



WEST DES MOINES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday, April 13, 2017

Commissioners Present: Justine Morton, Frank Harty, Sanjita Pradhan, Ila Plasencia
Commissioners Absent: Bernell Edwards
Staff Representative: Althea Holcomb
Council Liaison: Rick Messerschmidt
Guests: David Meeks, Tom Hadden
Call to order: Meeting called to order at 4:03 p.m.

1. Roll Call

2. Guest introductions

3. Approval of February 2017 Minutes

- Frank Hardy moved to accept; Sanjita Pradhan seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved as read.

4. Opportunity for Public to Address the Commission

- David Meeks presented his proposal for maximizing the Commission's outreach, education and compliance efforts which includes utilizing his services as a "Diversity Consultant" on a five month trial basis for a fee of \$5,000. David asked that the Commission review his recommendations and provide feedback. David is currently working full-time for the West Des Moines School District as an associate for special needs and students at risk. He also serves on the equity team.

5. Chair Report

- Justine Morton attended the March human rights symposium on housing and poverty.
- Justine will forward a list to Mindy of resources available to Des Moines citizens from the Des Moines Human Rights Commission.
- Justine was also part of a conversation group entitled "WDM Community Equity and Multi-Cultural Discussion" led by a volunteer parent with other parents, students and some school staff in attendance. The group discussed the North-Valley game, and the misinterpretation of the Valley patriotic dress theme and the "USA" chant. The next meeting is on April 20th at 7 p.m. and is open to anyone interested in attending.

6. Staff Report

- The budget was reviewed. There have been no expenses since the February meeting. The Commission has a \$3,000 annual budget, with a balance of \$2,560. Althea is waiting to hear back from Daniel Hoffman-Zinnel at One Iowa regarding events the Commission might sponsor or fund. Justine entertained a motion to accept the budget as shared – Frank motioned to approve and Sanjita seconded the motion; the budget was approved as read.
- Mindy compiled a listing of the annual events the Commission has supported in the past. The Commission reviewed the items and agreed that they would be considered consent agenda items. Frank motioned to approve the items as set expenditure items through June 30, 2018.
- The annual police report will be presented at the June meeting.

7. Report on Human Rights Phone Line

- No calls to report

8. Report from Commissioners on recent activities

- Frank attended a mass at St. Ambrose Cathedral in support of the immigrant community.
- Sanjita and a few others hosted a discussion regarding hate crimes on February 1st, and will continue these discussions going forward with bigger quarterly events as well as smaller events.
- Sanjita is now with the Greater Des Moines Partnership, responsible for “Attraction and Retention of Global Talent”.

9. Old Business

- Tom Hadden discussed the need for the Commission to develop a five year plan. He asked if the Commission could be increased to seven members, and Justine replied that it could be. She suggested that based on the recommendation from the survey “Municipality as an Employer”, a representative from the LGBTQ community may be appropriate at this time. The survey recommended that an individual who is outwardly gay be appointed to the commission. Justine mentioned that she thinks we need more than just our group to develop a strategic plan; she suggested we network with other City departments who have a stake in human rights (e.g., police, fire).
- Rick said we need to survey the community to see what they think the Commission should be doing and to get their impressions of diversity in West Des Moines.
- Sanjita said it’s not just about doing surveys; we are not reacting to a crisis – rather, this is a proactive approach. E.g., resource fair for human rights fair or videos on the website (“I am WDM” – one minute videos on Facebook or You Tube).
- Tom said the City is hiring a writer to highlight each of the individuals on WDM boards/commissions for Facebook clips – this initiative could start with the HR Commissioners.
- Sanjita mentioned that ideas or goals require someone to do the work and that we need to be mindful of that – she said it might mean hiring a part-time coordinator or intern.
- Rick suggested the City would hire a coordinator, and Tom agreed. He said he’s not intending to put more on Althea’s department and that this would come from outside. Tom said the City is willing to dedicate resources including an expanded budget which would include funding for additional staff. He suggested the Commission develop a strategic plan comprised of one year thru 5 year goals, and start implementing those goals.
- Sanjita said she knows of several people who we may want to consider facilitating the strategic planning session. Justine said the person will need to have an understanding of government. Justine asked that everyone send their recommendations to Mindy by April 21st. Justine mentioned she may know of someone with a strong skill base who will do it for free.
- Further discussion was held concerning having a sub-committee to review the facilitator recommendations. Frank, Sanjita and Justine volunteered for the sub-committee. The date for the sub-committee meeting with Althea attending is May 11 at noon. Once a facilitator has been identified, the strategic planning session(s) will be scheduled after the regular commission meeting on June 8, 2017.
- Rick suggested reaching out to the colleges for help. Tom said the City is going to fund this, and it’s important to get someone with experience so we get a quality end product.
- Justine proposed that the commission move forward with the strategic planning and determine who should be at the table for those discussions. Sanjita questioned the need for a consultant during the strategic planning process since we had had a planning session during the prior HR meeting. Justine suggested based on the dialogue at this meeting an external consultant seem to be the recommendation. An external consultant may be able to provide a more objective view.
- The commission was in agreement to have the next strategic planning session take place in June following the regular Commission meeting. Frank asked if it had been decided to just tap into just our core group for the sessions. Tom suggested we start with the core group and reach out to other WDM groups as we progress in our planning.

10. New Business

- Tom Hadden asked if Sanjita, as part of her role at the greater Des Moines Partnership, could speak before a group comprised of leaders of companies in West Des Moines. Sanjita agreed to do this.

11. Next Meeting Date

- The next regular meeting will be held on Thursday, June 8, 2017.

Adjourn: Chair called for motion to adjourn. Sanjita moved to adjourn; Frank seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 5:05 pm.

Minutes by: Mindy Hotovec