

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES

The Human Rights Commission met on Tuesday, July 17, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society.

Members present were: Kristal Dahlager, Richard Engan, Shelly Huseby, Bashir Abdi, Barbara Little, Marlin Breems, Shawn Mueske and Denis Anderson. Also present were Janell Sommers, Recording Secretary. Absent were Abdirahman Abdi Hussein, Abdala Abdulahi Mohamed, Lynn Travaglio and Jill Benson who were excused from the meeting.

Item No. 1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kristal Dahlager at 5:00 p.m. A motion was made by Richard Engan to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2016 meeting with the deletion of Shawn Mueske and Denis Anderson as being in attendance. Denis Anderson seconded the motion, which carried.

Item No. 2 Public Comment

Kelly Doss, Executive Director of Advocacy & Inclusion Matter of West Central Minnesota (AIM), which offers scholarships for swimming lessons for disabled individuals, appeared before the Commission. Her main concern was the substantial increase in cost of swimming lessons through Willmar Community Education and Recreation for the disabled individuals versus non-disabled in 2016. There was no increase in fees for non-disabled individuals. Ms. Doss stated she contacted CER Director Steve Brisendine who explained it as the lessons for disabled persons are more of a private lesson versus the individuals without disabilities are in a group. Ms. Doss questioned if there was a way to balance it out so it is more even between the two groups? Commission Member Shawn Mueske suggested that the Commission draft a letter to the Community Ed and Recreation Director addressing this issue. Commission Member Denis Anderson offered a motion to direct Chair Kristal Dahlager to draft a letter to the Community Ed and Rec Director Steve Brisendine, CER Director addressing the issue with the thought in mind of working something out for future charges with copies provided for Pam Vruwink of CER, City Administrator Larry Kruse, and Willmar School Superintendent Jeff Holm. Commission Member Shelly Huseby seconded the motion which carried.

Item No. 3 Review of Proposed Changes to Bylaws

A motion was made by Commission Member Denis Anderson to approve the proposed changes to the bylaws as discussed at the May 17th Commission meeting. Commission Member Richard Engan seconded the motion which carried.

Item No 4 Interpreter Concern

Commission Member Bashir Abdi updated the Commission on the concern he brought to the Commission at the May 17th Commission meeting in regard to the current hours a Somali interpreter is available at the Kandiyohi County Family Services. The hours seem to not be sufficient to meet the needs of the clients. Commission Member Denis Anderson suggested a letter be sent to the County addressing this issue. Following discussion, Commission Member Richard Engan offered a motion to direct Chair Kristal Dahlager to send a letter to County Administrator Larry Kleindl to address this issue. Commission Member Shawn Mueske seconded the motion which carried.

Item No. 5 New Business

Commission Member Shawn Mueske mentioned he had spoken to MN Human Rights Commissioner Kevin Lindsey in regard to the duties of the Commission. Commissioner Lindsey stated the duties of the local Commission are the following: 1. Investigation of charges (however, Willmar does not have a legal entity in place, so this duty would be forwarded to the State); 2. Ensure equal opportunity in employment; 3. Equal pay

certificates; and 4. Education and disparity issues. Some of the issues the State is focusing on are: 1. Ending homelessness; 2. Disability services; 3. Workforce alignment; and 4. Reduce recidivism. He stated local commissions should be autonomous. Last year the state sponsored a MN Humanity Center event and local commissions were invited to attend, and they hope to sponsor this again. The State is working on broad conversations on issues such as school bullying, etc. He stated they are impressed with Willmar's Commission and the support/attendance by the Commission members. Commission Member Shawn Mueske was very pleased with the discussion and stated that Commissioner Lindsey is very approachable, should we need to contact him in the future.

In other New Business, Chair Kristal Dahlager brought up the issue of exploring education opportunities available on various issues such as homelessness, human trafficking, racial profiling, etc. that are pertinent to the purpose of the Commission and possible funding options for the education. Following discussion, Chair Kristal Dahlager suggested that members come to the next meeting with ideas of topics they would like to see the community receive education on. It was also mentioned it would be advantageous to have a representative of the Police Department to attend the meeting in September to talk about human rights topics in general that they witness.

Item No. 7 Miscellaneous

The Commission set the next meeting date for August 16, 2016.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell Sommers
Recording Secretary