

Minutes

Decorah Human Rights Commission Meeting

City Hall, 400 Claiborne Drive

March 3, 2020, 5:30 - 6:30 pm

1) Call to Order

We called the meeting to order at 5:34 pm. Commissioners present were Andrew Ellingsen, Melissa Koch, Tiffany Macklin, and Laura Wright. Clara Muggli-Toyloy and Sharlene Bohr were also present.

2) Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chair Koch brought a motion and Ellingsen seconded to approve the minutes from February's meeting.

3) Community Comment

No one was present to offer community comment.

4) Old Business

ICRC Workshops in April

Chair Koch offered an update on ICRC workshops for businesses and the community. It is scheduled for April 7 and 8. Cerissa Snethen with the Decorah Chamber of Commerce is working on promotional materials to send out. Koch then presented a PowerPoint about the workshop. Impact would charge us \$100 for their facility's use. There will be a lecture and discussion during a two-hour session. Chair Koch would like to request donations from a few businesses.

Their presentation will include a general session for the DHRC and anyone in the community who wishes to attend. Their presentation will take the place of the DHRC's April meeting. The city manager, Chad Bird, will house the funds for the event. The group then brainstormed about additional organizations to solicit funds. Commissioner Wright will request funds from the faith communities. Donors' names will be placed on a poster. Chair Koch will send out the pitch in a PowerPoint form so that the budget can be shared with potential donors. The DHRC needs to raise approximately \$2,100 to \$2,700.

Kelly Larson, Director of Dubuque's Human Rights Commission, recommended one presenter. Larson has experienced the training with the person.

Commissioner Ellingsen also suggested Nicole Robinson as an incredible trainer and sent her contact information to Chair Koch.

Women's Month and International Women's Day

Chair Koch discussed the ERA coalition. The coalition is a national organization that is working to pass the amendment in all 50 states. The coalition is speaking with Senator Joni Ernst about the matter. The coalition views Iowa as attainable. Other adjacent states have not passed the amendment (i.e., Missouri) and adjacent states of Nebraska and South Dakota wish to rescind their support of the ERA. Chair Koch wished to reach out to individuals on ratifying the ERA.

Other events in the community include a read-in at the library to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the passing of the 19th amendment. Chair Koch proposed another event at the Peace and Justice Center for children. The director of the NEIPJC, Sharlene Bohr, noted that she will not be present at the center but will connect with Chair Koch to arrange the event. Chair Koch will organize the event and place it on Decorah Now.

Additionally, Chair Koch was asked to introduce Quakenbush at the Ethnic Arts Festival on March 7 . She will highlight missing and murdered indigenous women in her introduction. Clara Muggli-Toyloy will contact Commissioner Macklin, if Clara needs volunteers for the event.

Recruiting Future DHRC Commissioners

The DHRC discussed potential. There were community members who were interested but they are currently heavily involved in other organizations and they would like to be considered in the future. Brent Parker told Chair Koch that someone from the Decorah Police Department will join the Commission. Mayor Borowski planned to talk with the Police Chief about filling the position. One commissioner identified Nori Hadley as a superb possible commissioner. Chair Koch will reach out to Nori Hadley. Commissioner Macklin also spoke with a Luther student, and Clara Muggli-Toyloy will reach out to a few current or past students.

5) New Business

"All Are Welcome" Stickers

Commissioner Ellingsen will assist with the stickers after PRIDE has concluded. The DHRC will need to get bids. Ellingsen offered to mock up a logo as a summer project that could be done during the time when the DHRC is not meeting. Ellingsen noted as a point of comparison that PRIDE ordered 1,000-1,500 stickers

for a surprisingly small cost. Ellingsen requested that he be reminded about the project after PRIDE has concluded.

Visioning Committee

A visioning committee needs to be formed to discuss how we will ensure key community members are supportive of living out the values of the DHRC. This will aid in future policy creation. The DHRC has found that the commission needs to step back and ask, “What is Decorah about? What is important to us? What do we need to ensure we live out those values, even if the state of Iowa does not protect those values?” The DHRC needs to bring stakeholders together.

The DHRC discussed how to bring those stakeholders together. A casual get-together was discussed. However, the Commission does not have the budget to do so. The City Manager, Chad Bird, described a kind of event that he’s seen work. At this event, there must be a purpose for gathering. Only minimal cookies or pizza was served. The commission discussed an event like this where Joshua Barr, the Director of Des Moines’ Civil and Human Rights Division, is present and guides a conversation. It would be ideal to have city council and city leaders present with a few cups of coffee from Impact.

The DHRC then brainstormed who should be present at such a meeting. We would ideally invite key individuals from Luther, the Kinderhaus board, Decorah Public Schools, church leaders, leaders of economic development, the Montessori school, the Decorah Public Library, Decorah Food Pantry, county government, Parks and Recreation, directors of Eastern Star, Aase Hagen, and Wellington, NEIACAC, Winneshiek Medical Center, Gundersen, Spectrum, NEIA Behavioral Health, leaders in tourism, the Vesterheim, Pulpit Rock, Toppling Goliath, the Hatchery, the Rotary, and others.

The DHRC will look into whether or not the Chamber meets at a predetermined time with business leaders to see if we could address these matters as part of one of their meetings.

Implicit Bias Training

An implicit bias training will be held in the fall for the business community. Much feedback has come to the Commission from Luther students on the need for training for businesses. Commissioner Ellingsen noted that Nicole Robinson was one of the best trainers he has experienced. The trainer worked with teachers who were required to attend yet the attendees were grateful for the training. Robinson began her work as an elementary music educator and became a VP of a major university. Chair Koch offered to send her a note to invite her. Commissioner Macklin had spoken with another individual who recommended an organization

called People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. The cost was very reasonable. Commissioner Macklin will forward the ideas to the chair. Clara Muggli-Toyloy will also speak with Wintlett Taylor-Browne, director of the Diversity Center at Luther for other suggestions. We've had much feedback from Luther students on the need for businesses to have training.

6) The meeting Adjourned at 6:25 pm.