



CITY EXPERIENCE
Mayor's Office of Resilience and Equity

Greater Tulsa Area African American Affairs Commission

Regular Meeting | November 12, 2024 | 6:00 – 7:00 pm

City Hall at One Technology Center | 10 North Meeting Room

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Patricia Carter-Breeckner, Marquess Dennis, Dewayne Dickens, Brian Humphrey, Margaret Love, Tracye Love Chandler, Larissa McNeil, Anthony Payne, John Paul Ray, Jameelah Stuckey, Kandy Whitley-White, Juddie Williams, Tony Williams

Commissioners Absent: David Harris, Burlinda Radney, Maybelle Wallace, Kristi Williams

I. Call to Order and Introductions

- a. Chairman Dickens called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

II. Guest Speaker: Dr. Ebony Johnson, Superintendent of Tulsa Public Schools

- a. Dr. Johnson began her presentation by recognizing Commissioner Love for elevating the issue of African American students who are struggling to get drivers licenses and end up having interaction with law enforcement. Pending bond passing, Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) will have driver's education classes in schools.
- b. Dr. Johnson shared context for TPS and her journey to becoming Superintendent.
 - i. TPS is the largest district in the state.
 - ii. Became Interim Superintendent role amidst a publicly tumultuous time for the district. The Oklahoma State Superintendent had concerns about TPS, prompting monthly meetings and reports to the state. TPS received news that they no longer have to return to the State for these meetings.
 - iii. TPS has a baseline goal of 47% of staff identifying as BIPOC, currently at 56%.
 - iv. Currently have approximately 130 teacher vacancies.
 1. Puts a strain on other educators in schools and district staff.
 2. Exploring non-conventional ways to recruit educators.
 - a. Partnering with colleges and universities to bring interns into classrooms.
 - b. Bring in content experts with subject knowledge to classrooms and partner them with someone who can handle classroom management and lesson planning.
 - c. Encourage Teaching Assistants to becoming classroom teachers.
- c. Previously, TPS has not called out a need for students to enroll in IB/AP courses. Now, there is a directive to have more students, especially BIPOC students, take academically rigorous courses setting them up for higher education and post-secondary success.
- d. Challenges with supporting wholistic student needs.
 - i. Launched the PTA for every school initiative this year to establishing PTAs at every site. Want the community to be active and sign up.



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- ii. Can be challenging to have families show up (IEP meetings, parent teacher conferences) and want families to be active in students' education. Continuing to work on collaboration with families.
- e. One of the safest districts. Ensuring students feel safe physically and emotionally.
 - i. See, Hear, Share messaging to students.
 - ii. All middle and high schools have bag checks and metal detector wands every day at school entrances. Need for volunteer support.
- f. Dr. Johnson shared TPS data illuminating challenges for the district. Passed out a one pager.
 - i. Chronic absenteeism
 - 1. Education gap with families, as some don't see that two or three days missed per month is significant; however, that time out of school adds up.
 - 2. Advocated for state funding to get staff to address absenteeism but turned down.
 - ii. Suspensions
 - 1. Suspension rate for Black students is higher than white students. This is in line with national trends, but not a point of pride.
 - 2. Established a task force for African American student suspension to investigate the root causes of this issue and create plan to address it.
 - 3. This issue takes time to remedy due to changing mindset and policy.
 - iii. There are two diplomas offered in Oklahoma: college & career readiness and core.
 - 1. State will now be assessing graduation rate based only on college & career readiness diplomas issued. TPS working to have students default to this diploma. Already only have a small number of students on core diploma.
 - iv. Increase in African American students being identified for Gifted & Talented program.
- g. Opportunity for support: Oklahoma's Promise
 - i. Oklahoma families leave millions of dollars on the table every year. Money is allotted for families who qualify, and families are not applying. 85 – 95% of TPS students qualify.
 - ii. TPS implementing a policy that all 8th Graders will fill out Oklahoma's Promise.
 - iii. Additionally, starting this year, students can't graduate high school without completing the FAFSA. However, the state-level mandate has no additional funding.
- h. Commission Question & Answer
 - i. Commissioner Dennis: Absenteeism often has to do with family. How can the community wrap around students and families?
 - 1. Dr. Johnson: Attach yourself to your neighborhood school, offer to volunteer. Community members can participate in PTA even if student is not at the school. Organizing around and volunteering for key dates—parent teacher conferences, testing monitors, attend sports games.
 - ii. Commissioner Love noted increased support from professional counselors in schools. Dr. Johnson recognized the needs in the district are acute. Significant reduction in resources for where students and families can turn. TPS schools have on-site counseling services; however, it's difficult to know how to support a student in acute trauma even with education and training.



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- iii. Commissioner Ray offered support from and integration with TU and Street Law. Dr. Johnson shared that she meets with TU every other week and they are a great partner.
- iv. Vice Chair Humphrey: Teaching is a challenging job. Are there partnerships working to help address the shortage?
 - 1. Dr. Johnson: State has a retention and recruitment program, takes cohort of novice teachers and support them throughout the year. Bigger issue centers on incentivizing folks to move to Tulsa to teach. Teacher pay in Oklahoma is among the lowest in the nation, hard to incentivize people to move here.
 - 2. Focusing on freeing up as much general fund dollars as possible to pay teachers more (can only pay teachers out of general fund) by utilizing bond dollars when possible.
 - 3. Situated in a state where many ideologies and decisions are made that are polarizing. Housing costs and ability to raise a family are positives.
 - 4. Commissioner Love suggested sharing information about resources to educators and families who need support.
 - 5. Vice Chair Humphrey noted that even with freeing up funding within the district, there is a limitation on how much you can pay teachers due to state funding.
 - 6. Dr. Johnson: State will give what amount they're going to give. Legislators can make decisions that will give teachers a decent living.
- v. Chairman Dickens: What are some ways commissioners can connect with the TPS team to ask more questions and engage?
 - 1. Dr. Johnson offered to set up another meeting to connect further. TPS Chief of Staff, Tasha Johnson, will send out a way to funnel questions.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. Chairman Dickens entertained a motion to approve September meeting minutes.
 - i. Vice Chair Humphrey's name is misspelled in Section VI, needs correction.
 - ii. Commissioner Payne made a motion to approve minutes with one change, Commissioner Love seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 13, Nay: 0
 - iii. Motion carried, September meeting minutes approved with one change.
- b. Chairman Dickens entertained a motion to approve October meeting minutes.
 - i. Commissioner Ray made a motion, Commissioner Payne seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 13, Nay: 0
 - ii. Motion carried, October meeting minutes approved.

