

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION
1203 CITY HALL
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The Community Relations Commission was established by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen in November, 1966 and the 20 members were appointed in December. The Executive Director was appointed in January, and approved by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen on February 6, 1967.

The first business of the Commission was to hold a Public Hearing in the City Hall on February 16, to which individuals and/or representatives of organizations were invited to appear and state what they felt were their own problems or those of the community. More than thirty-five (35) persons spoke, on matters ranging from the Food Stamp Plan for Fulton County to the prospect of immediate eviction, from a plea for help in a 15 year old struggle against water damages to property to the need for recreation facilities, better sewerage, and help in racial stabilization of neighborhoods.

Two spokesmen presented a petition with more than 200 signatures. A civic club president, a student, a teacher, an academic Dean, a housekeeper, a member of the State Board of Family and Children's Services - men and women, young and old, they pinpointed problems of their community.

Following is a summary of response to matters brought up:

A. RECREATION:

1. Vine City: As requested by the Vine City Youth Council, the Vine City Recreation Center has resumed services under Mr. Eddie Murphy. The city of Atlanta Recreation Department is paying his salary, along with a supplement from the Boy Scouts of America. The Boy Scouts's supplement came as a result of NASH-Washington Service Center, EOA, following suggestion by the Executive Director of the Commission.
2. General Recreation: Mr. Jack Delius, in reply to many other recreation requests, reported that the playlot program will

have priority in summer programs, that 21 are now scheduled, an increase from 7 operated last year. He pointed out that there are no EOA funds for this, and in order to budget for these he has had to curtail activities in other parts of the City to save \$48,000 for salaries for playlot personnel.

Existing playlots are located as follows:

Summerhill-2; Mechanicsville-3; Buttermilk Bottoms-1; Vine City-2; Lightning-1; Edgewood-1; Cabbage Town-1; Park Ave. & Lansing Street-1; Arlington Circle, N.W.-1; Central Ave., S.W.-1; Proposed new sites are Lightning-1; Perry Homes-1; Edgewood-1; Huff Road, N. W.-1; Plunkett Town, Bender St., S.W. and Little Street, S.E. Four (4) portable swimming pools just acquired through anonymous gift; sites not yet decided on.

B. HOUSING:

1. Public Housing: In response to inquiries about Mrs. Murray who appeared before the Commission, Atlanta Housing Authority staff reported that the tenant had been warned last fall about complaints from neighbors, had been given eviction notice which had been withdrawn after conferences, that the decision of the manager to evict was upheld by the central staff. The Authority did, however, agree to the Commission's request to postpone eviction while the Commission got more information. (Mrs. Murray plans to move soon; she was particularly grateful not to have to move during cold weather which would have been difficult for her elderly mother.)
2. General information about public housing, requested by the Commission, is that leases are for a month and are on the form normally used by public housing units throughout the country; it is not customary in any public housing to give written notices of reasons for eviction. Project managers are given maximum authority to make decisions, but there is a tenant relations officer at the central office, to whom tenants may go for any business. Funds collected for damages, etc. go into general operating funds for that project. (Housing Authority projects receive no operating funds except from rents and the overall operation must break even.) The receipts should indicate reason for charge.
3. Neighborhood Stabilization: Meetings attended in Gilbert Heights area and in Lynhurst area following appearance of residents at Hearing. Georgia Real Estate Commission investigator explained responsibilities of licensed real estate agents and risks of dealing with unlicensed persons. It was announced that those agents operating in the Gilbert Heights area had agreed that anyone who had put his house on the market through a misunderstanding about the neighborhood would be permitted to rescind his action.

Individuals in southwest area in transition have asked for help along the following lines: all sections of the city must be opened up to make one housing market, "by opening up other areas to all people, the tension will be relieved here"; "Negro teachers be placed in all schools where teachers are needed, so that people won't have any place to run to avoid contact with Negro citizens; financing be used to encourage housing market rather than to discourage.

4. Demolition of sub-standard housing: Property referred to on Markham St., owned by Mr. Joseph Sheffer, is under court order and the city can do nothing.
5. Property on Garibaldi Street, damaged by water: Several city departments have sent inspectors out and each disclaims any responsibility for the situation. Mr. Gleaton has obtained legal advice and an engineer has been engaged to survey the area. Five(5) other residents of the same area have signed statements, describing similar conditions, of damage from water entering house and being unable to enter front door in times of heavy rain because of water standing.
6. Resolutions from the Atlanta Branch, NAACP, asking Housing Resources Committee to request "Open Housing Occupancy"; urging state tax abatement law; requesting Mayor and Board of Aldermen to reduce term of Atlanta Housing Authority members from 10 to 5 years "as in other cities of the country" and to increase Negro representation on authority.

C. POLICE PROTECTION

1. Police protection in Pittsburg: Police added, although records show not as much crime there as in some other areas.

D. INADEQUATE MAINTENANCE, OTHER SERVICES:

1. Inadequate maintenance, etc., in private apartments: reports have resulted in inspections and in some cases, the apartments have been found unfit and residents are now on the priority list for relocation.
2. Sewerage and drainage problems: Individual locations reported to Construction and Sanitary Departments, and in several cases corrected.
3. Sidewalks: Property owners must sign for new sidewalks, 51% of the owners of the property frontage must sign a petition requesting paving and agreeing to pay for same.
4. Proctor Creek: Mr. Nixon says property lines extend to middle of creek and it is responsibility of property owners to fence property and parents to keep children away from creek if it is dangerous.
5. Food in neighborhood stores: Investigations by Health Department.
6. Civil Defense: General Woodward states no discrimination, says records are not kept by race, so cannot report on participation of Negroes; 14 employees (No Negroes) Mr. Sterrs Johnson is now on state merit system register for Deputy Civil Defense Director.
7. Nursing Homes: Administrators of 3 facilities mentioned (Wesley Woods, Hillhaven, and Highview) all have expressed policies of no discrimination; Mrs. Dempsey has been so advised.

Hillhaven reports one Negro patient; Highview reports no applications; Wesley Woods says they have always offered services to all. (Highview receives \$500 from the city certain percent of space reserved for patients receiving public welfare assistance.)

8. Planning and Zoning: Planning department says area in East Lake Heights, where residents are concerned about possibility of zoning for business is zoned R4-single family residential and there are no zoning changes projected.
9. General statement at Hearing that Planning and Zoning still according to 1956 format "is inaccurate", Planning Department says present format is multiple, with formats varying from area to area, and changing as the need arises.
10. Sanitary Department-garbage collection: City of Atlanta is responsible for all collections in Fulton County and for all within city limits, even if in Dekalb County. For portions of East Lake Heights not in city limits, Dekalb County is responsible. All collections for private residences are on twice weekly schedules, with 2 or 3 days lapse between collections. Business collections are done nightly.
11. No report yet on City Personnel Department; CIP, UA agencies city contracts require equal opportunity. To be taken up at meetings to be scheduled with various department heads.
12. Food Stamp Plan: Inquiry directed to EOA; response that inquiry should be made of state Family and Children's Services. This has been done; report pending.
13. Delay in Court cases: Student complained of having to appear as a witness and case postponed; lawyer, etc. say this is inconvenient for everybody but see no remedy.

March, 1967