



## **Durham Workers Rights Commission Meeting 6.24.2025- In-Person at City Hall**

**Attendees:** Chair Ballan, Vice Chair Reinstein, Commissioner Luster, Commissioner Martin, Commissioner Morell, Commissioner Robertson, Commissioner Spates, Commissioner Medelius, Commissioner Fenerty, Commissioner Wang, Commissioner Wegwert, Council Member Baker

### **Agenda Items:**

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00pm

PUBLIC COMMENTS – No Public Comment.

### MINUTES/OLD BUSINESS

- A. Note: DWRC minutes for May were moved and approved at 6:12pm
- B. The mission of the Commission was shared by Chair Ballan
  - a. New Member/existing member's introductions took place

### COMMITTEE UPDATES:

- Updates on Amazon x ICE – Commissioner Medelius
  - a. Reports last week about ICE coming to RDU1 (Garner, NC, right outside Raleigh); Con Agra explosion became that explosion - warehouse is 1mi long; union member reported 2 unmarked cars outside the Amazon, 2 Haitian coworkers had temporary protected status taken away and then taken; 3 Venezuelan coworkers were alerted and have not been to work since. No contact
- Smithfield and Durham RDU 5 were told by Siembra that ICE raids were impending
  - a. Can ask if documented that HR is handing info over to ICE
- Amazon already said if you vote for a union, you will be deported (on video)
  - a. Vote no rally (DJ paid \$300/hour, halted work for people to have to watch, managers from all over the country and union busters)
- Part of the resolution here was to send a message that City Council is here for them in Durham
  - a. Expanding into Durham has been going well - union in 4 of 5 warehouses, organizing commissioners have been going off; resolution helps to show that they have support
    - i. Support from organized labor - AFL-CIO? Go to a meeting and meet folks
    - ii. Looking for a chair for Durham community committee

- Be watchdogs! Any unmarked vehicles, hand people red cards (in multiple languages) of what happens if ICE approaches; talked with Siembra about 4th amendment workplaces but that would require cooperation from Amazon
  - a. Would the union be interested in getting that training?
  - b. Siembra would be interested in us sponsoring 4th amendment workplace for the city of Durham (Carrboro did it on May 20th)
- **Other Union and labor updates**
- DGSU efforts to raise wages have failed
  - a. Commissioner Luster – Duke Workers United is looking to build coalescing power (6 locals on campus)
- Mechanisms on City Council Level – City Government certified pro-worker
  - a. Leverage optics
  - b. Way for workplaces to apply for certification (like the living wage project)
    - i. Commissioner Wang joined Workers+ subcommittee
- **Former Chair Luster was asked to give History of DWRC**
  - a. The commission started in 2019 - Commissioner Luster received an appointment in June, rep Alston (now NC GA) was the liaison, 4 meetings and then COVID changed everything. Then Former Mayor Pro Tem Jillian Johnson was liaison, then when she left office, we did not have a liaison. Transient/fluctuating membership
    - i. 1st in-person meeting since Feb 2020 (!)
    - ii. 1st thing: passed workers bill of rights; listening sessions at PSH, worked closely w DWA and SWA
    - iii. listening - mechanism to connect citizens' w organized labor
    - iv. some promotional stuff with DWA and SWA
  - b. Meet 10x/year
    - i. Usually off July and December but up to us if we want to meet!
    - ii. No liaison – lot of things that would take 3'4ek to get an answer instead of instantly
  - c. DWA was instrumental in getting the commission started – wanted something similar to HR commission specific to Workers' Rights
    - i. Rep Alston and MP Johnson
    - ii. When this was in the dream stage, what would that group of people see for this?
      - 1. listen to citizens, provide a space, provide research to the council, recommend policy to the council - core values set in the bylaws is where we want to go
  - d. Has commission had difficulty getting support from council? No, just like any deliberative body there will be some easier to get support from than others, but not more than usual. Focus on providing information to the council, listen to the citizen, be a bridge.

