



# CITY OF TOPEKA

## HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

### MEETING MINUTES DRAFT

**Date:** December 5, 2022  
**Time:** 5:30pm  
**Location:** City Hall – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room; 215 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street

**Call to Order.** Commissioner Roberts called the meeting to order at 5:31pm.

**Roll Call.** Present: Commissioner Luc Bensimon (By Zoom); Commissioner Cynthia Hopp (By Zoom); Commissioner Pamela James (By Zoom); Commissioner Carol Roberts; Commissioner Carmen Romero-Nichols (By Zoom) and Commissioner Alexis Simmons. Absent: Vice Chair Jennifer Goetz; and Commissioner Angelique Brown.

**Guests.** Mayor Michael Padilla (By Zoom); Mary Kuckelman, Senior City Attorney; and Kaitlyn Willis, Senior Executive Assistant, City Manager's Office.

**Adoption of December 5, 2022 Agenda.** Commissioner Romero-Nichols moved and Commissioner Simmons seconded a motion to adopt the agenda as written. Motion passed unanimously.

**Adoption of November 14, 2022 Minutes.** Commissioner Simmons moved and Commissioner Romero-Nichols seconded a motion to adopt the minutes as written. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **Old Business.**

- **Rebuilding and Reintroducing the THRC.** Mayor Padilla spoke to the Commission about the following items:
  - **Chief DEI Officer.** Ernestor De La Rosa has been selected to be the Chief DEI Officer. He will begin working for the City of Topeka on January 9, 2023. Mayor Padilla hopes that Mr. De La Rosa will join future HRC meetings and be involved with the Commission.
  - **Independent Police Auditor (IPA) Reports.** The City is hiring an Internal Investigator, and they will conduct internal City investigations in addition to serving as the IPA. Mayor Padilla asked the Commission for their thoughts on the previous IPA Reports, and the consensus was that the Commission benefited from reviewing and approving these reports.
  - **Role of the Commission.** In the past, the Commission was a community advocate and worked with city departments to address certain issues. The Commission also held town halls, but these ended due to low attendance. The Commission discussed holding town halls in conjunction with other meetings to increase attendance. The Commission also discussed the benefits of having a body in place for constituents to share concerns that can be forwarded to city departments or the Governing Body.

- **Onboarding and Trainings.** Mayor Padilla asked if anyone would like to schedule onboarding or receive any trainings. The Commission has a few new members, so the consensus was to schedule onboarding once the vacancies have been filled in 2023. The Commission also discussed potential trainings from the Police Department and Fire Department so they can have the tools and knowledge to serve on the Commission.
- **Attendance.** Mayor Padilla asked Commissioners to prioritize the Commission and attend future meetings. Kaitlyn Willis will send a survey to the Commission to find a new time for 2023 meetings.
- **Election of Chair and Vice Chair.** Commissioner Romero-Nichols moved and Commissioner Simmons seconded a motion to postpone the election until the January HRC Meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment.** No public comment.

**Adjournment.** Meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

**\*\*Next Meeting: TBD\*\***

To request an ADA Accommodation, please contact 785-368-3725 between the hours of 8:00am – 5:00pm no later than 3 working days in advance of this meeting.