

Some members resign: 8/2/74

Commission rejects suicide

By DICK NEWHALL

The Human Relations Commission struggled for two hours last night, trying to commit suicide as per its instructions from County Council. It didn't quite succeed, but it got far enough so its failure probably doesn't matter.

Several weeks ago council asked all members of the commission to resign in order that a 15-member, geographically balanced, commission might be appointed. The present commission originally consisted of 30 members, but attrition has worn it down to 16.

The request for mass resignations called forth a wide variety of responses from commission members. The actions ranged from anger and resentment at council, through statements that the commission had done a poor job and should resign, to statements that the commission was not a failure and that some mem-

bers of the council should resign.

In the end, Bennie Brown, Earl Robbins, Mary Anne Knight, and Walter L. Williams refused to resign. Resigning were Leonard Springs, chairman, Elaine Norwood, Horace Butler, J. C. Thompson, James Boyd, Robert F. Young, Julie R. Bond, Willie McBee, and Mary Thompson. Absent were E. D. Dixon, John Spearman, and Wales Burdette.

Spearman and Dixon could not be reached for comment. Burdette said he had been out of town, had not had time to consider the matter, and had no comment to make.

A number of commissioners blamed council for the commission's problems, but Mary E. Thompson disagreed.

"Our problems started right in this room," she told commission members. She strongly criticized members of the commission who had gone to the county with reports of in-

ternal dissension on the commission. Council members should have told the commission to solve its own internal problems by itself right then, she said.

Her strongest criticism was levelled at one commissioner who brought a tape recorder to meetings, and taped the proceedings. This commissioner was Mary Anne Knight. However, Mrs. Knight was temporary secretary of the commission for several meetings, and was responsible for keeping minutes and writing a record of what happened.

"We need more human relations on this commission," Mrs. Thompson said. I think we should resign for the betterment of human relations in Greenville County."

Mrs. Thompson denied that lack of money was the cause of the commission's problems.

"I was a member of the Mayor's Council on Human Relations," she said. "We didn't have a nickel, and we

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got more work done than this commission."

She blamed the commission's problems on what she called constant bickering among commissioners, a campaign to undermine executive director Jean Hagood, and disrespect for commission chairman Leonard Springs.

Other commissioners said they had learned a great deal in the past year, and were unwilling to admit failure by resigning.

"I didn't come here to quit," Bennie Brown said. "I'm not going to quit, either. If you think you should quit, then quit. It's the people being characterized as fools who should quit. We are supposed to be the conscience of the community though. We are supposed to lead it into the right."

Jean Hagood, executive director, told members she did not think resignation was an admission of failure. She

pointed out that the commission was supposed to be balanced geographically, but that resignations and lapsed terms had unbalanced it substantially. Appointing new commissioners was the only way the commission could be made to conform to geographic guidelines, she said.

Chairman Leonard Springs reminded members that a person who resigned might well be reappointed.

A good part of the evening's argument centered around how the commission should resign. Some thought it should resign in a body. This could not be effected, since not all the members intended to resign.

Springs said that the remaining members of the commission should get together and elect a new chairman.

Springs said there was a question as to whether council could appoint a new commission until the old one resigned.

The week a Rules meets

Greenville County Council's Special Rules Committee will meet Tuesday at 4 p.m. in conference room B at the courthouse annex.

County council will discuss its agenda at 7 p.m. Tuesday in conference room B in the annex.

Council will hold a public hearing on supplemental appropriations at a public meeting Tuesday 6:30 p.m. in the courtroom of the courthouse.

The Greenville Hospital System Board of Trustees will meet Monday at 7 p.m. in the doctors' d