

## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES**

Approved 10/17/17

The Human Rights Commission met on Tuesday, September 19, 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, Maria Larson, Jill Benson, Shawn Mueske, Osman Jibril 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      Approve Minutes of Meeting

Chair Huseby presented the minutes of the August 15, 2017 meeting for discussion. It was suggested a slight change to the verbiage to reflect the meeting starting at 5:20 p.m. Commission Member Benson moved to approve the Human Rights Commission minutes of August 15, 2017 with the noted change. Commission Member Shawn Mueske seconded the motion, which carried.

### Item No. 3      Public Comment

There were no members from the public present for comment. Commission Member Ben Larson handed out information from the ACLU website of model state and local law enforcement policies for future review.

### Item No. 4      2017 Report for Diverse BRE Program:

Chair Huseby introduced Aaron Backman, Director of the Kandiyohi County Economic Development Commission who presented the Final Report for the Design and Implementation of a Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) Program for Diverse Businesses in the Willmar area. Mr. Backman stated there are about 70 diverse businesses in Willmar or about 12% of our total businesses in the community. In perspective, in 2012 there were about 48 and 18 years ago there were less than 10. Last fall the EDC was approved for a grant from the Southwest Initiative Foundation to design a BRE Program for diverse businesses in this area to do the survey. The deliverables included a Diverse BRE site visit form, a list of ethnic-owned businesses in Willmar by ethnicity and a geographic map.

Overall the businesses viewed Willmar favorably. They described it as quiet, safe and positive in its diverse population. Latino businesses were more likely to own the property and on average the Somali owners were more likely to lease. Mr. Backman identified 31 East African, 27 Latino and at least 8 Asian businesses. The old Latino businesses have been operating in Willmar for nearly 20 years. The Somali's have been creating businesses at a faster rate in the last five years. For Somali businesses, the most common type were food-related such as grocery or restaurant followed by transportation. For Latino businesses, most common was food related as well, and second was auto repair sales and service.

Geographic locations for all diverse businesses in Willmar tend to be located in the

downtown with a little over 50% and along US Highway 12 and Business 71-23 (First Street). The Asian businesses were located along First Street south of Willmar Avenue and primarily they were food-related or a nail salon of some fashion. The most frequent trade area for the Somali businesses was 11-15 miles and Latino businesses was 51-100 miles. He touched on the square footage of their businesses and their signage. Most of the businesses surveyed were not heavy users in technology such as websites. It was interesting that they have bypassed websites and are using social media such as Facebook.

Utilities were surveyed and overall water, sewer, and natural gas were rated highly by the business owners. For Somalis the lowest ranked services were telecommunications and garbage removal. For Latinos it was electricity cost and internet (access and speed). The views of the community were asked including likes and weaknesses. What they responded as most liked about Willmar was it is quiet, safe and they liked the diversity. The weaknesses were more parking in the downtown and lack of activities for youth. Only one business owner referenced any discrimination. For the most part they described people in Willmar as “good people.”

They were surveyed on having signage in downtown in multiple languages to welcome customers into the area, of which most all were favorable. Mr. Backman then answered questions and commented on how the Human Rights Commission can assist him in the future. Members of the Commission thanked Mr. Backman for the report.

Chair Huseby introduced Osman Jibril and welcomed him as a new member to the Human Rights Commission. He has lived in Willmar for the last 12 years. All the Commissioner members gave a brief introduction to Commissioner Jibril and welcomed him.

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

Chair Huseby informed the Commission that on September 5<sup>th</sup> the question and answer session was successfully taped with the law enforcement officials. Commissioner Ben Larson was present and briefed the Commission on the outcome. The next task will be to have it translated.

Item No. 6 Other Business:

Commission Member Benson brought forward a “hate” note she received subsequent to her letter to the editor pertaining to the prior incident at the Farmers Market. She presented the note she found on her garage door attached to her letter to the editor. The Commission discussed the note and its focus.

The next meeting date of the Commission will be Tuesday, October 17, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. A motion was made, seconded and passed to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell Sommers  
Administrative Assistant