

Decorah Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

September 3, 2019

Members Present: Melissa Koch, Lisa Scott, Tiffany Macklin, Andrew Ellingston

Guests Present: Laura Wright

Community Members Present: Nori Hadley and Mark ??

Special note: The official notes were lost due to a technical problem. Fortunately, Laura Wright also took notes that the DHRC could use as a base.

- The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m.
- Motion to approve June minutes, by Melissa, seconded by Lisa
- Motion to approve September Agenda by Andrew seconded by Tiffany

1) Community Comment

a. Indigenous Peoples Day

- i. DHRC will ask for Mayor Borowski to proclaim October 14th, which is the second Monday in October, Indigenous People's Day. There are precedents in Iowa for doing this. Iowa City Council endorsed the event. Davenport also did something similar, but they did not replace Columbus Day. Nori Hadley visited with Lorraine about the matter and told Lorraine that she was coming to the DHRC to discuss the declaration.
- ii. DHRC approved (vote not captured in the notes) and encouraged Nori to send details to Mayor so she could designate the second Monday in October Indigenous People's Day.

b. Racial Slur at Decorah Business

- i. A member of the community came forward to share a story that happened to them. This member noted that while in a Decorah restaurant, the owner said, "I hate Rochester because they have too many towel heads there." The Decorah resident told the owner that his students are not comfortable downtown and wanted to document the incident.
- ii. As this conversation closed, it was noted that Chamber is going through branding. Questions were raised about the destination brand: How are they shaping this for the businesses? Inclusive languages? Are the images of people representative & inclusive? Will this brand attract the same people already coming to Decorah & not welcome others? What's the messaging to three new black faculty members who were hired?

2) Old Business

- a. Debrief on Report to City Council
- b. Achieving Quorum in 2019-2020. Strategy going forward: everyone understands the meetings are a priority; reserves the first Tuesday of the month @5:30 pm for the meetings; let's the DHRC know if they will need to miss a meeting. Tiffany will be away for the October 1 meeting.

3) New Business

a. Events in the Community:

i. Already planned:

1. First, it was noted that the opening of the Race Exhibit will occur next Tuesday at 5 PM.

ii. Events were ranked from 1 (little work) to 5 (a lot of work)

1. **Ethnic Arts Festival**: Ranking: 2 Luther takes the lead. So, this requires less work for the commission. The event increases recognition of local artisans whom students should know. It would be ideal if the art was accessible to students on a budget. The event will encourage students to learn how to tell their story. There will also be a table of books that would increase knowledge of the indigenous history in Decorah. Last year, students held a huge line dance. To facilitate this dancing, they will have a DJ this year.
2. **Day of the Dead**: Ranking: ? unclear if DHRC can connect with Luther or other events happening in town. Latinx students will do a celebration for the Day of the Dead. If the students take the lead, it will require less work by the commission. A Taco Truck was present and a young, Latina woman on Star Search came down and performed. Last year's event was highly successful at Luther. The lead was a particular student who made the event successful. Since that leadership & imagination has graduated, it is unclear how this year's event will come together.
3. **Indigenous Peoples Day**: Ranking: 1. October 14. Ideally, it will be declared by the mayor and not require more work since most effort this year will be focused on implicit bias training for businesses.
4. **Implicit Bias for Businesses**: Ranking: 5. This event will take much planning & effort by DHRC.
5. **Martin Luther King Day**: Ranking: 3 Luther takes the lead on this event. There is a lecture but often the community doesn't come. DHRC to check into (1) how to highlight what's happening at Luther and (2) have coordinating town event(s)
6. **Women's International Day**: Ranking: 3 Luther will be holding events on this. February will be dedicated to Toni Morrison on campus and the celebrations around her will lead into celebrating women's history month. DHRC to check into (1) how to highlight what's happening at Luther and (2) have coordinating town event(s)

Meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.