

Minutes
Decorah Human Rights Commission Meeting
City Hall, 400 Claiborne Drive

Tuesday, February 4, 2020

1) Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 pm. A quorum of commissioners was present, including Andrew Ellingsen, Melissa Koch, Lisa Scott, and Laura Wright. Clara Muggli, Facilitator of the newly formed Anti-Racism Group, and Sharlene Bohr, Director of the Northeast Iowa Peace and Justice Center were also present.

2) Approval of Meeting Notes from November & January meetings

Lisa Scott brought and Laura Wright seconded a motion to approve the November minutes. Andrew Ellingsen moved and Melissa seconded the motion to approve the minutes for January.

3) Approval of February Agenda

Andrew Ellingsen reminded the Commission that Decorah's City Council will consider the final version of the Flag Policy on Monday, February 17, 2020 at 5:30 pm. The policy will fly the previous flags alongside the PRIDE flat at the city's will. An organizing meeting will be held on Thursday night, February 13, 2020, at 5:30 PM at Impact to encourage residents of the city to contact their council members.

Commissioner Koch also reminded the Commission that a committee meeting for the city will occur on Air BNBs on Tuesday, February 10th, at 7:00 pm. They will hear from Air BNB owners that night. This impacts questions around affordable housing in town.

4) Community Comment

Anti-Racism Group. Clara Muggli, facilitator of the newly formed Anti-Racism group, described the first meeting where they discussed their vision. There were 45+ people present at their initial meeting. A number of individuals from the schools were also present as well as members of Decorah Covenant Community Church. At their first meeting, the group wrote down their different visions of how our community can be better and more inclusive. The group is meeting again to discuss who will be the core of the group and how they will proceed. Clara noted that this group can support this commission and support other groups

in the community who do this work. They will meet again next Tuesday, February 11, 2020, at 6:30 pm at the Northeast Iowa Peace and Justice Center.

5) **Old Business**

Updates on ICRC workshops for businesses and community. Elizabeth Johnson, the Executive Director of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, will come and lead a workshop on April 7th at the meeting time of the Commission. She will present the laws around bias for the community. The Commission will invite community members who are responsible for areas related to the training. Then, Wednesday morning, April 8th, she will focus on service, accommodations, and employment—all areas that affect our local businesses.

Update on Logo. Commissioner Koch reminded us that at the last meeting we discussed de-coupling the “All Are Welcome” sticker from a training. She looked into doing a sticker around “All are Welcome” with the color scheme of the chamber’s destination brand. The city will let us use the logo and they have a graphics design artist, Cerissa Snethen, who would work with us. Ellingsen noted that if the design resembles too closely the chamber’s logo, few will even notice what it says. Ellingsen requested that it be distinct in some way to communicate clearly to customers of the business. Koch suggested that we look at other logos used to convey the concept of “All Are Welcome.” There was informal consensus that the colors for Decorah’s destination brand would still be a good place to begin; it was noted that often these stickers contain a rainbow for queer inclusion but fail to communicate inclusion based upon race or other factors. Koch suggested that we continue to work with the graphics design artist with the Chamber, Snethen, for new ideas.

Update on Robin DiAngelo workshop. Koch requested an update from members of the Luther community on the possibility of the Robin DiAngelo workshop coming to Decorah. Lisa Scott was cautious about bringing DiAngelo because the community may not have the tools and background to have a conversation about white fragility. If one were to pursue this option, Scott wished that the lecture by DiAngelo would be part of a broader program where, for instance, counseling services was present to continue the conversation. Scott described the town as having pockets of dialogue, but we are not talking across our differences. Scott raised the questions: How do we help people not pack their backs when they encounter this new information? How do we help people enter into dialogue with those who think differently? What do we do with folks who may not be there yet, but they are in the room? What happens after the lecture? Scott stated that some may think this was a waste of time and money after the lecture has been given because it is not a comfortable dialogue.

Update on our revision strategy for Decorah’s city codes. Wright discussed a conference call that she and Koch had with Joshua Barr, Director of Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission. Barr encouraged us as a commission to build a consensus within the

community about our values and then let the code reflect those values. Wright described how an outside facilitator would be ideal for the conversation. Koch suggested Joshua Barr or Kelly Larson. Ideas were discussed regarding what that community meeting might look like. It might take the form of a reception with appetizers for business leaders and other stakeholders in the community. From that gathering, a committee would form.

6) New Business

Plans for Women's Month / International Women's Day

- Connect groups of women in town who don't frequently socialize. Have a watch party at the Cellar on March 8, International Women's Day. Lisa will contact the Cellar. Koch will create Google doc to share ideas of what to watch and any other plans.
- Koch to connect with children's librarian about having a story hour about 100 year anniversary of the 19th Amendment, women's right to vote

Voting rights in Iowa / ACLU workshops on voting rights

The ACLU will provide training for community members who may be disenfranchised voters. Koch suggested that there may be local places that serve these community members (e.g. food pantry) that could host ACLU voter trainings. Koch will share at the next Anti-Racism Group meeting to connect with these local places.

Recruiting DHRC members

- The police department plans to have an officer apply to join the DHRC.
- We need one more additional member, preferably someone who has lived in Decorah for many years.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 PM.