IV. Chair's Report

- a. Chairman Dickens made a special acknowledgement of the Black Educator Excellence Awards Ceremony. Appreciate the Education Committee and everyone who contributed. Dr. Wimberly did a great job sharing her story. Want to care for and improve this award over the years to come.
- b. Culture Committee Newsletter is a way to get messaging out.
- c. No official calendar for 2025 but want month to month activities outlined.
- d. Commission will not meet in December, but committees can meet.



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V. Committee Reports

a. Policy Recommendations

- i. Commissioner Dennis shared that he met with Erran Persley with City of Tulsa to discuss economic impact and transportation.
- ii. Policy Committee discussed tackling transportation as a focus issue and organizations to partner with.
 1. Possibly use old City vehicles and donate them to organizations that provide transportation to individuals.
- iii. Working with other Commissions on how to collaborate.
- iv. Chairman Dickens proposed being in the brainstorm and collaboration phase for now, not make an official recommendation. Would like to collaborate with other Title V commissions and other entities. This is a Tulsa need, not just an African American community issue, will only find a solution if we convene everyone.

b. Community Engagement and Culture Promotion

- i. Commissioner McNeil shared the committee is meeting on Thursday to work on planning on spoken word contest at Juneteenth.
- ii. Monthly newsletter will go out in December.

c. Education and Skill Building

- i. Commissioner Stuckey reported the committee is meeting in December.
- ii. Writing first op ed about chronic absenteeism. Meeting with Impact Tulsa to discuss data. Will also incorporate data from Dr. Johnson.
- iii. Would like to have a quarterly op ed.

d. Human Rights Commission

- i. Commissioner McNeil provided an update on the September HRC meeting. Guest speaker was Dr. Rebecca Hubbard, Chief Mental Health Officer at City of Tulsa, who provided great information about city initiatives. Would be a great speaker for GTAAAC as well.
- ii. Humanitarian of the Year Award Ceremony is next Monday, November 18 at 3:30 in place of regular meeting. Award is being presented to Amairani Perez Chamu.

VI. Old Business – no old business

VII. New Business

- a. Chairman Dickens welcomed two new commissioners.
 - i. Dr. Breckner, who has been part of the Education Committee for a year,
 - ii. Tracye Love Chandler, a community leader.
- b. Bylaws Change for Chair and Vice Chair
 - i. Under the current bylaws, this would technically be the last meeting for Chairman Dickens and Vice Chair Humphrey in their roles. Chairman Dickens illuminated that a one-year term makes it difficult for Chair/Vice Chair to assess and implement changes/programming.
 - ii. The commissioner reviewed proposed changes, which were sent via email the previous week. Changes are in Article VII of the bylaws.
 - iii. Chairman Dickens opened the floor to discussion on the bylaws changes.



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1. Commissioner Ray recommended to take out portion stating "chair or vice chair" when restricting consecutive terms. This would enable someone who serves 4 years as vice chair to then serve as chair in consecutive terms.
- iv. Chairman Dickens entertained a motion to adopt bylaws changes with Commissioner Ray's recommended edit.
 1. Commissioner Love made a motion, Commissioner Stuckey seconded.
 - a. Aye: 12, Nay: 0
 - b. Commissioner Payne left the meeting before the motion.
 2. Motion carried, bylaws changes were adopted.
- c. Nominating Committee for January Slate of Officers
 - i. Chairman Dickens entertained motion to not convene nominating committee due to bylaws changes.
 1. Commissioner Love Chandler made a motion, Commissioner McNeil seconded.
 - a. Aye: 12, Nay: 0
 - b. Commissioner Payne left the meeting before the motion.
 2. Motion carried, the nominating committee will not convene this year.

VIII. Announcements / Public Comments

- a. Commissioner Stuckey shared several upcoming events.
 - i. 36 Degrees North Global Entrepreneurship Week (11/18 – 22)
 - ii. TSET Discover & Built Environment Grants open 11/19, deadline is 2/12/2025.
 - iii. Tulsa Area United Way Community Investment volunteer opportunity: Sign up at <https://volunteer.tauw.org/opportunity/a0CPn00002le5VK/>.
 - iv. City of Tulsa HUD Grant Review volunteer (sign up by 11/29)
 - v. Tulsa Area United Way Reunite Celebration at Cain's Ballroom (12/3)
- b. Commissioner McNeil: Tulsa City County Library and Fulton Street screening *Until We're All Home* (11/16)
- c. Commissioner Breeckner: No Greenwood Chamber gala this year, will bring back to celebrate the Chamber's 100th year.
- d. Commissioner Love proposed having new local elected officials come speak to the commission.

IX. Adjournment

- a. Chairman Dickens entertained a motion to adjourn.
 - i. Vice Chair Humphrey made a motion, Commissioner McNeil seconded.
 1. Aye: 12, Nay: 0
 2. Commissioner Payne left the meeting before the motion.
- b. Motion carried, meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.