

THE EDENTON HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
December 8, 2020

Introduction

As a major priority for 2020, the Edenton Town Council approved the creation of a Human Relations Commission to address racial reconciliation by developing greater inclusiveness, equity and harmony within our community.

An initial step by the Town Council in this commitment to racial equality is found in the Edenton 2020 Vision Statement. The desire to speak about and dismantle systemic racism finds fuller expression in the Statement of Solidarity unanimously adapted by the Town Council on June 9, 2020 following the brutal murder of George Floyd.

These two statements are attached to highlight both the commitment and the need for the Edenton Human Relations Commission.

Mission

It is the mission of the Edenton Human Relations Commission to strengthen our community by promoting racial equality through activities and policies that foster mutual respect, inclusiveness and harmony among all of our citizens.

Philosophy

We believe that a strong community is one that values all its citizens without regard to race, religion, gender, age or sexual orientation. We acknowledge that discrimination undermines the growth of Edenton by limiting individual potential and by preventing residents from contributing fully to our community. Discrimination also frustrates, degrades and embitters people creating a lack of trust and a further lack of involvement. In response, the Edenton Human Relations Commission is dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and equitable treatment among all its citizens.

Objectives

The Edenton Human Relations Commission seeks to fulfill its mission in the following ways:

- Studying problems and concerns related to local racial relationships including ways to create better communication between races.
- Creating educational opportunities through workshops and programs that enhance understanding, respect and goodwill among its citizens.
- Providing a forum in which residents can raise issues related to racial equity concerns in a safe, respectful environment.
- Promoting interpretations of history that value the contributions of African Americans and encourage recognition of such contributions.

- Promoting equality of opportunity and participation with a focus on town staff positions, town boards and commissions, and town supported organizations.
- Encouraging greater African American participation in the arts and in cultural activities.
- Examining housing and police policies as well as town infrastructure priorities for equity of treatment and use of town resources.

Organization

The Edenton Human Relations Commission shall include 12-members with representatives appointed by the Mayor for four-year terms and a maximum of two consecutive terms. Half of the members should represent the African American community. The Commission shall name its own Co-Chairs and develop sub-committees as needed Two alternate members shall also be appointed by Mayor. Alternate members participate and contribute to discussions but shall not have a vote. It is anticipated that as vacancies occurs, Alternate members will be appointed to fill unexpired terms.

The Commission shall name its own Co-Chairs and develop sub-committees as needed.

Recommendations for events, educational opportunities and town policy changes shall be presented to the Town Council for approval. The Mayor shall appoint a member of the Town Council to serve as Council Liaison to the Commission.

TOWN OF EDENTON 2020 VISION STATEMENT

We see Edenton, as a Town where history, hospitality and natural beauty come together to form a community that is proud of its past and excited about its future. The Mayor and Town Council also recognize the importance of its citizenry and believe that future prosperity is rooted in relationships of equality, respect and inclusiveness that encourage preservation and celebration of Edenton's unique and diverse heritage.

EDENTON TOWN COUNCIL STATEMENT ON SOLIDARITY (June 9, 2020)

This past week we all have seen much pain, outrage, fear and grief throughout our country in response to the horrific murder of George Floyd. The cruelty and disregard for human life displayed in that video was the result of systematic racism, proof that the biases, whether implicit or explicit, that we carry as individuals and as a society have grave consequences for Black citizens. What happened to George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery were tragedies whose publicity has called attention to their regular occurrence and we utterly condemn these unspeakable acts of violence.

However, unlike most unforeseeable tragedies that we carry ourselves through by means of our faith and resiliency, these deaths exemplify why we must grow and change as a society. What has shocked and disgusted so many White citizens is a reality that our Black colleagues, Black friends, Black friend's children and loved ones face every day.

Systematic racism and the resulting violence against Black citizens must be spoken of, must be acknowledged and must be dismantled. North Carolina Mayors of small towns and large cities, including our Mayor, have signed a letter pledging to make every effort within their power to fight systemic racism within our police forces, cities, in this nation and within ourselves. We, as a governing body, collectively affirm this pledge as well. And collectively, all of us, this Council and every citizen must all work to be a better Edenton, a more equitable and just community. As an initial step, the Mayor and Town Council pledge to establish a Human Relations Commission to assist our community in addressing issues of justice and equality, including concerns expressed to us this week and in the recent past related to the Confederate Monument.

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. so eloquently stated, "the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." There are challenges in Edenton that we know will generate controversy. But all of us must be brave enough at this moment in time to recognize the need for change.