



**Community Relations Commission**  
~ Minutes ~

Thursday, September 17, 2019

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

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Todd Burton called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**A. Roll Call**

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

**B. Introduction from Mayor McNamara**

Mayor McNamara welcomed the recently appointed Community Relations Commission (CRC) and discussed the potential for the Commission to bring best practices to City staff; help educate and unify our community on matters of diversity; and to celebrate diversity as one of the true strengths that makes Rockford such a fantastic city. The Mayor also encouraged the Commission to hold him and City staff accountable for the diversity-related goals he has set, and thanked Commissioners for agreeing to take part in making the City better by serving on the Commission.

**C. Introduction from the Chair**

Chairman Todd Burton welcomed Commissioners and introduced himself, providing an overview of his background and interests. Each Commissioner then introduced himself or herself and provided a brief summary of their interests, community involvement, and intentions for serving on the Commission.

**II. INFORMATION ONLY**

**A. Discussion from Department of Law regarding Human Rights Chapter; Role of Community Relations Commission.**

Legal Director Nicholas Meyer introduced himself and provided an overview of how the Commission was established through the recently revised Human Rights chapter of the City of Rockford Code of Ordinances, as well as what he envisions the role of the Commission to be. Director Meyer emphasized the need for a forum to have constructive conversations about sometimes uncomfortable or controversial but important topics impacting our community. The Legal Director also explained that he envisions the Commission to serve not only as a forum for City staff to provide information, but also as



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a forum to receive information from Commissioners about what is happening in the community and raise community concerns. He reiterated the importance of Commissioners being active and engaged in this two-way communication between the City and its residents.

Director Meyer reminded Commissioners that the body is designed to be advisory to the Mayor, City Council, and City Administration. As an example of this function, he discussed how the Commission will serve to provide critical input on drafts of community-related ordinances before moving them on the City Council for consideration. Director Meyer asked each Commissioner to carefully review and become familiar with the functions of the CRC laid out in the Code of Ordinances, Article III of the Human Rights Chapter.

Director Meyer introduced Michelle Vella, Contract and Grant Compliance Officer for the City and explained that Ms. Vella serves as the City's Equal Opportunity Compliance Officer, referenced in the Human Rights Chapter. He explained that she will be providing information on the City's Minority and Women Business Enterprise (MWBE) utilization to the Commission, as the City's recently revised MWBE Procurement Policy requires.

The Legal Director also advised that the Commission is subject to the Open Meetings Act (OMA). He reminded Commissioners to complete the Illinois Attorney General's online OMA training utilizing the link he circulated by email and to provide proof of completion to him.

### **B. Future Meeting Schedule; Department Presentations**

Director Meyer explained that during the next Commission meeting, there will be a couple of important actions taken, including approving the schedule of meetings for the coming year and adopting rules that lay out, among other things, the order of business for meetings. He informed the Commission that the first few meetings will feature presentations from most of the City departments, which will be provided to give Commissioners an overview of each department's function and interactions with the community. Director Meyer advised that the Commission will meet on the second Thursday of every month for the first six months and then bi-monthly for the remainder of 2020. Ms. Vella provided an overview of the proposed meeting dates and the departments that are scheduled to present during each meeting. Director Meyer informed the Commission that department presentations need not be the only topics presented at these CRC meetings. Chairman Burton welcomed Commissioners to contact him if they wish to add something to a meeting agenda or want a department to cover something in particular. Director Meyer also welcomed Commissioners to invite community organizations to present at future meetings.

### **C. Overview of Proposed Meeting Order of Business**

Director Meyer provided a general overview of what CRC meeting order of business will be, including Call to Order, Information Only, New Business, Old Business, Commissioners Reports, and Adjournment. He indicated he anticipates meetings will last approximately one hour.

## **V. COMMISSIONERS REPORTS**

Chairman Burton reported that the beginning of October is Mental Health Awareness Week and that Shelter Care Ministries will be holding Harvest Fest October 10th at the Jubilee Center. The event will



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feature a chili dinner and bring awareness and support to the Jubilee Center of Rockford. Chairman Burton also reported that on November 3, 2019, the Winnebago County Veteran's dinner will be held at Giovanni's.

Commissioner Eric Brown reported that NAMI of Northern Illinois is hosting a Be Here Tomorrow event on September 18, 2019 with Kevin Hines as speaker at Prairie Street Brew House.

Commissioner Ricardo Montoya Picazo summarized his commitment to the Commission, stating that he is a good listener, and will bring forward any problems brought to him by the community.

Commissioner Erin Hannigan reported that her hope as a Commissioner is to engage her own neighborhood in discussing the things that are missing there.

Commissioner Charles Prorok stated he and his wife go to a lot of community events and will use them as a way to get to know what people in the community are looking for and what they think should be addressed by the Commission.

Commissioner William Martin stated he is involved with Carpenter's Place and believes it is a good place to get feedback on what is going on in the community. He also indicated that he has partnered with Constance Lane Elementary School's Mentorship Program, which is a program for young boys in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades who do not have fathers. Constance Lane is a newly constructed school located at 620 Gregory Street. Commissioner Martin also reported that his church, Providence Missionary Baptist Church, will be partnering with Swedish American Hospital to host a trunk or treat on Mission Street on Thursday, October 31, 2019.

Commissioner Victoria De La Rosa shared that a lot of what she does for community outreach is related to her job, visiting different community events and providing educational information about engaging in our democracy. As part of this effort, she encourages people who are legal permanent residents to take the steps to become U.S. Citizens. Commissioner De La Rosa also reported she is a voter registrar with the League of Women Voters and that the organization, along with Justice for Our Neighbors and the Illinois Coalition for Refugee Rights, is sponsoring an educational event on September 15, 2019, at Christ United Methodist Church.

Commissioner Jurea Crudup discussed her involvement on the Illinois Department of Commerce Board for Career Pathways which helps to build career pathways for at risk youth.

Commissioner Nikki Lynch shared that as coordinator for programs for youth and teens at the Washington Park Community Center, she also frequently interacts with the local NAACP chapter. Commissioner Lynch reported that the chapter will hold its annual banquet on September 29, 2019 from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Radisson Hotel.

Commissioner Anquetette Parham reported that on Saturday, September 21, 2019, Rockford Promise will be hosting an event called Raise the Roof at Rockford University at 7:00 p.m. to raise funds for scholarships. Parham also reported that Next Rockford is sponsoring a 5k fun run to benefit the Family Peace Center on October 19, 2019 from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. It will begin and end at Prairie Street Brewhouse.

With no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.