



CRC Link

COMMUNITY HARMONY MATTERS TO ALL OF US

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Community Dialogue and Action Spell Success: A Conversation With Mayor Foxx

by Deborah J. Walker, Ph.D.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's population has become increasingly more diverse over the last ten years and we expect that trend will continue. While diversity brings depth and vibrancy to a community, it also can bring social pressures that may create unhealthy divisions along racial, cultural, ethnic, neighborhood and economic lines. This dynamic has serious implications for the community. But together we not only can manage the changes but prosper from them. This opening statement from the Community Relations Committee's brochure framed the conversation with newly elected Mayor Anthony Foxx.

In his opening remarks, Mayor Foxx acknowledged former Mayor Stanford R. Brookshire's leadership in appointing a group of citizens who became the City's first Human Relations Committee in 1961. This Committee was the forerunner of the current Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee.

Question: In a radio interview, you noted that we, as a community, are united on several priorities (i.e. School System, Transportation, Homelessness, Housing, Growing Jobs) and that we have not reached agreement on the 'how' to address these challenges. What strategies do you suggest for addressing the 'how'?

Mayor: First, let me note that the lack of connectedness many feel in our community will require multiple strategies to address. Engaging and reengaging the community requires dialogue and action. We can't simply address some of the gaps as well as some of the glaring challenges in our community through conversation alone. It is important to have conversation but conversation alone is not sufficient.



Question: What are some of the gaps and challenges that are calling for community dialogue and action?

Mayor: Two immediately come to mind--Education and Housing. I am going to meet with the new Chairman of the School Board shortly. There clearly are challenges with disparities in educational performance in our schools. I believe it is the collective responsibility of our community to come to the rescue of our children. They are our future and through whom so much of our economic wellbeing is connected. I believe our economic future is tied to the quality of our educational system. Housing is another huge issue we face...not just the provision of shelter but the working through of the flairs ups that occur when a city tries to


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CRC’s vision is a Charlotte-Mecklenburg where people’s differences are acknowledged, understood and appreciated

CRC Link welcomes letters to the editor, articles, community announcements or other items of interest.

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CRC in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community:

By Robin A. Edgar

As the Chair of Communication and Intercultural Relations Committee, I feel personally responsible for getting the word out about what the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee (CRC) is and what our staff and volunteers do for our community. Everywhere I go, I am an “ambassador” for CRC, telling everyone I meet about our goals and initiatives.

In brief summary, CRC is a statutory agency of the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County that promotes the quality of opportunity for all citizen as well as understanding, respect and goodwill among all. An integral part of the human relations support system for the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, we provide channels of communication among various racial, religious, and ethnic groups in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. We also study human and community relations problems and make the results available to the public.

CRC volunteers and staff work tirelessly with community agencies and organizations to:

- Ensure fair housing practices and access to public accommodations.
- Settle disputes and group conflicts
- Endeavor to improve race, ethnic and community relations
- Prevent discrimination

Obviously, we cannot accomplish all of this alone. That is why, in this issue, we asked some of our elected officials about what they plan to do to support these endeavors. Hopefully, it will get you thinking about how you can support us, too!

Robin Edgar is the chair of CRC's communication and intercultural relations subcommittee

The Law Enforcement Authority of CRC

By Ailen J. Arreaza

I've frequently heard CRC described as Charlotte's best kept secret. When I talk to others in the community about my work as a fair housing investigator, they are often surprised to hear that there's a department within local government with the authority to investigate allegations of discrimination.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee is, for all intents and purposes, a law enforcement organization. It is the local agency entrusted with the fair housing and public accommodations ordinances, and has the authority to receive, initiate, investigate, conciliate, and conduct public hearings on housing discrimination complaints.

In my work, I have encountered people who, when faced with a discriminatory action, dismiss it as wrong or unfair, but what they don't realize is that discrimination is **unlawful**. Treating everyone equally in housing and public places is not an option; it's the law.

