

THE PARK HILLS CITY COUNCIL HELD A CAUCUS MEETING ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2018 AT 7:00 P.M. AT THE ST. JOSEPH HEIGHTS LOCATED AT 1601 DIXIE HIGHWAY WITH MAYOR MATT MATTONE PRESIDING. COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: KATHY ZEMBRODT, PAM SPOOR, JASON RESER, STEVE ELKINS AND KARL OBERJOHN
ABSENT: GREG CLAYPOLE
ALSO PRESENT WAS ATTORNEY, KYLE WINSLOW

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

I. Public forum to discuss the possible formation of a Local Human Rights Commission in Park Hills.

Mayor Mattone asked anyone wishing to speak to please sign in. He stated after the panelists' introductions, residents will have 2 minutes to speak and then the panelists will have an opportunity to respond. After Park Hills' residents have addressed the panelists, others will be invited to speak. The Mayor asked that everyone be polite and asked that no personal attacks be made against Council members or anyone else in the community. The first panelist to be introduced was Mr. John Fisher who is the Northern KY Field Supervisor for the KY Human Rights Commission. He helped to found Covington's Human Rights Commission (HRC). Next to be introduced was Mr. Frank Warnock, the City Solicitor and Assistant City Manager for Covington. The next member was Reverend Donald Smith, Park Hills resident and former member and chair of the Covington HRC. Mayor Butch Callery was unable to attend the meeting so Ms. Bonnie Meyer came in his place. Ms. Meyer is the Director of the Office of the LGBTQ Programming and Services at the Northern KY University.

Mayor Mattone stated the whole reason for having the panelists here and having the conversation about a HRC was born out of misunderstanding about a bumper sticker. Without divulging the content of the sticker, the Mayor said it made someone feel threatened causing other people to feel they were being attacked. A Municipal Order was introduced to Council as a result and no action was ever taken on it. The Mayor doesn't believe the Order is what is being discussed tonight but rather what a Local HRC could mean for the City of Park Hills.

Ms. Meyer thanked the Mayor and Council for the invitation to speak about the issue of fairness. She feels her work at the university gives students a place to feel safe, welcome and a part of their community. As the founder of the LGBTQ Program and Services, she has been at this work for almost five years and stated that NKU is rated as one of the most inclusive campuses for LGBTQ people in the country. She is a resident of Covington and works as the co-chair, on a voluntary basis, of the Northern KY Pride Festival with her wife, Katie. She wants people to feel welcome in the community regardless of who they are, what their background is or what their family may look like. She stated when people on campus ask her where the best place to live is, she says Covington. Covington is the only city in Northern KY that has a Fairness Ordinance. She

would like to see everyone work together to make Park Hills the inclusive city she knows it can be.

Reverend Smith began by saying; in 2003 Cincinnati didn't have a Fairness Ordinance. The Mayor at that time contacted Covington's Mayor on how to go about getting one for his city. He is very proud to be a part of creating the Ordinance. He would like to make the case for the advantages of an inclusive community. He stated he has been outed as a minister and most of what he says will be coming from that background. He added; there are maybe 6 or 7 verses in the entire Bible which suggests people of different sexual orientation should be discriminated against. He likes to go with what Jesus' response was when asked; what is the greatest commandment; 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength' and 'Love your neighbor as yourself'. The golden rule is 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you'. He would like to keep these in mind tonight when discussing a Local HRC.

Mr. Frank Warnock is the Assistant City Manager/City Solicitor for Covington since 2005. Prior to that, in 2003, he was asked by Mayor Callery and City Manager Jay Fossett to draft a fairness Ordinance for Covington. They reached out to all members of the community for input, businesses and religious entities. The Ordinance passed unanimously. The Ordinance prohibits discrimination in the areas of employment, housing and public accommodations. The Ordinance can be seen in full on Covington's website. There is also an enforcement aspect to the Ordinance. If a business or entity is found to violate the Ordinance, there are penalties involved. He believes it is important if the city is considering this that it be creative about it. He believes it should be simple and basic.

Mr. John Fisher was the last panelist to be introduced. He represents the KY Commission of Human Rights. They are the state agency that enforces the KY Civil Rights Act. He thanked the Mayor and Council for having him. He works with the Local HRC's throughout Kentucky. He believes Local HRC's enhance communities as they are a mixture of diverse people from the community wanting to make their communities better. He doesn't believe just talking about these issues does any good they need to be acted on. Having a group of people that are all diverse brings together a collective knowledge any other group in Park Hills may not have to bring up issues, programs and resolutions. The Mayor added that it is not the intention to point out people's differences but to celebrate similarities.

Mr. Lawrence Flick was the first resident to speak. Mr. Flick started by saying he requested information that was obtained regarding the case of the foresaid bumper sticker. He was turned down by the attorney for this request and he believes this is hiding things. He also stated he believes money is being spent on this that the city doesn't have. He wants the city to get back to reality; there is already a state HRC. He is against this because of the money and potential liability.

