



## WEST DES MOINES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, May 14, 2020

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

**Commissioners Present:** Heather Schott, Mindy Begenat, Sanjita Pradhan, Dr. Rich Salas, Milton Cole (call in)

**Commissioners Absent with notice:** Lonnette Dafney

**Staff Representative:** Laura Reveles

**Council Liaison:** Councilwoman Renee Hardman

**Guests:**

1. **Call to order:** Meeting called to order at 4:44 p.m.

2. **Roll call**

- Commissioners gave updates on how they are doing this this time

3. **Approval of April 2020 Minutes**

- Commissioner Dr. Rich Salas motioned to approve, Commission Vice Chair Mindy Begenat seconded, minutes approved

4. **Opportunity for public to address the Commission**

- No public joined the meeting

5. **Staff report**

Staff liaison for the Commission Laura Reveles covered the following topics:

- Phone Line: No messages. If there is a message it will send Laura an email, so calls are not missed
- Budget handout
- Update from WDM Human Services Department: Last week we provided approximately \$11,400 in rent and utility assistance to people as a result of the federal Community Development Block Grant COVID funding allocation (\$192,000). Unfortunately, only \$3,300 were spent from the CDBG dollars. We spent \$8,100 of our discretionary account to help undocumented workers with their rent and utilities. (CDBG will not cover undocumented individuals.) We received 47 calls last week. 5 were from Des Moines and 1 from Waukee who were referred to their respective helping sites. We sent out links to 15 people to access the application. Lots of calls were requesting assistance for June. We asked them to call back a little later in the month.
- Councilwoman Renee Hardman Updates
  - City council is looking at how to recalibrate budget, future projects and what all needs to be done in light of the situation
  - Council approved \$192,000 relief package to the residents of West Des Moines for assistance for housing and utilities
    - Dr Rich Salas asked if funds can be allocated for extenuating circumstances where the parents are not documented but the children are documented. She will look into that and get back to the committee

- Councilwoman asked commission members to share this message of the relief on their respective Facebook pages
- All allocations are being looked at, including the Martin Luther King Day allotment

## 6. Report from Commissioners on recent activities

- None

## 7. Old business

- Strategic Plan Subcommittee Leads
  - #2 - Commission Chair Sanjita Pradhan and Commissioner Dr. Rich Salas
  - #1 – Commission Vice Chair Mindy Begenat
  - #3 – Commissioner Heather Schott
    - Commission Chair Sanjita Pradhan will touch base with Commissioners Milton Cole and Lonnie Dafney on which priority they would like to work on. She gave the example of the event calendar she created and partnering up with community members on cultural events and city departments, and stated the subcommittees can discuss what they will do, who are their collaborative partners, budget, and bring it back to the commission for approval
    - Commissioner Dr. Rich Salas inquired about the amphitheater and planning events, Laura mentioned putting them in touch with the parks department.
- Sponsorship Document Approval
  - Commissioner Heather Schott presented the document and made sure to align it to the WDM HRC strategy and highlighted portions of the document. Page 1 and 2 for external facing, page 3 internal only, and then fix up the form
  - Commissioner Dr. Salas agrees to minimize the document to a page /page and half. Accessibility of the document is needed for languages and the visual impaired.
  - Commission Vice Chair Mindy Begenat agreed to pair it down but likes having all the content available. They asked if we want to put a percentage in the books or have it be depending on the situation and do we want those in place.
  - Commission Chair Sanjita Pradhan agreed that all giving would align with the commission’s plan, but questioned if the Advancement section of the sponsorship criteria aligns with the commissions strategic plan.
    - Commission Vice Chair Mindy Begenat agrees with removing the portion about advancement
    - Commissioner Heather Schott felt the GARE presentation fell under the advancement piece but could be lumped under the education section
    - Commissioner Dr. Salas feels the Advancement piece is a strong component and not to remove. There may be some good initiatives that fall under this Advancement category and he doesn’t want to leave anyone out that could help make an impact
    - Commission Chair Sanjita Pradhan suggests shuffling things around and make it more adaptable to the strategic plan. We need to build flexibility in

the document. Clubs may be included and supported but not directly stated in document possibly.

- Commissioner Heather Schott will send it to Commission Vice Chair Mindy Begenat and the document can be updated and sent to committee for review by June 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Recommendations for new Commissioner
  - Discussion took place on recommendations for the committee. Councilwoman Renee Hardman said to make sure to get the candidates submit their applications.

## **8. New business**

- Future 2020 events
- Commissioner Dr. Salas stated to include Commissioner Lonnie Dafney in planning the MLK event. Commissioner Milton Cole and Councilwoman Renee Hardman would like to be part of the MLK planning.
  - Commission Chair Sanjita Pradhan reached out in regard to the Taste of the Junction event but no response yet
  - Valley Junction Foundation's Cinco de Mayo event has moved to September.
  - Commission Chair Sanjita Pradhan sees these two events as collaborative and cobranded, not just sponsorships.
  - Commission Vice Chair Mindy Begenat related concerns regarding the health and safety of the community and where it will be at when those events are scheduled to occur
  - Commissioner Dr. Salas and Councilwoman Renee Hardman agreed it's about safety and not having the commission's name attached to an event. We need to be strong proponents of social distancing and the health of our community and we need to be careful of the message we are sending.
  - Commissioner Heather Schott agreed as well with taking precautions and suggested if the commission chose to sponsor an event to work with the organization to use the funds in case of cancellation to better help community members in the most need
- Councilwoman also recommended the commission register and attend "Life Interrupted: DEI" Friday from 12-1, May 29<sup>th</sup>
- Commission Vice Chair Mindy Begenat shared with the commission that we will be in an interesting position where we can make those structural changes as they will be happening all around due to this current environment. This is the best time to get involved as these things are changing and we are in a unique position to get involved.

## **9. Next meeting date: June 11, 2020.**

**Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 6:13pm.

Commissioner Heather Schott moved to adjourn; Commissioner Dr. Rich Salas seconded

**Minutes by:** Laura Reveles