

CITY OF LIMA
NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS COMMITTEE
MEETING REPORT
FEBRUARY 18, 2025 @ 6:00 PM
Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

Councilor Jones called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The roll call showed the following members present: Thomas Jones, Derry Glenn, Jon Neeper

Others in attendance were: Jamie Dixon, Anthony Wilkerson, Carla Thompson, Anthony Geiger, Mariah Cunningham, Eric Pheneger, Jessica Begonia (Attendance sheet attached)

ITEM OF DISCUSSION

1. Discrimination from Local Businesses

Councilor Jones reminded everyone that Chambers is not a court room. He believes that it is his job to listen to the concerns of the residents and find out the proper steps to take and to be of assistance in any way that he can. He referenced the City Ordinance pertaining to discrimination by employers in the City. He thanked Claytonia Logan for trusting City Council with the situation that occurred to her. Councilor Glenn explained there has been problems in the past, but it has never been brought to Council before. He sees discrimination as an issue in the City and should be brought to the forefront and not swept under the rug. He referenced the individuals who have called him complaining of racial discrimination. He expressed there are things they can do as a City body as there is an Ordinance. He expressed his displeasure of those individuals not attending the meeting who have complained about racial discrimination.

Councilor Neeper agreed that something needs to be done to address racial discrimination, but he is not sure what the City can do legally. Councilor Wilkerson referenced the Human Relations Commission. He further referenced the individuals who are afraid to speak up of their discrimination experiences. He hopes that the Committee can form an action plan to address the issues. Councilor Thompson explained she had a similar incident about a month and a half ago by the same group as Pastor Logan. She provided a handout to the Committee which outlined a possible solution which is enacting a Human Relations Council (hereinafter referred to as "HRC"). She explained that an HRC can do things depending on what their community needs of them such as research, mediation, advocacy, act as legislative bodies and enact fines and punishment or act as an investigative body that makes recommendations to City Administration.

President Dixon advised from a legislative standpoint there is not much City Council can do. He referenced the HRC. He explained he wanted to ensure they do not do anything that can put the City in a liable spot. He addressed Pastor Logan and expressed he does support her in the cause to bring awareness to the issue but from a legislation standpoint, there isn't much the City can do. He recommended Pastor Logan to follow up with the Civil Rights Commission.

Councilor Jones expressed the importance of Councilmembers doing their due diligence and making sure they hear their residents. Claytonia Logan explained she is here tonight because she didn't want to take things into her own hands and she wants to do things the right way. She further explained the horrific events that she encountered at Walley's Gas Station. She explained during her meeting with the owners, Councilor Glenn, and Councilor Jones, she asked for a public apology and instead, she was offered \$500.00. She expressed her current state of fear that she lives in due to the threats made against her. She explained she came to Council because she thought it was the right thing to do and it was disheartening to hear President Dixon advise there was nothing Council can do. She explained Jones and Glenn did not take a side during their meeting and acted as a mediator. President Dixon advised Pastor Logan that there currently was nothing on the books that Council can do hold an entity liable for discrimination. He further advised after the last Council meeting; he spoke with Councilor Thompson about revisiting the HRC because the Commission could have been able to assist in Pastor Logan's specific issue.

Councilor Jones reiterated the reason he put the issue in Committee is because the City currently has an Ordinance on the books and the Law Dir. is in attendance to explain the Ordinance. Pastor Logan expressed the need to spread awareness of the experience she had, and it is important to not allow it to happen. President Dixon apologized to Pastor Logan.

Tony Geiger, Law Director, expressed no one should go through what Pastor Logan encountered. He explained that he doesn't know how to write a law that fixes racism and hatred. He pointed out the HRC legally cannot have a legislative function as that function is invested in the body of the City Council of Lima, Ohio and it cannot be delegated to another entity. He further advised President Dixon was correct that there is nothing on the books now that can do the types of things that Councilor Thompson is talking about but there are some things on the books. He referred to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission and explained a complaint can be filed within 6 months from the date of the occurrence. He advised the second things that is on the books is Chapter 870 which gives Pastor Logan the right to hire a lawyer and file a lawsuit as a private cause of action. He further advised the third thing that is on the books is the Human Relations Council that has never been administered. He expressed the importance of coordinating the HRC with the Administration. He advised Council has authority to hire their own employees but they also have to go back to the Finance Committee to find funding for those positions.

Pastor Logan thanked Councilor Jones and Councilor Glenn for being professional when they met with the owners of the gas station. She expects that new businesses will know that racism is not accepted in the City of Lima. Yolanda Shobe referenced her son's experience with racism as a 16 year old child and how that made her feel as his mother. She explained no one sends their child into the world expecting these types of things. She thanked god that her son was with his pastor when the experience happened and not one of his friends because the outcome could have been different.

Councilor Jones asked everyone to trust that Council will do their due diligence as this is an awakening for all of them. Councilor Thompson encouraged Pastor Logan and Yolanda to contact Crime Victim Services as they offer trauma counseling. She explained policy and education can go a long way. She referenced a discussion she had with Mayor Smith about revisiting the HRC. She explained many of the HRCs are volunteer based and she believes having working meetings is not something to push away. She expressed the need to start thinking about what Council can do and how they can move that forward. Councilor Glenn thanked everyone for coming and he knows Council has power. He referenced the need to look at everything when it comes to businesses. He expressed Pastor Logan has done nothing wrong by coming to Council. Councilor Wilkerson referenced Yolanda and her son's experience and he encouraged her to keep doing what she is doing.

Councilor Neeper explained he is not condemning the idea of the HRC, but it hasn't been in effect since 1970 with no action. He is not in favor of creating a job that nothing gets done in. Thompson referenced the HRC examples she provided the Committee. She explained the HRC can be a tool that Council can act on and can be part of the solution. Neeper expressed the need to discuss the HRC in the committee that it currently is in. President Dixon referenced Yolanda's son and his lack of communication. Janelda Cowan expressed that she is appalled that the room is not full and the community is not coming together as she knows everyone has been through a situation similar to Pastor Logan's experience. She encouraged Council to expedite the process as it is important to tell the community racism will not be tolerated. Pastor Logan reiterated the last thing someone wants to hear coming into Council Chambers is that they don't know why they are here. She explained she never expected the City to file a lawsuit but she did so to find out what the City had to offer. She explained she believes in the City. Councilor Jones thanked the Law Dept. for attending as their input was the purpose of the meeting. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Glenn moved, seconded by Neeper, to adjourn. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Jones, Chair

Neighborhood Concerns 2/18/25

- 1) Thomas Jones LCC
- 2) Mariah Cunningham Law Dept.
- 3) Eric Pheneger Law Dept.
- 4) Tony Geiger Law Director
- 5) Claytonia Losen
- 6) Tammy Gould
- 7) Theresa Manship
- 8) Tony Wilkerson LCC
- 9) Carl Thompson LCC
- 10) JON NEPPER LCC