

Owatonna Human Rights Commission - Minutes

The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Tuesday, February 9, 2021 in the Second Floor Conference Room at City Hall. The meeting was accessible via Microsoft TEAMS, Call-in Number 507-242-3225; Conference ID 374 940 357#. Commission Chairman Gunderson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. with Commissioner Emanuelson, City Administrator Busse and Administrative Specialist Clawson present. Attending virtually were Commissioners Effertz, Vanoosbree, Gillespie and Worden.

Commissioner Gunderson welcomed everyone to the meeting and lead the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Minutes of the January 12, 2021 OHRC Meeting were reviewed, Commissioner Emanuelson made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented and Commissioner Cords seconded the motion. With a roll call vote, all members voted aye in approval and the motion carried.

During Old Business, Commissioner Worden asked for comments on the TikTok video he shared prior to the meeting. The video, prepared by an attorney, recommended actions to do when you are pulled over by a police officer. Commissioners discussed if they could use video as an informational/educational tool for our community members. City Administrator Busse cautioned that the commission should not offer legal advice. Commissioner Worden suggested requesting City Attorney Walbran view the video to determine if appropriate for commission use for awareness. Commissioner Gunderson suggested an Attorney Opinion Letter be requested to share and discuss. Commissioner Emanuelson suggested all OHRC members view the video prior to the next meeting in preparation for discussion.

Commissioner Vanoosbree advised “Alliance for Greater Equity” is the name of the new group formed by combining Better Together and the former Cultural Diversity Network. They recently applied for and were awarded grant funds. They will meet this Thursday, February 11 to set the pillars to define their organization’s structure and determine how these grant funds will be spent. OHRC was identified as a Community Partner and will be a resource to ask for assistance. Commissioner Emanuelson commented he would be willing to help; Commissioner Vanoosbree commented they anticipate many volunteers will be needed and she will advise if opportunities arise.

City Administrator Busse suggested the commission consider observing a Day of Service on future Martin Luther King Jr Days by encouraging community members to participate with acts of kindness for others. Commissioner Emanuelson suggested this could be a good way to involve high school students. Commissioner Gunderson asked everyone to consider potential opportunities to discuss during the September OHRC Meeting to begin plans for the 2022 MLK Jr Day next January.

Commissioner Emanuelson commented he hopes the OHRC can plan an event or activity within the next 2-3 months promoting education and public awareness of items pertinent to the OHRC’s Mission Statement. City Administrator Busse commented February is Black History Month, the Library prepared a video recognizing black authors which is currently being shown on the City’s public access channels. Commissioner Vanoosbree said she frequently receives information on training opportunities or speaker options; she just participated in a virtual meeting offered through the University of Minnesota with discussion of race and culture bringing out feelings for environments and not just race sensitivity; she will watch for future training options. City Administrator reminded everyone of the Courageous Community Leadership Program with ISD #761, the first meeting is Friday, February 19th and registration is still open. OHRC Commissioners were asked to notify Jeanette if they wished to participate in this six-session program which meets once every two months. The first two meetings are planned to be held virtually on Friday mornings from 8-9:30 a.m. Commissioner Gunderson asked everyone to consider potential educational opportunities for discussion during the March OHRC Meeting.

Commissioner Emanuelson asked if anyone received comments on the OHRC Winter Newsletter. City

Administrator Busse commented the newsletter was sent via e-mail to community members who have previously expressed an interest in the Human Rights Commission and several responded with thanks for sending this to them. Commissioner Gunderson commented he hopes future publications can be included in the monthly OPU Newsletter.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. Commissioner Gunderson asked if commissioners would be comfortable with this as an in-person meeting. Commissioner Worden commented he is still opposed to in-person meeting, current variants of the virus are more contagious than the original virus. Commissioner Emanuelson commented he would like in-person meetings but as a medical professional he has received a vaccination which other OHRC Commissioners have not. Commissioner Effertz commented it is nice to have the option to participate in-person or virtually and does not want to offer only in-person meetings during the pandemic. Commissioner Gunderson commented he prefers in-person meetings but understands current concerns and hopefully will be able to return to just in-person meetings within a few months.

At 6:10 p.m., Commissioner Emanuelson made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Worden seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.