The CRC has the trained staff, tools, and resources to catch those who decide to discriminate in Charlotte. Through testing and detailed analysis of comparative data, this organization can determine whether or not an individual or entity broke the law and take appropriate measures.

If the respondents don't want to cooperate with the investigative process, the CRC has the authority to subpoena the required information. If they retaliate against the complainant, the CRC can amend the claim to include retaliation -- another prohibited activity.

As part of its mission to advocate for an inclusive community where trust, acceptance, fairness and equity are the community norms, the CRC has an essential role: Discrimination Police.

Ailen J. Arreaza is Community Relations Specialist with CRC



A Look at Our Work Together - A Message to CRC Staff and Committee Members

by Willie Ratchford

Like many communities across the country, Charlotte-Mecklenburg has been negatively impacted by the economic downturn. However, before our economic woes we experienced phenomenal growth in population, jobs, businesses, schools and the environment. Many of these changes impacted the work of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community relations Committee (CRC). To address the changes, CRC moved forward with vision, strategic thinking, collaborative partnerships, teamwork between committee members and staff and solid work performance. The participation of staff and committee members in the many activities around diversity, conflict management, communication and community harmony contributes to the efforts to our community's social capital. Our work, along with our available resources, methodically contributed to our organizations' goals of promoting harmony, improving the lives of all residents, enhancing communications across the many lines that separate us, addressing public safety, strengthening neighborhoods and advocating for an inclusive community where trust, acceptance, fairness and equity are the community norms. The CRC's staff and members work together to encourage mediation and collaboration, citizen access and enforcement of our local Human Relations Ordinance.

Our community depends on us to monitor and improve the quality of human relations within our community by interpreting the social inclinations and frustrations of citizens. We believe that this can all be done successfully if we are intentional and strategic in planning for your future success and how we manage our organization.

In every organization there exist certain understandings that govern how people interact with one another around important things. Sometimes these things are written down in procedures and guidelines. We have some common practices captured

in our local government's administrative policies and procedures. By way of this newsletter article, I have chosen to articulate some of the fundamental principles and approaches to leading a human relations organization that I feel will improve our management practices and secure our organization's future in our community. These, although not exhaustive, are representative of major issues facing most human relations organizations, staff, commission members, and those who work with us. If we apply them to our practice we will see positive results. If we apply them consistently, our organization will become an even better place to work and better at helping our community achieve positive outcomes on everyday issues that need our attention.

Our organization exists to serve people in the community who need us: Beyond our community's Human Relations Ordinance, our organization has a vision and a mission and that is why we exist. We provide services mandated by law and regulations and others that the community, our staff and our committee membership has deemed important. Apart from our vision, mission and mandates, we as an organization have no reason to exist. Staff and committee members must incorporate this humbling reality into their practice. Organizations and individuals that do not understand this connection become obsolete. This fundamental principle is the foundation for a strong emphasis on excellent customer service and an efficient, courteous response to the community.

We are stewards of a public trust of resources and responsibility: The resources provided to us are purposeful – to help people achieve better outcomes in their lives. Most of our funds are from public taxes. Others derive from the generosity of private businesses and individuals, who seek to help our community be-

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A Conversation about CRC with Chief of Police Rodney Monroe

by Robin Edgar



Appointed in June 2008, Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Chief of Police Rodney D. Monroe may be new to the area, but he has been in law enforcement for nearly 30 years. Serving in Washington, DC and Georgia, he was the Police Chief

in Richmond, Virginia before coming to our fair city. In our conversation, Chief Monroe reflected on the impact of CRC's work with conflict resolution, youth, gangs and drug and alcohol addiction.

Conflict Resolution: Last year, the CRC Dispute Settlement Program processed 2177 referrals, including worthless checks, for mediation and conciliation. Of the 552 mediations that were held, 88% were successfully resolved and 457 worthless check cases were conciliated. These services saved Charlotte-Mecklenburg approximately \$203,200 in court costs and legal fees.