Mr. Mark Koenig was next to speak. He, as has Mr. Flick, attended the meetings with Mr. Fisher and the Mayor regarding the formation of a local HRC. He recalled being a child riding the Green Line Bus from school to his home in S. Ft. Mitchell and passing the sign

that read 'If you lived in Park Hills you'd be home now'. He became friends with many people in Park Hills and moved here after his marriage in 1970. He recalls the meeting in the fall when the Welcoming and Inclusive Order was first introduced. He wanted to be involved to find out what it was all about. He read several Ordinances from other cities. He noticed as he sat in Reality Tuesday this morning, there were people of all types coming and going. It came to him that this is what Park Hills is; a community with respect for one another. He believes actions speak louder than words and to just have a piece of paper that states the city is inclusive means nothing compared to being there and experiencing it.

Mr. Jonathan Pearson approached the podium. Mr. Pearson is not a resident of Park Hills. He states, being Catholic, he is aware of being discriminated against. He believes reactionary law is more at the state level; something serious happens and legislatures come together to rectify a problem. On a local level, reactionary law tends to be more statement oriented. His concern is that this is more statement oriented than anything. He asked how many specific cases there have been that would cause the city to have something over the existing laws.

Mr. Fisher replied there is very little cost to implement a local HRC. He added; since 2003 there has been one lawsuit in Kentucky which was settled without fines being imposed. He said a local HRC would give people a place to go to air their grievances. Mayor Mattone stated there is a difference between having a fairness Ordinance and having a commission. He believes everyone is focusing on an Ordinance vs. a commission. He would like to see what a commission can do for the city.

Ms. Meyer replied to Mr. Pearson's question by saying just because you don't hear about a problem doesn't mean they aren't there. She said people who are discriminated against will not come out until they have a space where they feel safe, welcome and included. Reverend Smith reiterated the fact that there is not a large cost to the city to implement. He added; one issue of discrimination is too many.

Mr. Pearson concluded by saying there could be a clash between the religious freedom side and the side of the commission.

Mr. Reser is not sure how many incidents there have been but read articles in the paper where people would sign petitions about what was going on in the city leading to lawsuits that cost the city hundreds of thousands of dollars. He heard the lawsuit was about discrimination and decided to run for office. He didn't think the lawsuit fit the character of Park Hills. That is why he brought up the Welcoming and Inclusiveness Order to Council. He would like to create an outlet for people who have problems.

The Mayor asked if we all believe we get along ok, is there an advantage or disadvantage of creating a local HRC.

Ms. Sheila Dean approached the podium next. She moved to Park Hills ten years ago as it was close to work. She became interested in the city's politics after experiencing changes to the Covington Catholic campus that affected her property. She says the proposed HRC has morphed into something that has an undercurrent of homophobia and an undercurrent

of religion that makes her uncomfortable. She believes the Council is too divided and would like to see them agree on something.

Ms. LuAnn Holmes has lived in the city since 1999. Part of what she loved about Park Hills was that everyone was different. She stated she worked for a large company in a conservative part of Michigan and being a creative industry, had to find ways to make people want to come work there. She believes the same can be said for Park Hills by finding ways to have productive people come live here. She says people should be like her niece who is colorblind and sees all people as equal.

Mr. Fisher closed by saying we don't have laws that will make people get along but we do have laws that make sure people are treated with respect, fairness and dignity.

Mr. Warnock added that it is not ok to discriminate against anyone and we need to realize there is a problem and deal with it.

Reverend Smith asked everyone to remember how he started out 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you'

Ms. Meyer stated people need a place to interact with others like them and voice their concerns. She said people should be proactive and not reactive. She added she would be happy to sit down with anyone and discuss these issues with them.

The Mayor asked if anyone on Council would like to add to the discussion.

Mr. Oberjohn began by thanking the panelists for attending. He asked Reverend Smith how Covington overcame the contentious meetings that occurred during the process.

Reverend Smith stated they sat down with the business community and were able to agree on an Ordinance that fit the needs of Covington. Mr. Warnock and Ms. Meyers both stated it is important to listen to the community.

Mr. Elkins stated he is keeping an open mind as his daughter is special needs with Down syndrome. He believes for the most part people in Park Hills treat each other with respect. He believes we strive to treat each person as their own person. He believes some of the consequences will be giving a voice to a group or groups. His concern is that people in other groups who are not listed will be afraid to voice their opinions for the fear of being labeled. He does not want to pit groups against each other. He likes to work with people on an individual level. He wants to work toward things people agree on such as respect, friendship and honesty; things to bring people together. He said the right that none of us have is the right not to be offended. He would like more time to think on it and thanked the panel.

Ms. Spoor also thanked the panelists and residents for coming. She has lived here for forty years and has a variety of neighbors. She added; when needed, everyone is there for each other because they are neighbors. She is concerned about identity politics that she read about in Harvard Magazine. She would be happy to share the article. It read, in part, sometimes when we engage with the best of intentions in identity politics, we actually reap a different result where people stand apart rather than coming together. She has not experienced this in Park Hills. She says having a housing authority creates special demands on a city. Park Hills does not have a housing authority. She hopes that Council

is welcoming to people that have issues and we have state and federal laws to address these problems. She finished by saying we are all called to love thy neighbor.

