

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES

The Human Rights Commission met on Tuesday, December 19, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society.

Members present were: Shelly Huseby, Jill Benson, Shawn Mueske, Barbara Little, Fernando Alvarado, Maria Larson, Ben Larson, Richard Engan, Mayor Marv Calvin and Janell Sommers, Administrative Assistant.

Item No. 1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Shelly Huseby at 5:00 p.m.

Item No. 2 Approve Minutes of Meeting

Chair Huseby presented the minutes of the November 21, 2017 meeting for discussion. Commission Member Benson moved to approve the Human Rights Commission minutes of November 21, 2017, Commission Member Ben Larson seconded the motion, which carried.

Item No. 3 Public Comment

Linda Olsen spoke during the public comment and thanked Commissioner Ben Larson for his participation in the City Council meetings. She stated she is there in support of a community that is united and stands together. She also asked the Human Rights Commission to consider the possibility of requiring mandatory diversity training for our City Council to learn about ourselves and other cultures and how others think. We need to close the divisions within our community and learn to function together and accept each other. She stated she is speaking on behalf of ISAIAH and herself.

Anita Flowe addressed the Commission stating she agreed with what Linda Olsen had to say and feels the community really needs to do something to address the issue that doesn't "feed the bear" and stir things up.

Linda Olsen also stated she realizes the City Council meets in a public building and if it was private or rental there could be a ban on weapons. It is a very uncomfortable situation sitting in meetings where there are conflicts and know that people have weapons. It is her understanding is it requires legislative action as long as it is in a public building.

Amanda Hatzman spoke during the public comment on another safety issue stating she feels it is very unsafe, especially for woman, to have to give their address at City Council meetings during Open Forum. She realizes it needs to be a point of public records and feels that the signing in should be sufficient.

Mayor Marv Calvin addressed the comment stating the address is to find out if the person resides within the City limits and looking back historically some individuals said they were never given an answer after they made a comment at the Council and this is a way for staff to respond to them. The question was raised if they have to state their address publicly and Mayor Calvin stated he would check with the City Attorney for clarification.

Steve Mayer, Pastor of Eagle Lake Lutheran Church, questioned the Commission as to why they did not somehow communicate something about this Facebook incident rather than Ben Larson doing it on his own? Commissioner Benson stated the Commission has not had time to discuss the situation as it was brought up at the end of the previous meeting and the Commission has no actual power. Mayor Calvin stated the Commission does have power because it has a voice but no administrative power.

Kathy Hartley, Pastor at Bethel Church, stated she had attended a City Council meeting in ST. Cloud and there was discussion about being a welcoming City. We need our leaders to step up by doing something like diversity training and be proactive.

Pastor Steve Mayer commented on how powerful Mayor Calvin's comments were at the Council meeting the previous evening and thanked him. Chair Huseby thanked the public for their comments.

Item No. 4 Discussion on Report – A Rural Latino Vision to Strengthen Communities for a Thriving Minnesota:

Chair Huseby brought up the report received from the Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs who did an extensive survey through seven communities in Minnesota, Willmar being one of them on issues that affect Latino residents. They focused on four main areas: Economic Development, Education, Health Care and Immigration. The goal is to look at the issues and bring recommendations to the legislature for some political change. With the legislative session beginning February 20th, the Commission has January to invite our legislators to our meeting to move forward on this.

The Commission discussed how people who were undocumented use to be able to get a driver's license as long as they met the criteria, went through the training and passed the test. In 2003 there was an executive order by Governor Pawlenty that cancelled their ability to do so. The Governor does have executive power to reinstate this. Legislators are the ones who can bring that forward to the Governor

The Commission came to a consensus of several items they would recommend legislators to present on the legislative floor. The top items on the list were: driver's license, promote dental care, affordable workforce housing and transportation.

Also discussed were municipal identification cards and reaching out to the City of Northfield who is in the process of implementing such a program, improved funding for housing, education, and dental/medical insurance. The two main topics the Commission decided to focus on with the legislators were affordable housing and identification issues and allow time for questions from the public.

Item No. 5 Other and New Business:

The Commission briefly discussed diversity training and recommending the City Council pass a Welcoming Resolution. Other communities have done this and it presents a good image of the City.

Commissioner Alvarado commented on the diverse individuals that spoke during the Open Forum at the Council meeting sharing why they lived in Willmar, what they enjoy about the community and that they wanted the same things for their families as the rest of the community.

Commissioner Mueske spoke on the redevelopment of the Human Rights Commission and how it has progressed.

Opportunities and future events were announced:

Community Conversation at the Goodness Coffee House – looking for event planners
Vision 20/40 Refresh January 30th from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Willmar Conference Center
WAMA – Shelly Huseby and Marlin Breems will speak on January 4th at 11:45 a.m. at Oakes
Unitarian Church – Shawn Mueske and Ben Larson will speak

The next meeting date of the Commission will be Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at 5:00 p.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Mueske, seconded by Commissioner Ben Larson and passed to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell Sommers
Administrative Assistant