



Date: October 16, 2015

To: Thomas Bonfield, City Manager
Through: Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager
From: Delilah Donaldson, Human Relations Manager, NIS Department
Subject: Human Relations Commission Recommendations for
Water Management Department Review

Executive Summary

Former employees of the Water Management Department and Water Management Department staff came to Council and alleged that there were racial inequities in the treatment, discipline and promotion of employees within the Department. Mayor Pro Tem Cora Cole-McFadden recommended to the group that they take their concerns to the Human Relations Commission (HRC). The group presented their concerns to the HRC and requested that the Human Relations Commission (HRC) conduct a review of the City's Water Management Department. The group alleged racial inequities in the treatment, discipline, and promotion between black and white employees within the Department. This agenda item includes a report and a power point presentation that was prepared by the HRC in response to the Council's request.

This agenda item includes a report that was prepared by the HRC in response to the employees' concerns

Recommendation

The Human Relations Division of the Neighborhood Improvement Services Department recommends that the City Council receive and accept the recommendations relative to the Water Management Department that have been prepared and presented by the Human Relations Commission.

Background

On October 16, 2014, Chair Ricky Hart approved Nathanette Mayo's request to be put on the agenda for the November 11, 2014 HRC meeting to provide a presentation concerning allegations of discrimination and unequal treatment in the Water Management Department.

On October 30, 2014, City Manager Thomas J. Bonfield sent a letter to Chair Ricky Hart informing him that this matter was already being reviewed and investigated by the City Manager's Office and the Human Resources Department. The City Manager had directed the Human Resources Department to investigate disciplinary practices, grievance decisions, promotions and performance management data in the Water Management Department.

There was discussion by the Commission about whether to look into the complaints now or wait to review the results of Human Resources' ongoing investigation. Commission members voted to start looking into the complaints rather than waiting. Chair Hart appointed a subcommittee consisted of Susan Austin (Chair), Gerri Robinson, Sejal Zoto and Girija Mahajan.

On November 11, 2014, Ms. Mayo, an employee of the City of Durham Water Management Department and a member of UE 150 Durham City Workers Union made a presentation to the Commission alleging discrimination and unequal treatment of employees within the Water Management Department. Following Ms. Mayo's presentation, former employees of the Water Management Department spoke to the Commission about alleged unequal treatment that they experienced or witnessed while at the Water Management Department. They urged the Commission to look into the matter and conduct an investigation into the allegations. Based on the allegations that had been presented and the documents that were submitted, the subcommittee submitted a request for information to the Staff Liaison and it was submitted to Human Resources.

The subcommittee convened meetings, conducted interviews and continued to collect data relative to the allegations that had been presented to them.

Former employees of the Water Management Department came to six HRC meetings to provide comments and to determine the status of the investigation. The HRC informed the employees of the HRC process and stressed to them at each meeting that the HRC did not have the authority to get the employees' jobs back. The HRC informed employees that their concerns would be reviewed and that the HRC would make recommendations to City Council that it believed could benefit the City of Durham and the Water Management Department going forward.

On January 6, 2015, Regina Youngblood provided a detailed report to the HRC of the investigation that had been conducted by the Human Resources Department. Her report included a discipline analysis of the Water Management Department as well as a detailed response to the data request from the HRC Water Management Subcommittee.

On June 16, 2015, the HRC held a special meeting to discuss and finalize the recommendations.

On September 1, 2015, the HRC voted and approved the final recommendations.

Attachments

HRC Report: Recommendations for Water Management Department