

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES

Approved: 9-18-2017

The Human Rights Commission met on Tuesday, August 15, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society.

Members present were: Shelly Huseby, Barbara Little, Marlin Breems, Ben Larson, Shawn Mueske, Fernando Alvarado, and Janell Sommers, Administrative Assistant.

Item No. 1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Shelly Huseby at 5:20 p.m. when quorum was reached.

Item No. 2 Approve Minutes of Meeting

Commission Member Breems moved to approve the Human Rights Commission minutes of June 20, 2017. Commission Member Ben Larson seconded the motion, which carried.

Item No. 3 Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Item No 4 Citizenship Ceremony - League of Women Voters:

Chair Huseby introduced Jan Dahl representing the League of Women Voters. Ms. Dahl stated the League of Women Voters is requesting the support of the Human Rights Commission in submittal of an application for a Citizenship Ceremony to be held in Willmar in April of 2018 at the Barn Theater. She cited the Court will locate people from the area that are newly designated citizens to participate in a formal swearing in ceremony along with family members or guests and interpreters. There is no cost for rental of the Barn Theater; however it was suggested by the League to have some type of reception following the ceremony. The only costs associated with the ceremony would be for any refreshments at the reception following. Ms. Dahl will notify the Commission if Willmar is chosen. Commission Member Mueske made a motion that the Willmar Human Rights Commission partner with the League of Women Voters to support the opportunity to sponsor and promote the Citizenship Ceremony. Commission Member Larson seconded the motion of support, which carried.

Item No. 5 Follow-up Discussion to Session with Law Enforcement Officials:

Chair Huseby informed the Commission that on June 29th she and Commissioner Mueske met with Sheriff Hartog to present him with the questions raised at the June 20th meeting of the Commission concerning the form that is required upon booking. They received clarification that the form is a standard form and if they do not answer the question of citizenship then the County does contact ICE to check if they are a U.S. Citizen or not. Sheriff Hartog said it is about public safety and wanting to know about the individual they are dealing with as they have had many issues of individuals with multiple forms of identification. An interpreter is provided if needed and this form is only required if they are being booked into jail. That is the only time this question is asked, not during traffic stops. It is a paper form and if they do not speak English well, they stop until they can get an interpreter. First preference is a face-to-face interpreter and for most languages they do have access to an interpreter that will come to the jail. If a language is spoke that they do not have quick access to, they will use the language line. It was noted that just because they answer "no" to the question, does not mean they are here undocumented. They are allowed time to provide the necessary paperwork or VISA. If there is a traffic stop, they take their information and run it through the system and if they are on a Federal Watch List it will alert them and they do whatever they are instructed to do.

It was noted by Commissioner Mueske that the form is a standardized, locally used form and he felt they indicated they need to ask that question for identification purposes. If they are arrested, they are held only for the crime they are booked for and not held for ICE or any longer than they are mandated for the crime they are being held for. Linda Olsen, a member of the public, stated that they are not guilty until proven guilty. Having to fill out that form does not allow them that option if found not guilty of the crime they are being booked for. Chair Huseby stated they did talk about that with Sheriff Hartog and people are arrested for a reason. There is enough evidence to arrest someone. They are not randomly picking people and if they are stopped and there is enough evidence to book them, then they are transported to the jail.

Chair Huseby announced the recording on WRAC TV with both the Chief of Police and Sheriff Hartog will be done on September 5th at 10:00 a.m. The list of questions is many of those answered when they came before the Commission earlier this year. The recording is planned to be aired on WRAC TV and translated afterward with the intention of distributing the video to outside organizations to be aired on a larger scale. Leaders in the community will be contacted after the product is available. Chair Huseby asked if any member of the Commission could volunteer to be present for the recording. Commissioner Ben Larson offered to attend to help moderate.

Pastor Steve Meier sought clarification on the booking form reiterating the question of asking for citizenship if this is their practice or are they required by any government authority to do so, and is this their practice because they are trying to figure out their identity? If they answer the question and don't have the documentation they are reported and also if they don't answer the question they are reported to ICE whether they are innocent or guilty?

The Commission discussed the positives of the video presentation and the ability to reach individuals we would not be able to reach at a public forum or other setting. After the program is recorded and interpreted the broadcast schedule will be relayed to leaders in the community.

Item No. 6 Other Business:

The Commission discussed the incident at the YMCA Farmers' Market the previous Saturday and the letter to the editor. The incident was reported to the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

The next meeting date of the Commission will be Tuesday, September 19, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. A motion was made by Commission Member Breems and seconded by Commission Member Larson to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell Sommers
Administrative Assistant