

## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES**

The Human Rights Commission met on Tuesday, February 21, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society.

Members present were: Kristal Dahlager, Richard Engan, Barbara Little, Marlin Breems, Lynn Travaglio, Shelly Huseby, Jill Benson, Maria Larson, Ben Larson and Janell Sommers, Recording Secretary.

### Item No. 1      Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kristal Dahlager at 5:00 p.m. Chair Dahlager welcomed the two new commission members, Ben and Maria Larson.

### Item No. 2      Approve Minutes of Meeting

Commission Member Huseby moved to approve the Human Rights Commission minutes of January 17, 2017. Commission Member Travaglio seconded the motion, which carried.

### Item No. 3      Public Comment

Pablo Obregon touched on a discussion of the Latino Provider Service Network on the immigration situation of our nation that resulted from a meeting with representatives of the Willmar Police Department. Mr. Obregon stated there have been several "sparks" out of all these possible changes and noted there are some clergy working with the ISALAH group on how to become more supportive to the immigrant/refugee community. He stated the City has had the opportunity to welcome people from all over the world in the past 150 years or more. Willmar is a community of immigrants and unfortunately there is a strong movement nation-wide against different races other than whites. He stated there are different opportunities of how cities can be supportive of different immigrant/refugee communities, and the one most mentioned in the news is a sanctuary city ordinance.

Mr. Obregon closed with two things: He acknowledged he knows a lot of hard- families with three-four children in the school system of whom one of the couple does not have immigration documents. What can be done so those families can continue to live in peace and not in fear? The second is the treatment of the East Africans he has heard of. Young men are stating they have noticed more horn honking downtown and students are being called names in the high school. He urged the Human Rights Commission to discuss these issues.

Commissioner Member Breems questioned if there is a way to address these issues without becoming a Sanctuary City? Mr. Obregon stated an alternate route would be an agreement with the police department or ordinance to be an open community. St. Cloud has such an agreement. Chair Dahlager thanked Mr. Obregon for his comments.

### Item No 4      Family Promise Presentation:

Heidi Kohls, Case Manager/Director for Family Promise presented information related to the Family Promise program in Willmar. Ms. Kohls stated there are 11 host churches and 13 support churches in the program. They each take a week at a time and on Sunday they pick up the families from the Day Center which is located in the First Presbyterian Church. Each family in the program is taken to the respective church at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday are fed a meal, and offered a place to stay and sleep until 6:00 a.m. at which time a volunteer driver delivers them to the Day Center about 7:00 a.m. From there the kids go to their school and the parents their job or work on finding employment. There is a laundry facility at the Day Center and showers available. At 5:00 p.m. they repeat the cycle. The program is open to families with children, couples and expectant mothers. You can be denied for two reasons – committed of a sex crime or a recent violent crime. There are 202 Family Promises in the United States and 4 in Minnesota.

The referral process includes calls from Heartland Community Action, the Salvation Army, Grace's Place, schools, churches, calling themselves or walk-ins. The average national stay is 60 days and the average for Kandiyohi County is 41 days. Affordable housing is a determining factor in the length of stay. Commission Dahlager thanked Ms. Kohls for her presentation and sharing the program with the Commission.

Item No. 5      New Business

Commissioner Dahlager announced the Human Rights Commission received an email from Jonathan Wong, Information Officer of the St. Cloud Human Rights Office, which included a form giving details for Commissioner Lindsey to attend a future meeting. The Commission discussed the form and the goal of his attendance. Commission Members were asked to submit ideas for discussion.

Commissioner Little informed the Commission that the ISALAH Group would like to present to the Human Rights Commission at a meeting in the near future. Commissioner Little will coordinate with this group to schedule their attendance.

Item No. 6      Miscellaneous

Chair Dahlager read an email from Commission and Council Member Fernando Alvarado regarding the Diversity March he participated in. The Commission set the next meeting date for March 21, 2017.

A motion was made by Commission Member Travaglio and seconded by Commission Member Breems to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell Sommers  
Recording Secretary