- e. What mechanisms? Be a voice for the citizens of Durham - the strongest mechanism any labor organization has. Not a lot of federal, state, or municipal (even with progressive city) because of state repression.
- Social media pages - may need to restart - focus on promoting, putting out info, sharing pro-worker op-eds. FB, IG, twitter - can't get in contact with people who started accounts
  - a. worked on survey since 2021
  - b. **city email for the commission?** Ashlee says she hasn't been able to in the past
    - i. planning commission has [@durhamnc.gov](mailto:info@durhamnc.gov) email; Durham open space and trails have their own budgets (also produce reports 1x/year)
    - 1. Mayors Hispanic committee - sent in budget requests; subcommittees did the work, meetings each month were just to update people
    - 2. Mayors Hispanic committee - sent in budget requests; subcommittees did the work, meetings each month were just to update people
- At least 2 members at DWA and SWA meetings - listening session every quarter and quantify that data
- Resolution writing, bring as much to council as possible
- What were the thoughts behind making public comments? During COVID put together a town hall and expressed concerns (i.e. lack of PPE) and platform to share with key people listening - city council members (shared on socials)
  - a. feel heard and supported and see us being visible
    - i. If they can have a union-busting rally, why not have a pro-worker one?
- 1st year trajectory was mapped out – Commissioner Luster will check to find it

### **New Business**

- Elect secretary: Manage calendar of when subcommittee meet, when DWA and SWA meet and our rotation to attend, point person for Google Drive/passwords; keep official calendar of Commission events; keeping documents organized
  - a. Commissioner Morell elected by unanimous acclamation!
- Elect social media subcommittee: Min. 2 volunteers - managing /starting Instagram, Facebook, (Tiktok?) accounts, gaining visibility, publicizing events, resolutions, keeping people notified, documenting things we attend; manage GROUPME
  - a. Vice Chair Reinstein, Commissioner Spates, and Commissioner Robertson!
- Research subcommittee - Chair Ballan, Commissioner Fenerty, Commissioner Martin, Commissioner Medelius, Commissioner Wang

- **[ Outreach committee - tabled]**
- **[ July meeting in-person]**
- \*\*\*all subcommittee meeting must be noticed through and be open to the public – Clerks office puts out weekly calendar - submit to Mary Bryant at least 1 week in advance; **48-hour notice to meet in July to Mary Bryant**
- **Vision-building exercise: Vision statement, goals, and measurable outcomes we want to see in Durham that has dignified work free from exploitation.**
- 4th quarter project: august to December, then reset for January
  - a. regular cadence of social media
  - b. SWA and DWA - them knowing our faces, establish rotation
  - c. each subcommittee meets and figures out goals
  - d. Annual report
- **Vision for utopic worker-friendly and operated Durham to be fleshed out in July meeting**
  - a. CM Baker: commission does not have to exist - state law says planning commission etc.; challenge of uncharted waters, but a huge opportunity too. Go rogue and imagine yourselves as a group of residents fighting for workers' rights, we happen to have this name attached to you and an appendage from the city, we have legitimacy associated with this name. Work with city workers. What is the North star even if we could never achieve it? What is the perfect utopia of workers' rights? Then what do we do tomorrow? How do we use communication channels to educate people? What can't we do and why? People need to know. Why can't we have rent control? Why can't we have a minimum wage? What are the goals and metrics to get us there? What are the creative actions to get us there?
  - b. Outside speakers? From outside the city of NC or labor leaders.
  - c. What is the landscape? What is the world that exists that we can work on? How many unions do we have in the city? How many workers are in unions?
  - d. What city resources do we need? We have new economic development director Josh Gunn - we don't even have an economic development plan in the city - we can push it. Focus on worker co-ops/ownership? Experts on that field that can come speak
  - e. Who is organizing? We have a true working class movement that is broad-based in Durham
  - f. You are important!!!!
- **Announcements**
  - a. NC state democratic party is having state executive committee this Saturday - Comm. Wang can let us know if any worker-related gets passed (Peoples' primary - ban on corporate PAC money from primaries, adopted in slate of resolutions to be voted on) Commissioners were encouraged to sign up to speak at the Council Meeting

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:22pm**

**Next meeting: July 22nd at 6pm In-Person**

**Respectfully Submitted by: Ashlee Adams, Secretary to Workers' Right's Commission.**