Robin Edgar: How do these efforts impact CMPD?

Chief Monroe: These efforts are a great help, primarily because this process relieves us of having to investigate those cases criminally. Anytime you can resolve an issue or a conflict in this manner, it frees up valuable time for our officers to be fighting more serious criminal offences. When a case does not rise to criminal matters, CMPD personnel do not have to spend time doing things like being in court, interviewing witnesses, and getting certified copies of checks.

Robin Edgar: How does CMPD support these efforts?

Chief Monroe: CRC Dispute Settlement Program is wonderful. I did not experience anything like it other than Small Claims Court in my experience in Georgia, Virginia or DC. For many of these cases, we are happy to provide information about the individuals involved and to also serve as a referral outlet.

Youth and Gangs: CRC staff and members worked with The Gang Prevention Coalition (GPC) to develop a strategic plan to address youth and gangs in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. We have also been instrumental in creating a directory of mentoring and violence prevention services for the Teen Mentoring/Teen Violence Court Committee, which is a community collaborative led by District Court Judge Rickey McCoy-Mitchell.

Robin Edgar: How is CMPD involved in these efforts?

Chief Monroe: We actually operate the Gang of One program, which is part of the Coalition. GPC helps guide the efforts of Gang of One by identifying organizations out there that are working on gang prevention so we can assist in funding of their programs. Much of the CRC work is supported by Gang of One initiative.

Robin Edgar: I understand that you led the Office of Youth Violence Reduction while serving in Washington DC law enforcement. Do you have any further goals for CMPD to impact youth and gang violence here in Charlotte?

Chief Monroe: The Gang of One strategy is to continue to support organizations, like the Police Activities League and after school and mentoring programs that help to keep kids from becoming involved in gangs. An average of 200 kids per year goes through the Police Activities League and we have not lost one of those kids to gang activities or to the gangs themselves.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Drug Free Coalition: CRC staff meets regularly with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Drug Free Coalition and has co-sponsored several community meetings and town halls to address issues of drug and alcohol use of young people in our

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Councilman Cannon's Chapter in CRC History

by Kate Satchwill

Pat Cannon knows first hand the importance of the CRC. The recently re-elected City Councilman explained his long-time support of CRC in everyday language, saying that CRC exists “to help improve human relations within Charlotte-Mecklenburg regarding frustrations citizens have with unfair practices between landlords and tenants, offering mediation services, handling disputes between neighbors and dealing with police matters.”



Canon related an unfortunate situation in 1993, when he was first elected to the Charlotte City Council, in which an African American motorist was shot and killed. “There was a need to reduce police-com-

munity tension,” he explained. In an online article for Creative Loafing Cheris Hodges wrote, “When Cannon first won a seat on the Charlotte City Council in 1993, he helped to change District 3, reducing crime, paving the way for affordable housing and business development. He took leadership in establishing Charlotte’s citizen’s review board, which was designed to give the community a voice in dealing with police misconduct.”

As an advocate of working to resolve seriously divisive issues, the councilman authored the Cannon Amendment to establish the Cannon Citizens Review Board for CRC to participate in all Internal Affairs-level chain of command board hearings involving allegations of misconduct against officers. As a fully involved member of the board, the CRC representative has the opportunity to ask questions of accused

employees, witnesses, Internal Affairs investigators, as well as fully participate in the discussions and decisions of the board, including findings and any discipline.

During our interview, Cannon continually expressed his appreciation for the unique position CRC has held in resolving differences in situations that could become even more volatile. He recalled examples of other frustrations and citizens concerns that he has referred to CRC for resolution and that CRC staff and volunteers have worked with citizens of all nationalities, majority and minorities and their concerns that cross all cultural differences. He also has seen CRC work with schools to mediate truancy issues, to resolve issues with Medicare and Medicaid payment, with resolutions of housing discrimination, disagreements over accidents, payments of debts, and many positive initiatives to support and celebrate diversity.

