

Decorah Human Rights Commission Meeting
Meeting by Zoom
Tuesday, October 5, 2021, 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Members in Attendance: Melissa Koch, Maria Leitz, Sandhya Purohit Caton, Ben Krouse-Gagne, Siri Stevens

Call to Order & Welcome - Melissa 5:37

Approval of Meeting Notes from May Meeting

Maria approved the notes, Sandhya second.

Approval of Meeting Notes from Sept. Meeting

Maria approved the notes, Sandhya second.

Approval of October Agenda

Ben approved the notes, Sandhya second.

Community Comment

No community members were present for comments.

Choosing an approach for complaint process

At the end of the September meeting, the DHRC had identified three possible approaches to handling human rights complaints:

- 1) Option 1: Refer all complaints to ICRC.
- 2) Option 2: City lawyer reviews complaints to decide if something City or ICRC should handle
- 3) Option 3: DHRC reviews complaints to decide if something City or ICRC should handle. DHRC contacts the City Manager who then relays to City's lawyer for input as needed.

Melissa met with the new City Manager for his input and to update him on the DHRC work. He preferred Option 3.

The City Manager and City's lawyer (via the City Manager) are available to

- Review complaints
- Provide input to DHRC on a complaint
- Identify local resources for people who filed complaints

DHRC discussed and voted on the three options. DHRC members unanimously selected Option 3 as the guiding approach for revising the DHRC complaint policy. Melissa was typing and the Commission was verbally giving input and assisting verbal on adjusting the Code Of Ordinances.

The DHRC also imagines a supporting role for the DHRC before, during, and after the formal complaint process, which will be documented in the revised policy:

- 1) If a complaint is sent to ICRC, DHRC can provide support to person(s) who filed the complaint
- 2) If a complaint is handled locally, DHRC, City lawyer and City provide support and direct the person(s) who filed the complaint to resources.

The remainder of the meeting was spent editing the DHRC complaint process policy.

Next Steps

- DHRC needs to check the complaint form to make sure that it matches with the revised policy. (include with policy for City Council approval)
- Revise mission statement to also reflect changes to policy (include with policy for City Council approval)
- The DHRC would like more guidance from the City Manager and City's lawyer on how best to keep complaints filed private and include this info in the policy.
- The goal for the fall is to rewrite the DHRC policy and procedures to be approved by the city council. Then create an easy-to-navigate web page with points of contact both locally and at the state.
- Melissa will continue to edit the DHRC policy and plan to have it edited and shared to the DHRC members for input, corrections, or suggestions by Oct 26th. The DHRC aims to have a revised draft by the end of their next meeting on Nov 2. The DHRC will then send the draft to the City Manager to share with the City's lawyer for their feedback.

Recruiting new DHRC members

DHRC has two open positions on the DHRC.

Meeting Adjourned - 7:00