

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES

Approved: 4-18-18

The Human Rights Commission met on Tuesday, March 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, Shelly Huseby, Jill Benson, Maria Larson, Ben Larson, Bashir Abdi, Shawn Mueske, Fernando Alvarado 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 announced she has been Chair for a year and at this time passed the position to Shelly Huseby who was newly appointed by the Mayor and Council. Chair Huseby ran the meeting from this point forward.

Item No. 2 Approve Minutes of Meeting

Commission Member Breems moved to approve the Human Rights Commission minutes of February 21, 2017. Commission Member Mueske seconded the motion, which carried.

Item No. 3 Public Comment

There were no public comments, just a showing of support for the next item on the agenda.

Item No 4 ISALAH Group Presentation:

Commissioner Little introduced and welcomed the ISALAH Group and turned the presentation over to Charlie Lueze. Group introductions were made. Ms. Lueze stated one of the issues the ISALAH Group is working on is the undocumented population and how the community feels about this population. She felt it necessary to put a face to the issue and inform the community how the legal status of families is mixed and even though people are here undocumented, they are still working and contributing community members.

Ms. Lueze stated there is a lot of fear in the Latino and Anglo community from what is being said about undocumented people. Since the new administration a lot of people are staying home more and spending less money. She stated they want to talk about what Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) is doing and what the police are doing. She stated that so far what they have heard from the Police Department in Willmar has been positive. They are not going out of their way to cooperate with ICE unless ICE comes and has a warrant for a certain individual. The ISALAH Group would like the City to pass some type of an ordinance or separation agreement between the Police and ICE so that the community can feel safe. It was mentioned St. Paul has a separation agreement as does Worthington.

Ms. Lueze stated crimes are going unreported because of the fear. They agree with ICE if they want to pick up felons or criminals that is not a problem. They feel like they are all looking like criminals, all painted with the same brush and families are being separated or broken up. They voiced that signs within the community such as "Welcome Immigrants" would be helpful. It was noted there are several churches in the community that have such signs.

Several stories were given. One individual stated she is scared. She came here as an undocumented immigrant and presently is here under a Visa U. She has three daughters who are here under the DACA Program that was implemented for undocumented youth also known as "Dreamers." She fears that the President has not touched on what he is going to do with the DACA Program. She came here for a better life for herself and her daughters and doesn't know how she is going to protect them if that is taken away. Presently with the DACA they can work and study and contribute to the community. She has been waiting for

her papers for 1 ½ years and maybe in the next 18 months she may get her Visa. Her fear remains for her daughters. There are 800,000 Dreamers currently in the country.

Another individual stated she is a mother of three and came here from Mexico as a single mom and wanted a better life for her son. This country has helped provide a better future for her oldest son and she has two other children that were born in the United States. One is studying in college and the other in high school graduating. The problem they are facing now is that her husband has an order for deportation. She has been her for 19 years and her husband has had a few issues and has two DUI's on his record from 1995 and 1998. He has since been sober for 13 years. He use to work for Jennie-O but now owns his own tiling company. Under Obama Administration he was able to stay and in February when everything changed is when they told him he has to leave the country. ICE has given him permission to stay and attend the high school graduation of his son, but if he gets deported, then the other son will have to discontinue his studies to support the family. They do have any attorney that is working on expunging those charges.

A third individual that spoke stated they are a family that came from Mexico with four children and have committed no crimes. She stated she is not afraid to go back to Mexico, but her fear is that her two youngest children are not well they have an illness that is with them all their lives. They see three different specialists every three months due to metabolic genetic disorder. They can't go to Mexico as it is hard to find their particular treatment for this rare disease. Her children are two of seven people in the United States with this disorder which took four years to diagnosis. She did state that as of yet they have not been asked to leave and the children were born in the United States. She loves the U.S. and owes her children's lives to the United States.

Another individual who is termed a "Dreamer" talked about the process to receive citizenship even though she is able to work and drive it is still hard. She would like to become a legal, permanent resident. It was noted undocumented people cannot receive any kind of assistance. They obtain a Tax Identification Number that allows them to work and pay taxes with no benefits but with the new administration they are no longer available.

The group was asking for something more formal in Kandiyohi County noting St. Cloud has a policing agreement. A copy of the agreement was circulated to the members. Commission Member Mueske spoke thanking them for their stories stating you should never be afraid in your home. We are your neighbors and your neighbor has your back. The Commission discussed what path to take and noted Commissioner Lindsey will be in attendance at the April 18th meeting and these questions should be addressed at that meeting. The group was again thanked for their attendance and sharing their stories.

Item No. 5 Election of Officers:

March is the annual meeting for the Commission at which time the bylaws are reviewed and election of officers is held. It was noted Shelly Huseby is the Chair and Richard Engan is the Vice Chair. Both of these positions were appointed by the Mayor and Council. The Corresponding Secretary, the Budget Chair and the Member-at-Large are the offices up for election. Discussion of term lengths was held and it was noted these terms are appointed by the Mayor and Council.

Richard Engan made a motion that Jill Benson serve as Corresponding Secretary. Marlin Breems seconded the motion, which carried.

Marlin Breems made a motion that Shawn Mueske serve as the Budget Chair. Kristal Dahlager seconded the motion, which carried.

The Commission discussed the definition of "Member-at-Large." It was suggested to seek clarification and act at this at a later date. The Bylaws will be sent out to members and reviewed at a later meeting.

Item No. Miscellaneous:

Commission Member Mueske brought forward the suggestion of having an additional meeting to continue the discussion with the ISALAH Group. He felt it the Commission's responsibility to advocate the group's concerns in a timely fashion. It was agreed by the members to hold an additional meeting in April. The meeting schedule is April 18 at 5:00 p.m. with Commissioner Lindsey and April 25 at 5:00 for discussion from what was heard from the Commissioner and how to advocate for the ISALAH Group.

Commission Member Mueske announced that the Multi-cultural Club at Ridgewater College is showing a movie titled "A Stray" on March 30th starting with discussion at 6:00 p.m. The movie will be in Somali with subtitles and portrays one Somali's journey as a refugee immigrant coming to this country and navigating between two worlds. There will be free bus service to and from the downtown bus station.

A motion was made by Commission Member Dahlager and seconded by Commission Member Breems to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell Sommers
Recording Secretary