Ms. Zembrodt thanked everyone. She agreed with a lot of what Mr. Elkins said that people don't want to be put in categories. She added; the best way is to lead by example. She said most in her neighborhood come together when another is in need. She doesn't think a commission is needed as it is in Covington because Park Hills does not have a housing authority. She believes education is important without all the laws and bureaucracy.

Mr. Reser also thanked everyone for attending. He sees the HRC as a way to promote healing in the community as a way of being welcoming without naming individual groups; all types of people. He brought up the bumper sticker where the young lady may have had no one to talk to and felt afraid. He doesn't want to pit groups against each other.

Mr. Oberjohn said just because everything is fine for you doesn't mean it's fine for everyone else. He referred to the recent power outage and felt the need to help neighbors any way he could. He is just not sure if this is something the government should be involved in.

Ms. Spoor asked how rights are enforced. Mr. Warnock stated they are reviewed by the City Manager to make sure the accusations are not frivolous. Penalties can be imposed and it can also go to circuit court. Many referrals go through Mr. Fisher. Ms. Spoor asked if they can go through the state's HRC. He replied they can. Ms. Spoor stated the state laws cover city employees. Mr. Fisher said their Ordinance specifically addresses the LGBTQ; others can go to state.

Mayor Mattone believes this is a good discussion for the city to have for an opportunity to expand inclusiveness.

II. Committee Reports

A. Communications – Karl Oberjohn

Mr. Oberjohn stated the committee met last week to make plans for this years' newsletters. They would like to have newsletters delivered in May, September and December. He would like articles sent to the committee by April 1st.

B. Infrastructure – Karl Oberjohn

Mr. Oberjohn, along with Mr. Reser and the Mayor, met at the PDS for a meeting where they showed what they are doing with new programs that track city assets. He is excited to learn more about this and see how it can benefit Park Hills. Park Hills was used as a case study for its sidewalk assessment. Representatives from other cities were interested in seeing what Park Hills is doing. The sidewalk assessment has been done; waiting on the report from PDS. Mr. Reser added he would like Council to look at the software they were shown and have the city engineer work on. The Mayor added it is GIS based software. They are looking to coordinate with the cities and utilities. They are scheduled for the next business meeting to talk about the Z21 Planning Initiative. He would like them to perhaps go over the sidewalk assessment also.

III. Old Business

A. Berling Update

Mayor Mattone stated the consulting parties met and recommended increased screening, planting and for some of the money to go towards the publication of a book about the history of Park Hills and some signage. The information was given to the consulting parties for review. As of last week, the Army Corps of Engineers had not yet received any comments back from the Heritage Council. Once they do, the MOA is signed; it will go to the Army Corps of Engineers for them to review the permit. He hopes these will be issued by late spring. Ms. Spoor added that the KY Heritage Council was present at that meeting and the latter 2 items were agreed to. Ms. Spoor asked how the clearing permit issued without contacting the Army Corps of Engineers when the Blue Line Stream was discussed by all. Mayor Mattone did not have a clear answer except a lack of communication.

B. Gateway Update

The developers are making some tweaks to their submittal to the KCPC. The meeting scheduled for this Thursday has been canceled.

C. Municipal Order No. 2, 2018 – posting legislation to the website prior to meetings was discussed.

Ms. Zembrodtt would like to see the Order passed. Ms. Spoor wants residents to be able to see proposed legislation so they are aware of what's going to be discussed.

D. There was a brief discussion regarding the city's revenues and expenses as well as real estate and road taxes. Ms. Sarah Froelich would like to see financial reports given out at the meeting for people to keep up with.


IV. New Business

Mayor Mattone stated he was elected to serve on the PDS management board for the next two years.

Ms. LuAnn Holmes asked where the city was on its tree Ordinance and how the city can prevent power outages like the one last weekend. Mayor Mattone stated he spoke with Duke and some trees were trimmed. He would like for the Tree Board to do an inventory and then perhaps walk with Duke to see which trees pose a threat. Ms. Spoor stated she walked the lines with Duke four years ago but many of the Ash trees have since died. Mr. D. Scott Smith, a resident in attendance that works for Duke, stated the problem may be with the wires themselves. Mayor Mattone is hopeful Park Hills could be a test pilot for underground wires.

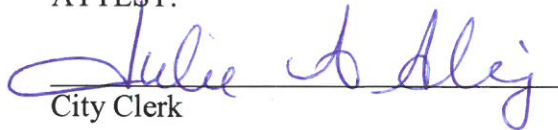
9: 25 Motion to adjourn from Caucus meeting was made by Ms. Spoor; second by Mr. Reser

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Mayor, Matt Mattone

ATTEST:



City Clerk