Noting that CRC offers citizens an opportunity to become a part of the process of creating harmony, Cannon said, “With all the things that have taken place in our community over the years, this is one of those tools that help us bridge the gaps of separation among citizens, our politicians and police officials. “

Kate Satchwill is a member CRC's communication and intercultural relations subcommittee

A Conversation with Mayor

Foxx:

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encourage the dispersion of housing throughout our community. We have many other challenges. The bottom line, however, is that we need to initiate and continue dialogue where we can. I believe a lot of that dialogue will be improved when our community starts working in action to amplify the conversation. In other words, if you have actions without dialogue it is empty and when you have dialogue without action it also can have the danger of being empty too.

Question: You seem to be saying Charlotte's children are its future and how we respond to our educational disparities; for example, will help determine Charlotte's economic future?

Mayor: Yes and I want to keep using the children of our community as a good metaphor for what I think the community needs to do broadly. I see our kids in a variety of settings. There are many who are growing up believing they will go to college and that afterwards there will be opportunities on the horizon in terms of employment and quality of life. But there are far too many children who don't have that expectation or ambition. This is a reality and that reality makes these attitudes and beliefs a community problem.

Question: What actions do you suggest to address these educational realities?

Mayor: There are actions that can be taken by families, by the larger community, by neighborhoods, by the police, and by each citizen. It starts with the family. There needs to be more focus and attention on the things that we as parents can do to prepare our kids for school. I was read to at an early age. I was raised in a family full of teachers and they knew to do that. I feel pretty strongly that some of the rudimentary parenting skills that were passed down from generation to generation in the past aren't being passed down today; and if that is true, we have to acknowledge it, deal with it and provide information so that people can help get their kids ready for school.

The larger community can take other actions. For example, today in public housing it is passe' to concentrate poverty in a particular housing project...we don't support or fund that approach any more; yet when you look at our school houses that is exactly what you are starting to see (concentrated poverty). Why would we tolerate this poverty in a school house when we already have said we won't tolerate it in housing anymore!? I believe these issues are dimensions of a conversation and that all are related to one another.

Further, in terms of taking action, I believe that for parents it is doing the things that will help your child become successful. For neighbors it is reconnecting and building the fabric of our neighborhoods so that the "community feel" will be strengthened. For police, it is not just a matter of making arrests, but having enough presence in the community so you know what is going on, and not being seen as an enemy of the community but as a friend and partner. A lot of that work is going on today and I think it is helpful. For every citizen, it is asking the questions, "do I have the capability to mentor a young person" or "can I go help a school out in another way"?

Given the realities, I think this is an 'all hands on deck' time for our community. Children and schools may not be your issue of choice. Your issue of choice may be homelessness or any number of issues but NOW is the time for the people who care about this community and who want to see the community grow and be successful take on a little bit more. It may not be an investment of money. It may be an investment of time. Both are important and will help take our community where we need to go.

Question: The CRC has been around since 1961. It, along with other stakeholders and partners, has worked to address racial and ethnic tensions, tensions between the haves and have nots, and various widening gaps that impact the quality of life in the City. Charlotte has come a long way. With your Mr. Mayor-Coach-Leader hat on, talk a little about what sometimes gets in the way of taking action and your vision for problem-solving differently?

Mayor: I don't like to use sports analogies because not everyone relates, but this time I'd like to use one. Sometimes you see a team that has a lot of very tal-

ented players but they lose and inevitably when that happens, people start pointing fingers -- “we are losing because you are not doing your job.” Then the next person says, “we are losing because you are not doing *your* job.” It just becomes a downward cycle and in some of the debates I hear we’ve gotten into that blaming mentality. If everyone is pointing the finger outwardly and not pointing inwardly we tend to keep that cycle going. I believe our very talented team can be successful and that each of us is a part of that talented team. I believe if each of us figures out what one or two things can we do to help solve this problem and then focus on that, we will be successful. We are never going to convince somebody else that they are all to blame for everything. So, the culture I’d like to see us get back to is a solution oriented one, a culture that acknowledges our shortcomings and at the same time doesn’t get stuck there, one that continues to push us to take more responsibility and let go of the blame.

