## **VI. COMMISSIONERS REPORTS**

Commissioner Hannigan stated LGBTQ Community has decided to postpone Pride Month activities until September due to the urgency of the Black Lives Matter movement and related protests and activities. She also reported that the Winnebago County Bar Association would like to push forward and make changes in the criminal justice environment related to racial equality. Commissioner Hannigan also encouraged all Commissioners to review information related to the ways in which Camden New Jersey has already remodeled their policies. They based their policies on an informational packet that was done on by the Police Executive Research Forum which is a not for profit Police Research Organization. This document is titled the Guidance Principles on Use of Force. All Rockford Police Department use of force policies are on the RPD website and they developed a new regulation this year. Section 1.18 was amended/revised this year regarding: reporting/reasoning for traffic & pedestrian stops; comments on the traffic stops; gender; and subjective determination of race. Commissioner Hannigan also encouraged Commissioners to research de-escalation.



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Commissioner Crudup stated that cultural training may also be needed for police to approach situations differently.

Commissioner Martin asked if Rockford has a police accountability group, based upon feedback he has heard from the community about wanting to understand how police are held accountable. In Chicago, they have a Police Accountability Task Force and they handle excessive abuse/excessive force. Commissioner Martin expressed that the City needs an independent body of individuals not a part of the police that reviews each case.

Chair Burton explained that on the Police Department website there is a General Order document 1.16 which is titled Reporting & Investigating in Response to Resistance. That is the Police Department's process for investigating use of force questions. There is a process for doing this and it ends with the Police Chief. There is currently no citizens' review board for public accountability process. Chair Burton stated this may be up for discussion as the CRC forms recommendations. There is great concern within the Police Department that Commissioners have an understanding of what the police do and how they work, and Commissioners are encouraged to make it a goal to do a ride along with a police officer.

Commissioner Montoya Picazo stated that he thinks it's important to engage with younger people to ask them about their views. He shared that he did an informal survey of random Latino & African American people and asked them how they feel about Rockford Police Department. A majority (80%) of the 57 people stated that they don't trust the Rockford Police Department. This was just by stopping people randomly at the grocery store etc. -- they don't know the Commissioner and the Commissioner doesn't know them. People in the community feel that they are being stopped due to race and being stereotyped. Commissioner Montoya Picazo said that trust is the biggest thing and if there is no dialogue, there is no trust. These groups do not have trust. The Commissioner suggested that other Commissioners also attend the protests and rallies to ask people questions. The younger people will be our leaders of tomorrow. He stated that we need to ask the leaders to engage with the protesters and to find the best mechanism to have these dialogues.

Chair Burton suggested joining listening sessions to hear from the community on two of the upcoming dates.

Commissioner Ware stated there is a skills gap which is real. We need to connect these kids (young activists) to good paying jobs and we need to have job fairs for people that are no longer in high school. He mentioned a conversation he had with someone who was recruiting for the Plumbers and Pipefitters union and discussed having something out at their office.

Commissioner Prorok expressed that the CRC needs to go into things knowing Rockford Police Department policies can be improved but not that their policies are necessarily bad. Some police officers follow policies and some do not. Some officers in the past were not appropriately held accountable for their actions, and that certainly is a concern. That is one of the things that the young people are protesting now. Part of that concern that they have is because the process they have of investigating the use of force issues are not transparent. They do not know what is being investigated and they do not know the facts in these cases. If we have a great use of force policy there are still people that are not going



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to follow it. We will need to address that issue as well and make sure they are held accountable.

Commissioner Brown stated that the CRC needs to engage with some of the experts in mental health. Many of them may have ideas that may benefit what we are looking at long term. Also, CRC should consider the possibility of engaging with current legislators to seek funds available and access them for body cameras.

Commissioner Martin suggested that the CRC review policies and look at situations where police superintendents have complained that the union is an issue for removing some of their officers (alleged to have acted outside of policy).

City of Rockford Legal Director Meyer stated that the Rockford Police Department is open to doing what is needed for change to happen. He stated that investment in police mental health training is important when analyzing recommendations for the police department. We are putting our officers on the front line and there are consequences in not investing -funding has been cut for is and it is an issue.

Commissioner Ware affirmed Director Meyer's statement and commented that the Police Department is often the dumping ground for problems and they are not all trained to handle some of these issues.

### **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Ware made a MOTION to ADJOURN. Commissioner Prorok SECONDED the MOTION. CARRIED 10-0  
The meeting Adjourned at 6:39 p.m.