



City of Sunrise Historical Commission Meeting
Monday, December 11, 2023, 4:00 p.m.
Sunrise City Hall, Everglades Conference Room,
10770 W. Oakland Park Blvd., Sunrise FL 33351

Meeting Agenda

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chairperson Toby Ginsburg Cohen.

II. Roll Call

The following members were found to be present:

Chairperson Toby Ginsburg Cohen
Vice Chair Bernard Shaw
Heather Clough Robinson
Roberto Fernandez - absent (excused)
Philip Howell
Stacy Sherman
Meryl Girard, City Clerk's Office

III. Open Discussion

No one was present.

IV. Approval of Minutes

MOTION A motion to approve the minutes of November 13, 2023 was made by Ms. Sherman was seconded by Vice Chair Shaw. All were in favor.

V. Follow Up Items

A. Oral interview with retiring School Resource Officer (SRO)

Chairperson Ginsburg Cohen said that Officer Ben Hodgers will retire at end of the year and the board is scheduled to interview him.

Deputy City Clerk Girard handed out questions that were asked during an interview with former Commissioner Donald Rosen in 2016, and a list of suggested questions submitted by board member Roberto Fernandez.

Ms. Clough-Robinson said it was her experience that once a question was asked it opened up and segued into other questions.

Ms. Sherman said they were interviewing Officer Hodgers for something he created in the city.

Mr. Howell suggested asking if there was something special in his life that motivated him to become a police officer.

The board decided the questions asked Commissioner Rosen were too specific to a Commissioner and not appropriate for this interview.

The board reviewed the questions submitted by Mr. Fernandez:

- Please state your full name and city of residence?

Ms. Sherman said it was no one's business where he lives.

Deputy City Clerk Girard said that information was exempt from the public record.

- Where and when were you born?

Board suggested eliminating this question as it was too personal.

Ms. Girard said again, it was exempt.

- How long have you lived at your present home?

Board suggested eliminating, not relevant.

- What prompted you to move to Broward County?
- What neighborhood or community did you live in?

Board suggested eliminating, too personal and not relevant to the interview purpose.

Mr. Howell suggested asking Mr. Hodgers to tell them something about himself, and let the interview flow from there.

Ms. Sherman suggested asking what motivated him to start this project, and where did he see it going in the future. That was the history they were trying to gather so they can have something on record. They did not need to know how he got here, but why he stayed.

Mr. Howell said someone makes their point in the first few seconds. They were there to present information for people who were interested, having that picture. He became a police officer because of an encounter that turned his attention to the good that police officers can do. People wanted the meat of the issue. That would interest them and cause them to look at what was in there. Many people were uncomfortable speaking about themselves, but they have to give Officer Hodgers the opportunity to decide. He would focus on what will flow from him. It was a unique profession. Was there something that motivated him to undertake the rigors of training to become a police officer? Officers lived a unique life.

Ms. Clough-Robinson agreed with Mr. Howell, and said she understood what Ms. Sherman said. They had to ask an open-ended question, so the conversation flowed. For example, tell us about yourself and chronicle your career.

Chairperson Ginsburg Cohen suggested asking about what other areas he was involved with.

Ms. Sherman suggested asking how the Panther Prowl began and evolved, what inspired him to come up with the idea to start this program. Did he feel the program was well supported by the community, and was there anything more the community could do to support it?

Mr. Howell suggested that he knew the program, and to tell them what else could be done. What were some of the bright evens of his career, and what he would reflect back on during his favorite times and events. Would he share some of his experience and in retrospect was there anything that stood out.

Mr. Howell spoke about his time coaching and also involved with Boy Scouts, he met some unique children and families. He recalled a special event, and felt blessed that he had the opportunity to meet so many great people.

- What do you feel is the most important resource of the City of Sunrise?
- What are your concerns, if any, for the future of Sunrise?

Ms. Sherman said when she was on the Education Advisory Board, and they were interviewing for students for scholarships, a question would come up, and they asked the applicant if they wanted to elaborate. They tried to state most of the questions in advance, especially for those that were at the vocational schools that she worked at.

Deputy City Clerk Girard said that Mr. Fernandez was a historian and had undoubtedly conducted many interviews.

Vice Chair Shaw suggested asking what he did as an SRO that would make it better for students when they graduated.

Ms. Clough-Robinson did not know much about the SRO program and was open to learning about it. She suggested asking, with everything that Officer Hodgers did, both personally and professionally, what did he hope his legacy would be.

Vice Chair Shaw said how did he think people would remember him years from now as an SRO.

Ms. Sherman said she had nothing in front of her to know what the Panther Prowl was. Was there a brochure or something that explained it?

Deputy City Clerk Girard said she would find out what it was before the interview and let everyone know so they are more informed for the next meeting.

VI. New Business

Chairperson Toby Ginsburg Cohen brought some brochures and memorabilia to share with the members. It was decided to review them at another time.

Mr. Howell reported the holiday event, Winter Wonderland held Saturday, was well attended with many children. He was there as a member of CERT because they are part of the Fire Department Auxiliary. They gave children a comic book that taught them to work with their parents to have fire safety in their own home, and have an escape plan. It was a fun day to be at the event, and Santa showed up.

VII. Old Business

None

VIII. Adjournment

Chairperson Ginsburg Cohen wished everyone a happy holiday season.

Seeing there was no further business to come before the board, the meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Meryl Girard, Deputy City Clerk