Question: We shortly will be celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s 81st birthday. I am reminded of two of his quotes: “We are caught in a web of mutuality, what affects one of us directly, affects all of us indirectly” and “Cowardice asks the question, 'Is it safe?' Expediency asks the question 'Is it politic?' But conscience asks the question, 'Is it right?' And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular but because conscience tells one it is right.” As you reflect on these quotes, share your thoughts?

Mayor: As I reflect on these quotes, I look at the election of President Obama. The most critical decision that ever was made in the whole course of that campaign was his decision to run. It would have been much easier for him not to. I am sure there were many who said he couldn’t do it. But someone had to have the courage to stand up. Many in Charlotte are standing up. In the educational context, it may be a single mother, it may be a lower income family, it may be families in which the parents are stressed out financially and everything is a struggle. But the one thing this single mother or this financially-troubled family does every day is to wake up. They get their kids ready for school. They make sure they have gotten their lessons done and they get them

off to school. That too takes courage.

Since 1961, CRC has been helping the City address issues of discrimination because of class, gender, race, national origin and other differences, through its various services and programs. They have worked with our citizens who are on the aggrieved side of these equations. I am glad to hear that one of CRC’s foci is education. You can help us continue to ask the questions we need to ask to help address education and other disparities. CRC can help us be in dialogue and in action. It can keep reminding us of the inescapable network of mutuality we live in.

Finally, the quotes remind me of the great lessons of the 1960’s. One of the lessons is that we had people who were fiercely dedicated not only to opening up lunch counters and public accommodations but they were committed to changing the mentality of a country and so it wasn’t just getting the laws changed, it was getting the laws changed and having people think differently. That took courage.

Question: What is your sense of where Charlotte is and will be?

Mayor: This city is at its adolescent period. It’s a little awkward. It is a little bigger than it has ever been...it has more people than it has ever had and it has entire neighborhoods that literally were not here 10 years ago. So, with all of that newness and change and growth it is hard to keep the fabric of a community intimate. In addition, as we are experiencing some road bumps in the economy, it is easy to ask ‘is this community really going to last? Is it going to be able to weather this storm? The answer to those questions is YES!! I believe one of the best ways for us to answer yes to the question is to engage or reengage Charlotte. All of us have a role to play in getting this community to the next place. Our community will evolve in a good way when all of us are picking the battles we know we need to fight on an individual and on a community bases. That is the secret to how we get through this period. I think Charlotte is going to be better than any community in the country because we’re still small enough and we still care enough about our community to want to do the required work.

A look at our work together:

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Question: What final words do you have for us?

Mayor: Charlotte still has a number of wounds that need to be healed. We also are dealing with complex issues in complex times. Given this, I think that responsibility has to be the linchpin of everything we do....my responsibility as an individual, my responsibility as a member of a family unit, my responsibility as a neighbor, my responsibility as a community member, my responsibility as a civic servant, my responsibility as a voter and constituent, my responsibility as someone who has kids and who wants to see them grow up in a world in which they can expect a city to be even better than it is today. If I really am thinking in all of these buckets, it is going to make me want to figure some of these issues out and to do everything I can to make sure I am not contributing to the problem.

Finally, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee is a critical partner in helping the City respond to the problems and in strengthening the fabric of our community and making sure that every person who lives here feels valued. It has been an integral part of the human relations support system of the City of Charlotte. Thank you for your work.

