



NEWSLETTER

OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY THE MAYOR AND THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN, NOVEMBER, 1966
1803 CITY HALL, ATLANTA GEORGIA 30303 TELEPHONE 522-4463 EXT. 433

A CITIZENS' AGENDA

FIRST QUARTERLY PROGRAM REPORT

Mayor Allen, in installing the members, said:

"As Atlanta's neighborhoods have grown up and spread out, also they have grown apart. Despite the instantaneous speed of modern electronic communications, it has become increasingly difficult to relate the interests of various neighborhoods one with another in the rapidly changing social, cultural and economic fabric of our city. For that is the way I see Atlanta -- as a group of more than 500,000 people with the common interest of making Atlanta always a better place to live in, to do all possible to make it become America's finest city. It is in the spirit of this common interest that this Commission has been created -- As I wish you Godspeed in your activities. I pledge you the enthusiastic cooperation of your City Government."

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The Community Relations Commission of the City of Atlanta inherited an unfinished agenda from an Ad Hoc Human Relations Committee, which was appointed by the Board of Aldermen in August 1966.

In July 1966 a meeting had been called by "Grass Roots" Community leaders to consider how Atlanta might avoid the disturbances that had erupted in other cities. (It should be noted that this was held before the disturbances in Summerhill and Boulevard, in August).

A resolution was adopted at the meeting, asking the Alderman to appoint a Committee to work towards the establishment of a biracial, human relations committee for the City of Atlanta.

On August 1st, the Board of Aldermen did adopt a resolution calling for the appointment of such a committee, to be composed of the Chairman of the Finance, Parks, Police, Public Works I, Public Works II, Urban Renewal Policy and Zoning Committees of the Board of Aldermen, and a committee "to be selected and designated by the Atlanta Summit Conference," with the Vice-Mayor an ex-officio member.

The Ordinance specified that the Committee should survey "the services and facilities which are furnished in the areas of the City known as Blue Heaven, Vine City, Mechanicsville, Summerhill, Cabbage Town and such as other areas as may be determined by the Committee and to make recommendations to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen for the furnishing of necessary services and facilities -- which will standardize these services furnished in the above-mentioned order as with all other areas of the City."

The Ordinance further authorized the Committee to "formulate and present recommendations for the Membership and formation of a Human Relations Commission for the City of Atlanta together with an estimated financial statement."

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Such a Committee was appointed, and was convened by Mayor Ivan Allen to hear reports from heads of major departments about improvements in City Services into substandard areas and to take a bus tour of various substandard and Urban Renewal areas.

At the second meeting of the Committee the advisability of inviting persons from these areas to a Public Meeting was discussed and it was agreed that such a hearing would be held to better advantage if and when there was a permanent Commission with a staff to follow through on the problems brought up. And so the Committee, with the Vice-Mayor serving as chairman, turned its attention to the recommendation of the creation of a permanent biracial Community Relations Commission.

The Ordinance establishing the Commission, which is an amendment to the City Charter was adopted on November 8, 1966. The appointments made by the Mayor, to the 20 Member Commission, were approved by the Board of Aldermen. The Organizational Meeting was held on December 14, 1966 with speeches by Mayor Allen and Mr. John Feild, Director of the Community Relations Service of the U. S. Conference of Mayors.

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The Commission, at its first regular meeting in January elected an Executive Director, (whose appointment was approved at the next meeting of the Board of Aldermen on February 7, 1967) and adopted as its first Agenda the unfinished business of the Ad Hoc Human Relations Committee - to hold hearings, both at City Hall and in specified neighborhoods, where Citizens might state their needs.

On February 16th, an overflow crowd appeared in the "Aldermanic Chamber to speak and to listen." Speakers included a member of the State Board of Family & Children's Services, a dean of a school of Social Work, representatives from a Youth Council, individual citizens from different areas. Through April, five meetings have been held to hear from ten to twelve neighborhoods. Three or more members of the Commission have been assigned as a Team for each area. Information Profiles on each neighborhood have been prepared so Commission Members and others can better understand the importance of various requests. These Profiles plus detailed minutes of each meeting provide a unique window for looking into these areas, each with unique problems reflecting its own characteristic -- physical, economic, political -- and yet, all together giving patterns of problems.

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Most of the requests have concerned the most basic public services, with little reference to civil rights or discrimination. Decent housing, safe streets and sidewalks, recreation, adequate sewers and sanitary services, increased police patrolling -- these are among the most frequently mentioned items. In some areas there are complaints from home owners about a strict code enforcement. In others, the complaints are that landlords are not required to meet standards. Throughout there is confusion and anxiety about possibilities of displacement and relocation because of code enforcement, urban renewal, highways, etc. (At the request of the residents a special meeting was scheduled about the various city plans in one of the areas.)

Public Housing is an area unto itself, with many questions about the actual amounts of rents and charges, but most important, questions about the authority of the manager and the lack of feeling of freedom and independence to question and complain. The month to month lease and the authority of the manager to evict (and until the recent Supreme Court ruling, that without written reason) has created a situation where many tenants feel they have no recourse -- particularly in view of the cost of moving and the difficulty of finding other accommodations if one is evicted from public housing. A request to help "stabilize a neighborhood" has opened up the subject of racial patterns of housing. The Commission has collected information and insights and is now attempting to develop realistic recommendations for all the various segments of the community which are involved.

In areas where few residents have cars, public transportation becomes of much more importance, economically and socially. The lack of streets and sidewalks, much less public transportation in many cases accounts for apparent lack of neighborhood spirit. Holes in sidewalks and dimly lit streets also become more important when travel is on foot.

