

Decorah Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes
05/02/17

Members Present: Elizabeth Kane, Kathryn Thompson, Amalia Vagts, Joseph Kremer, Carol Hemesath, Chad Bird

Absent: Pedro dos Santos, Lorraine Borowski

Guests: Melissa Koch

Meeting called to order at 5:37 by Amalia

- 1) Motion to approve minutes from April 4th 2017 meeting by Kathryn, seconded by Elizabeth
- 2) An individual was recently the victim of homosexual slurs in front of his home. Police have been notified and provided assistance. The victim stressed the importance of visible community support. Others around the community have displayed rainbow flags and local businesses have also demonstrated their support. DHRC thinking about writing a letter to the Decorah police to thank them for their exceptional treatment of this incident. Melissa will begin drafting up the letter and get some feedback and assistance from other committee members.
- 3) Chad Bird received email on 5/2/17 from a member of the Eastern Iowa Atheists. This group is looking to amend the city's ordinance to expand equal opportunity protection rights definitions to include Atheists. Madison, WI passed a similar ordinance about 2 years ago. For Decorah, this would fall under the human rights ordinance. Passing local ordinance as opposed to state level ordinance poses different challenges and provides different benefits. Chad will respond to the email informing him that we've discussed his request, inform him that DHRC won't be meeting for the summer, and ask for him to expand on the information he included in his initial email to clarify our understanding of his request.
- 4) Update from Melissa Koch and her discussion with Bill Nixon. Diversity training was a welcomed idea and Bill addressed some of the issues that he's faced in acquiring this training in the past. Melissa has agreed to assist and has been utilizing her contacts to begin this process focusing first on curriculum and funding sources. Several cities have a training that they've implemented that we can contact to draw upon. One option costs \$5,000. Melissa's hoping to find an option that's geographically closer so that the curriculum will best align with Decorah's rural location. Partnering up with different counties may be a good option to offset costs. Kathryn will assist with and can also start to focus on the educational dimensions of this issue.
- 5) DHRC Facebook page is now created thanks to Amalia. Open to DHRC members as a venue for info sharing beyond email.
- 6) Luther College group *Just Action* and student group *Students Standing for Social Justice* are putting on a showing of the documentary *13th* Thursday May 4th at 7:30 pm in Valders 206. The film is about mass incarceration and race. Just Action is also drafting a short letter of support to the students of St. Olaf which is currently dealing with several racially discriminatory offenses.

7) Planning over summer for fall events---Tentatively interested in a Wednesday in October. Will provide Lorraine several dates and see when works best for her. Still planning for the implicit bias awareness event.

8) Next meeting to be held Sept 12, 2017 5:30pm.

Motion to adjourn at 6:36pm by Amalia, seconded by Joseph.