

Mayor Perrin; Members of the Jonesboro City Council,

I am Dr. George Grant, a resident of Jonesboro, and retired Dean of the Library at Arkansas State University.

I am also Co-Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the Jonesboro Diversity Coalition, that seeks to have the city correct an oversight, whether intentional or not, with regard to the embarrassing lack of minorities and women on the Police and Fire Departments, at a time when cities all over the United States have achieved diversity in these two departments. In fact, many cities now have minorities and women who have been promoted to the capacity of chiefs of their Police and Fire Departments.

Steering Committee member, Dr. Adams, has summarized the numerous “Points of Pride” that the city’s Police Department can boast of with respect to protecting the Jonesboro community. And, while Dr. Adams did not enumerate them, we also acknowledge that there are also “Points of Pride” that the Fire Department can cite with respect to fire and personal safety of Jonesboro citizens. But, for him, and many minority and female members of the Jonesboro community, the hiring of minorities and women in these departments is “Unfinished Business.”

And, Steering Committee member, Dr. Stafford, has summarized, for purposes of this presentation, the background and focus of our initial recommendations to assist you in completing this “Unfinished Business.”

Any way you look at it, the absence of minorities and women, in any representative numbers, on the Police and Fire Department in Jonesboro is as conspicuous NOW as it was in the 1960s and 1970s when the denial of access to these career opportunities was addressed by the Civil Rights Movement. The question is simply, why haven’t more minority and female police officers and firefighters been hired?

**** So, whether or not you agree with our position that diversity in the Police and Fire Department should mirror the diversity of the Jonesboro Community;**

**** And, whether or not you are satisfied with the recruitment and hiring of minorities and women to date by the Police and Fire Departments;**

**** And, whether or not you are convinced that there are no qualified minorities or women who wish to become Police officers and Firemen;**

...The Jonesboro Diversity Coalition nonetheless urges you to give the improvement of diversity in these city departments your immediate attention.

And, in this regard, we are volunteering to:

... work harmoniously with the City in the recruitment of minority and female applicants for vacant positions with the Jonesboro Police and Fire Departments,

...to assist in strengthening working relationships of these departments with minority communities throughout the City, and even more importantly,

...to assist in the improvement the image of the City as one of fairness and equal access in employment to all segments of its population.

SO, HAVING PROVIDED OUR INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS, BOTH IN WRITING AND AT THIS SESSION, WE PUBLICLY OFFER TO WORK WITH YOU TO ADDRESS THIS CONCERN.

Now, with the time remaining, we welcome your questions, your comments and an invitation to begin working with individual City departments, or task forces, to implement our recommendations and any other initiatives that you deem appropriate in this matter.

Thank you. Do you have questions and comments?