Deborah J. Walker, Ph.D. is a member CRC's communication and intercultural relations subcommittee

come a better place to safely live, work, and play and more importantly, raise a family. All these resources represent a commitment and should be expended in a way that honors that commitment. This means that resources – money, time, equipment, contracts, technology, etc. – must be used intelligently and purposefully. In an environment where there are always greater needs than resources the inefficient use of resources through poor planning, lackadaisical management or waste is not acceptable. We are responsible for ensuring that resources are used well.



And speaking of resources, our staff and committee members are our most important and valued resources: We are the keys to helping our community achieve its goals and outcomes. Staff and committee members are due their respect. We can reasonably expect the support and structure we need to perform important tasks. Staff and committee members must stay in touch with each other's needs and concerns through effective management, while at the same time assuring that the work gets done. Both staff and committee members must walk the line between cheerleader and critic; neither extreme is optimally effective with adults. While a diversity of individual styles exists among us, we all are expected to manage our most important and valuable resource in a way that promotes high morale, high motivation, high achievement and effective teamwork.

We all, without exception, are leaders: Staff and committee members are all in key leadership posi-

tions in our organization. How we handle the role is visible to our funding providers, our community and those who are direct recipients of the services we provide. We cannot escape making decisions. Ineffective leadership can result in poor employee and membership morale and dissatisfaction and in turn, poor performance by staff or members. Good leadership encourages higher goals, higher achievement, higher participation and higher morale. Effective leaders are characterized by initiative and the practice of 100% responsibility. Leadership capacity is a prerequisite to our effectiveness and future success.

We believe that the following are sound characteristics of true leadership in an individual: A good leader is also a follower – sound leadership has partnership and collaboration as cornerstones to success and this means that in the role of leader you must sometime take the lead; however, equally important from time-to-time you must also be willing to give deference, to listen, to see the other point of view and then to follow.

A good leader has the ability to effectively manage conflict involving others, as well as conflict in which the leader finds him/herself in the role of disputant. As the leader, you must be in tune with the problem at hand so as to choose the appropriate conflict resolution style. To the extent possible, you must understand your personal orientation to conflict and that of the individuals you come into contact with each day, including committee members and staff.

A good leader is an active listener or a person who listens not only with ears, but with heart and eyes. Some studies indicate that when two individuals are engaged in conversation about 50-60% of the messages being conveyed are done so through body language. Obviously, you have to see the person to understand all that he or she might try to convey to you. If you still don't get it, there is nothing wrong with asking clarifying questions.

Finally, a good leader is also visionary and has the ability to see the big picture as well as the future. Without a vision and an inability to articulate or convey that vision, we are indeed lost.

Problem solving is a collaborative process: Part-

nership is one of our core values. Our work requires interdependence to achieve outcomes. While there is need for individual effort and performance, most of our goals require effective partnering and are most effective when collaboration occurs. We should collaborate and focus on outcomes that boost community harmony, reduce the incidence of discrimination and promote conflict resolution. We are an organization where partners in collaboration get praise when we are successful and share responsibility when we collectively fall short.

Management is about getting good results: While process is important to most of us, it is irrelevant if we don't get positive results for our community. What good is it if we work hard and accomplish nothing? Without effective planning, organizing, directing, and monitoring it's quite possible to fail to achieve the desired outcomes. Our strategic operating plan provides a focus and structure to guide our efforts towards positive outcomes. Our organizational structure should provide a focus and structure to guide our efforts towards positive outcomes, partnership and collaboration between staff and committee members. Staff and committee members are obligated to focus energies and resources on achieving positive outcomes.

Mistakes are rarely fatal – they are opportunities for improvement: Mistakes happen in our organization and because of the consequences failure cannot be trivialized. However, mistakes are rarely so serious that they cannot be corrected. Each of us is expected to learn from our mistakes and improve on our practice. Unwillingness to learn from mistakes can be occupationally fatal. When we fail to meet organizational requirements, a demonstration of insight and acceptance of responsibility is typically sufficient to avoid termination of employment for staff and membership for committee members, except in the most serious cases. The bottom line is we learn from mistakes and continually try to improve.