Everywhere there is a plea for recreation - places for children and young people to play, equipment, supervisors - young and old. The scarcity of parents at home makes this need especially acute. There have been many suggestions for areas in the neighborhoods suitable for recreation and play areas. Pleas for coordination of public services to provide maximum use of -- for example, use of school yards for recreation, use of public health facilities for planned parenthood and other clinics; dovetailing of code enforcement and planning programs - has been both implicit and explicit. The inconvenience of the present dearth of information services at City Hall has also been noted and appreciation expressed for the evening hearings to register requests and complaints. Running throughout the comments is a healthy combination of idealism - (citizens expect good public services) - and skepticism - ("We've been talking about this since God made men.") but above all, the feeling this Community Relations Commission represents just about the last chance of Getting Something Done.

And has Something Been Done? Some action, even if it is only an inquiry, has been taken on every request that has been made. Some report has been or will be made to the individual. Street lights have been scheduled. Trash picked up. Some housing problems straightened out -- The various departments of the City and other agencies have been cooperative and where possible, have complied with the requests for service. It is apparent, however, that the inadequacy of services stems not so much from the insensitivity of administrative officials as from the limit of the resources presently available to them.

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The function of a "Complaint Bureau" is a valid one. The function of a communication center is a valid one. These, the Commission will continue to perform.

The next phase, however, in its program is to move from the specific to the general, from the remedial to the preventive, from acting as an agent to acting as an innovator. To do this, the Commission plans first to meet with Heads of Departments and Agencies and to expand its organization in 3 directions. Already 12 individuals in professional positions have been invited to serve as a Technical Advisory Committee to the Director and Chairman.

Advisory Committees to the Commission in 12 areas will be named. These will include individuals already informed and those who want to be informed. They will duplicate the cross section composition of the Commission and will enable the Commission to make more realistic recommendations to the Mayor and the Aldermen. The areas in which Advisory Committees are anticipated are -- Housing, Education, Employment, Police and Law Enforcement, Recreation, Public Accomodations, Registration & Voting, Municipal Services, Welfare and Public Assistance, Social and Health Services, communications within & between Groups and Voluntary Associations.

A week after the first hearing at City Hall, on citizens needs, the Commission held a second Public Hearing and invited civic organizations and agencies to describe their programs and make suggestions to the Commission: 50 were represented and expressed support and offered their cooperation with the Commission.

In each of the neighborhoods visited, the Commission Team will keep in touch with various land resource people, in order to have continuous communication following up on the hearing. With a solid background of 3 months of daily contacts with the needs of citizens and administration, the Commission is now ready to accept these offers of help and to call on interested individuals and groups to join in developing a Citizens' Agenda to carry out the following functions as described in the City Ordinance:

"To foster mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect among all economic, social, religious and ethnic groups in the city."

"To help make it possible for each citizen, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin or ancestry, to develop his talents and abilities without limitation."

"To aid in permitting the City of Atlanta to benefit from the fullest realization of its human resources."

"To investigate, discourage and seek to prevent discriminatory practices against any individual because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin or ancestry."

"To attempt to act as conciliator in controversies involving human relations."

"To cooperate in the development of educational programs dedicated to the improvement of human relations with, and to enlist the support of, civil leaders, civic, religious, veterans, labor, industrial, commercial and eleemosynary groups; and private agencies engaged in the inculcation of ideals of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding."

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

(Appointed by Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr.,
and approved by the Board of Aldermen)

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|--|---|
| Mr. T. M. Alexander, Sr. 521-0549
208 Auburn Avenue, Northeast | Mr. Rolland Maxwell 522-1300
Davison's
180 Peachtree Street, Northwest |
| Mr. R. Byron Attridge 525-0484
Trust Company of Georgia Building | Mrs. Fred W. Patterson 233-1624
2959 Andrews Drive, Northwest |
| Mrs. Sara Baker 627-8193
928 Park Avenue, Southeast | Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild 873-1731
The Temple
1589 Peachtree Road, Northeast |
| Miss Helen Bullard 577-3600
Toombs, Amisano & Wells
70 Fairlie Street, Northwest | Mr. M. O. "Buzz" Ryan, 688-6500
General Manager
Marriott Motor Hotel
Courtland at Cain Street |
| Mr. R. J. Butler 524-5001
250 Tenth Street, Northeast | Mr. Jack Sells 355-4311
1416 Hills Place, Northwest |
| Mr. Robert Dobbs 622-0919
2455 Abner Place, Northwest | Mrs. Mary Stephens 766-5001
2840 Dearwood Drive, Southwest |
| Mr. Hamilton Douglas, Jr. 522-2200
National Bank of Georgia Building | Rev. Samuel Williams 688-0206
Friendship Baptist Church
437 Mitchell Street, Southwest |
| Mr. Clarence G. Ezzard 627-1187
245 Atlanta Avenue, Southeast | ***** |
| Mr. Joseph Haas 525-6141
First National Bank Building | * Executive Director 522-4463* |
| Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan 233-2148
Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta
P. O. Box 12047, Northside Station | * Mrs. Eliza K. Paschall Ext. 433* |
| Mr. Irving K. Kaler, Chairman 525-6886
1820 Fulton National Bank Building | ***** |
| Mr. Al Kuettner 873-3823
675 Sherwood Road, Northeast | Ex-Officio Member: |
| Dr. Robert E. Lee 874-8664
Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
731 Peachtree Street, Northeast | Mr. Sam Massell, Jr. 521-1694
Vice Mayor, City of Atlanta
40 Pryor Street, Southwest |

THE ATLANTA COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION MEETS THE FOURTH FRIDAY IN EACH MONTH
AT THE CITY HALL, 1:30 P.M., ROOM 22. MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION
1203 CITY HALL
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

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