



## WEST DES MOINES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES

**Thursday, January 12, 2023**  
**City Hall Council Chambers/ZOOM**

**Commissioners Present:** Rudy Trejo, Milton Cole, Tiffany Berkenes, Lonnette Dafney (ZOOM), Robert Morgan, Jill Crosser  
**Commissioners Absent:** Shaimaa Aly  
**Staff Representative:** Hannah Guck, Audrey Kennis, Aaron Gumm Jr (ZOOM)  
**Council Liaison:** Councilwoman Renee Hardman  
**Absent:**  
**Guests:** Amy, MJ

- **Call to order:** Meeting called to order at 5:18 p.m.
- **Roll call**
- **Opportunity for public to address the Commission**
  - Amy told the Commission that she does not believe West Des Moines is reaching the expectations set by the United Nations Human Rights Article 25. Amy said her invisible disability causes others to pick on her, making it uncomfortable for her to be in public.
- **Approval of March & April 2022 meeting minutes**
- **Presenter: Althea Holcomb, Director of Human Services**
  - Althea provided the commissioners insight to the resources provided by WDM Human Services. The department offers about 16 programs that provide food, clothing, financial support, and more. The department supported approximately 1,500 households at or below the federal poverty line in 2022. The department wishes to increase its Spanish and Arabic speaking staff to better serve immigrant populations.
- **Staff Report**
  - MLK Day of Service is prepared to begin
  - Black Armed Forces event is scheduled for February 16
  - All commissioners should be subscribed to DiverCity Newsletter
  - DEI training for all city staff launched on January 2
- **Council Report**
  - Read MLK Day proclamation at City Council
  - Councilwoman Hardman was the keynote speaker for a DSM MLK event and also was apart of the WDM MLK Day event.
- **Report from Commissioners on recent activities**
  - Rob met recently with affinity groups to support families of LGBTQ+ and POC students
  - Rudy attended the County of Polk Supervisor meeting with Tiffany. Rudy also helped plan the MLK Day events
  - Tiffany attended the County of Polk Supervisor meeting. Tiffany also shared that Iowa diocese have banned the use of puberty-blocking drugs and preferred pronouns along with restricting bathroom usage only to sex at birth. Tiffany expressed a desire to speak out against these policies

- Milton watched a documentary about Buffy Sainte-Marie. Milton also shared that legislation will be passed in California to prevent prison murders. Milton also recently met with Ryan Crane, Director of Philanthropy at Des Moines Playhouse.
- Jill shared educational DEI pieces as a member of a financial board. Jill helped plan the MLK Day events. Jill also reached out to Stan Thompson and learned he was no longer the Executive Director of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission.
- Lonnie had no report.
- **Budget**
  - Audrey shared the Budget Performance Report to the commissioners
- **Old Business**
- **New Business**
  - Commission Attendance Policy
 

Commissioners passed a motion regarding Attendance Policy which will go into effect starting February 2023. To ensure it gets into the minutes, the motion that was passed reads: A motion to adopt an attendance policy in which a Commissioner shall not exceed two (2) absences per calendar year, with advance notice to the Chair. In the event a Commissioner exceeds two absences, a conversation shall be initiated between the Commissioner and Chair to determine next steps."
  - Motioned to adopt the provision by Milton, seconded by Rudy. Vote: 5 yes, Trejo, Col, Berkenes, Morgan, Crosser; 1 no, Dafney. motion carried.
  - 2023 Event Planning, Initiative Planning, Project Planning & Strategic Plan & Charter
    - Commissioners discussed brainstorming programs, events, initiatives that could be undertaken-- keeping within the scope of the HRC Mission and what the City Council has prescribed within the City Charter.

**Next meeting date:** February 9, 2023

**Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 6:31pm. Commissioner Rudy moved to adjourn; All were in favor.

**Minutes by:** Aaron Gumm Jr, Staff Representative