

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES

Approved 12-19-17

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

Members present were: Shelly Huseby, Jill Benson, Marlin Breems, Shawn Mueske, Barbara Little, Fernando Alvarado, Richard Engan 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 Public Comment

There were no members from the public present for comment.

Item No. 3 Approve Minutes of Meeting

Chair Huseby presented the minutes of the October 17, 2017 meeting for discussion. Commission Member Benson moved to approve the Human Rights Commission minutes of October 17, 2017, Commission Member Breems seconded the motion, which carried.

Item No. 4 Follow-Up on Discussion with Middle School Principal:

Chair Huseby informed the Commission she had a discussion with Amy Sack, Assistant Principal at the Middle School regarding the Cultural Liaison position and she is aware of the issues. A new person is in the position and they were unaware that voice mail had been set up on the cell phone assigned to them from the previous employee. Messages were coming in and not answered until they realized the voice mail box was full. By this time there had already been a whole list of issues. The person who took the new position was a classroom para whose sole job was to do interpreting. School administration is now meeting weekly with the new Cultural Liaison and time has been scheduled within each day to make phone calls. A log has been created to track calls. Chair Huseby intends to follow-up with Commissioner Bashir Abdi to relay the message to the Somalian community.

Item No. 5 Follow-up on Meetings with the Faith Community:

Chair Huseby informed the Commission she and Commissioner Breems met on November 9th with ELCA Lakeland Pastors. Commissioner Breems updated the Commission stating it was a group of approximately 15 pastors and they presented them the challenge of making our neighbors feel welcome in our community and shared with them some of the challenges that the Commission has faced. They were very supportive. They are also going to meet with the Willmar Area Ministerial Association on January 4. Commissioner Mueske stated he was asked to speak at the Unitarian Church at 9 a.m. on January 14th and invited others interested to join him to talk generically about the Human Rights Commission, its history and how it has evolved including the types of issues that are dealt with.

Item No. 6 New Business and Discussion:

Chair Huseby said she was approached by Ken Warner, Chamber President, with a business card from the Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission in Austin who wanted to talk to her and connect with Willmar's Human Rights Commission. On October 23rd Chair Huseby called into their meeting and basically gave them the Commission's Mission Statement and also the history of what the Commission has done so far and what is happening now. They are dealing with some of the same topics that Willmar is. They asked her questions for over an hour. Windom's Human Rights Commission has also approached members of this Commission for information.

Commissioner Alvarado was in contact with Henry Jimenez, Executive Director of the Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs, and he and Chair Huseby met with Mr. Jimenez in early November. The four policy areas the Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs is working on right now are immigration, economic development, education and health. He talked about encouraging getting together with State Representatives Dave Baker and Andrew Lange to discuss the Commission's agenda items to bring to the state level. They are concerned and would like to have their voices heard. Mr. Jimenez would like to come to a Commission meeting most likely after the first of the New Year. The Commission briefly discussed the topic of Municipal Id's as a method of identification if a person doesn't have a drivers' license and the number one concern in the Latino community which is access to dental care. The question was raised if the Commission wants to invite the legislators to their meeting once the topics specifically related to Willmar are brought forward and bring them to our legislators before they go into session. It was the consensus of the Commission to invite the legislators to the meeting in January.

Item No. 7 Miscellaneous Items:

Commission Member Ben Larson informed the Commission of a Facebook concern that was brought to his attention. It was dismissed as a character issue and how Commissioner Larson chooses to deal with it is his concern as an individual.

Commission Member Mueske shared that the Mn State College and University system is hosting a book discussion for their faculty and staff on "Enrique's Journey" the story of a Honduran boy's dangerous odyssey to reunite with his mother. They will be having 3 - 90 minute adobe connect meetings and his thoughts were to open this up to the community. Commission Mueske will reach out to see if this is possible to have as a city-wide activity.

Commissioner Alvarado informed the members that there is a program coming to Willmar called "In Common Sharing Stories" from the American Composers Forum which gives communities the opportunity to explore their unique diversity through the sharing of stories and the creation of new music. This community arts project will last 12-18 months and take place in one Bremer Bank community each year starting in Willmar.

Chair Huseby mentioned a grant through the Willmar Area Community Foundation where the Goodness Coffee House will have bridging conversation suppers and invite people who are new English speakers and the community over a meal to converse with people and work on their English informally. An update on the law enforcement video was they have completed a voice over for the Spanish version and are working on the Somalian version.

The next meeting date of the Commission will be Tuesday, December 19, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Engan, seconded by Commissioner Ben Larson and passed to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell Sommers
Administrative Assistant