Don't do stupid things on purpose: In bureaucracies we are often expected to follow procedures or policies that may seem to be contrary to good practice or common sense. Most of our programs flow downhill from City, County, State and Federal governments in very separate and distinct streams. As a result, they often conflict. While we are obligated to carry out City, County, State and Federal laws, statutes, ordinances

and policies we also must apply sound judgment to the decisions we make. Our goal is to maintain compliance while doing the best we can for the communities we serve. When the application of a policy or regulation creates a hassle or harm, we need to go the extra mile to make it work for our clients and our community.

Staff and committee members are ambassadors:

Every person in our organization is an ambassador. Often we have program expertise and we can help the community understand our programs through outreach and presentations. Each opportunity to represent our committee is a chance to promote a positive image for our organization and to articulate our vision and mission. Even those who are not experts have the capacity to facilitate good community education for our organization. The way each of us handles this responsibility is critical to the image of our organization.

Organizations are dynamic – change occurs: Successful organizations learn to adapt to change. Successful staff and committee members are adept at adjusting to change and helping our community do so likewise. Change, while sometimes difficult, can lead to better results for committee members, staff and our community. All of us must be agents of positive change to be effective and to prepare for the future.

Willie Ratchford is CRC's Executive Director

Interview with Chief Monroe:

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community.

Robin Edgar: How do these efforts to address alcohol and drug use among youth impact CMPD personnel?

Chief Monroe: To really have an impact on crime, you have to address the systemic problems associated with crime in the community. Drug and alcohol addiction, lack of education or dropping out of school, unemployment and health issues are all enablers for criminal activity. Those types of programs associated with the Coalition help to address the type of criminal activity committed by individuals addicted to drugs and alcohol.

Robin Edgar: Do you have any other ideas on how we should address this issue?

Chief Monroe: When it comes to addressing some of the youth violence issues, it is important to create programs in partnership with non profits that seek to intervene in these youths' lives. We need to continue to do more prevention, but intervention is also needed for individuals who have already crossed the threshold of criminal activity. CMPD looks to partner with organizations that are doing that type of work so we can steer those individuals out of the criminal justice system and divert them into viable programs with those organizations. As we turn people away from drugs or alcohol use, or help others address their addictions, we will continue to see a drop in crime.

Robin Edgar: Do you have anything else to say about CRC?

Chief Monroe: I respect and greatly support the efforts of CRC, especially their efforts to recognize our officers every year for their work.

Robin Edgar is the chair of CRC's communication and intercultural relations subcommittee

Conversation with the County Manager

By Rhonda Gooden Taylor

Appointed in August of 2000, Harry L. Jones, Sr., began serving as the fourth county manager of Mecklenburg County in October 2000. Prior to being named County Manager, Jones served as Assistant County Manager since 1991. In a recent conversation, he discussed how he, as a county official, supports the efforts of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee (CRC), describing his impressions of the CRC's activities over the past year.

Rhonda Gooden Taylor: The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee (CRC) serves as an integral part of the human relations support system for the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. How does this help the citizens and employees of the County?

Harry Jones: The CRC is a vital component of building a community where all residents respect each other and where all cultures have a voice for fair and equal treatment. CRC Executive Director Willie Ratchford and his staff provide the necessary services and programs to address issues that affect the quality of life for everyone.

Rhonda Gooden Taylor: The mission of the CRC is to promote quality of opportunity; to promote understanding, respect and goodwill; provide channels of communication; and study human and community relations. In what specific ways can the CRC carry (or has carried) out this mission to benefit the citizens and employees of the County?

Harry Jones: Continuing to have diverse committee members, offering programs such as the dispute settlement program and the fair housing initiative all benefit Mecklenburg County residents and employees. The CRC is a link to the community that continues to be effective at uncovering cases of inequality as well as offering services to build a richer, more diverse community.

Rhonda Gooden Taylor: The CRC has conducted fair housing training with numerous groups across the city and county and has investigated numerous alleged violations of the City and County Fair Housing Ordinances and the federal Fair Housing Standards Act. Do you think these activities make a difference?

Harry Jones: Fair housing trainings, community dialogues, and meetings conducted by the CRC have been very helpful in continuing to make Mecklenburg County a place where fairness and equitable treatment is the only acceptable standard. The CRC plays a vital role in making sure nothing less is tolerated.

Rhonda Gooden Taylor: The CRC has initiated a number of community dialogues about diversity, inter-racial relations, how the current economic crisis is impacted by race and ethnicity, and the importance of being a good father. Do you believe these dialogues help our community?

Harry Jones: This type of ongoing dialogue and community

engagement is always good for Mecklenburg County and its residents. Along those same lines, we have many programs within the County such as the Reading Father's program in our jails, services offered by the Department of Social Services for help during the economic downturn, and remaining committed to building a diverse community. Through our Social, Education & Economic Opportunity Focus Area, we measure the performance trend for how residents perceive the diversity of our community. The Fiscal Year 2009 Ethnic & Cultural Diversity Index reported that 85% of those surveyed said that we are a diverse community and that 76% of businesses were minority-owned. Still, we need to build on our progress and remain vigilant in bringing people together with diverse backgrounds and thoughts to learn how to see and experience our community from a variety of perspectives.

Rhonda Gooden Taylor: This year the CRC will work with elected officials, community organizations, the business community and citizens to develop and implement a strategic plan to address human services in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Will County Government take part in this process?

Harry Jones: Along with the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners, the Community Building Initiative and Mecklenburg Ministries, we have supported and been involved in these planning sessions by having staff participate on panels, hosting meetings and fully supporting a strategic plan for human services. A comprehensive human services strategy for Mecklenburg County would seek more efficient and effective ways to align community services with the most vital human service needs of our residents.

Rhonda Gooden Taylor: Are there any other activities with which the County would like to see the CRC involved?

Harry Jones: We consider the CRC a valuable partner in building the community's social capital. Therefore, we will continue to seek the expertise and resources of CRC as we seek new and more effective methods of civic engagement.

2010 Committee Membership

Angeles Ortega-Moore, Vice Chair

Nathaniel Anderson	Kimberly Munn
Madelyn Baker	Ashley Oster
Demario Baker	Katherine Satchwill
Henry Black, Jr.	Mari Jo Shepherd
Tariq Bokhari	Andy Silver
Maura E. Chavez	David Smith
Joe Cooper	Michelle Sterling
Tonya Curry	Ruth Stevenson
Jennifer Daniels	Owen Sutkowski
Robin A. Edgar	Rhonda Taylor
Lori Fletcher	Victoria Taylor
Juli Ghazi	Elizabeth Troutman
Constance Green-Johnson	Marty Viser
Tyyawdi Hands	Deborah J. Walker
Azania Herron	Gerald Williams
Gwendolyn High	
Andrea B. Huff	
Kathi Knier	
Sharon Ingram	
Audrey Madans	
Judy T. Marshall	
Clara Mayfield	
Hope McKinney	

As a statutory agency of the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee (CRC):

- Promotes the quality of opportunity for all citizens
- Promotes understanding, respect and goodwill among all citizens
- Provides channels of communication among various racial, religious, and ethnic groups in Charlotte-Mecklenburg
- Studies problems in the area of human and community relations and makes the results available to the public.

An integral part of the human relations support system for the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, CRC members and staff pursue activities that:

- Ensure fair housing practices and access to public accommodations
- Assist in settling disputes and group conflicts
- Improve race, ethnic and community relations
- Prevent discrimination
- Improve communications among various community groups and individuals

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It is the mission of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee to advocate for an inclusive community where trust, acceptance, fairness and equity are the community norms.