

Owatonna Human Rights Commission – Minutes March 12, 2019

The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Tuesday, March 12, 2019 in Council Chambers. Commission Chairman Cords called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Commissioner Gillespie took roll call with Commissioners Ethan Cords, Fred Ventura, Jamie Vanoosbree, John Worden and Ryan Gillespie present; Commissioners Jim Gunderson and David Emanuelson were unable to attend. Also, present were City Administrator Kris Busse, Administrative Specialist Jeanette Clawson and approximately 15 members of the public.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Commissioner Cords welcomed everyone to the meeting. Minutes of the February 12, 2019 and February 20, 2019 Special Meeting were reviewed. Commissioner Worden requested to table action on the Minutes to the next meeting. Commissioner Ventura seconded the motion; all members voted aye in approval.

During Commissioner Comments: Commissioner Ventura said he recently meet with several parents of OHS students and is willing to meet with anyone who has concerns or suggestion for ways to move forward in creating a save and inclusive environment in Owatonna. Commissioner Vanoosbree said she attended the World Café at OHS on February 28th which was well attended by students and educators; she encouraged everyone to attend a future World Café event.

Commissioner Worden reported he has been tracking funding opportunities for the mural project. Commissioner Cords suggested moving the project to another location or dropping the project as funding has not been secured. Commissioner Ventura suggested a different site may entice local funding opportunities. Commissioner Worden explained funding requests include location specifications and changing the location would be considered a new request. Many funding requests take several years for approval and he believes changing the location would show as a new project and take longer for funding possibilities. Commissioner Gillespie made a motion to extend the current project thru 2020, Commissioner Worden seconded the motion. Commissioner Ventura advised he would abstain from voting; four commissioners voted 3-1 approving the motion.

Commissioner Ventura reported he and City Administrator Busse met with representatives of Fairway Outdoor regarding the LED Billboard. There has been a change in their company management and the OHRC account will become a Public Service Account. No new OHRC ads will be posted, City Administrator Busse encouraged use of Facebook or other social media opportunities to display messages.

Commissioner Ventura reported he contacted Stephanie Kibler, Event Organizer at the Steele County History Center about opportunity to co-chair an event. The commissioners and City Administrator Busse all thought this would be a good option to pursue for collaborative efforts.

City Administrator presented the Annual Report for commissioner's review. This will be on the next meeting agenda for discussion prior to presentation to Council.

Library Director Mark Blando presented a request for OHRC to promote the 2020 Census. The City is establishing a Complete Count Committee of volunteers to raise the awareness of the census. Many State and Federal Funds are calculated on population of the City; it is very important to get an accurate count. The Complete County Committee is forming this month with hopes to start promotions by April 1st just one year away from the 2020 Census.

Library Director Mark Blando extended an invitation to an event at the Library on Wednesday, March 20th in the Gainey Room at 7:00 p.m. “When Home Won’t Let You Stay” is a penetrating exploration of America’s evolving attitudes toward refugees. Documentary artist James A. Bowey has been traveling the United States meeting refugees, listening to their stories, and photographing their portraits. The photographs are taken on location in a setting of the portrait subject’s everyday life. Along with the portrait, Bowey interviews each person and their first-person story accompanies their photograph. The individuals in this exhibition share poignant stories of violence and loss, as well as perseverance and hope; and their images and experiences produce a compelling human portrait of refugees in America.

Commissioner Cords reported the Racial Equity Committee has not held a meeting. Commissioner Ventura questioned the purpose of creating another committee for Racial Equity Advisory. During the March OHRC Meeting, the commission approved forming a sub-committee for this. Commissioner Cords explained he as the Chairman plans to over-see the sub-committee, the sub-committee will report to the commission Commissioner Gillespie recommended the sub-committee meet quarterly to discuss specific racial and diversity concerns. During the Special OHRC Meeting on February 20th, the commissioners approved forming a sub-committee to begin the process of establishing a group with intention of creating a commission offering opportunity for discussion of racial and diverse issues. Commissioners Vanoosbree, Emanuelson and Cords volunteered to participate on this sub-committee and plan to meet prior to the April OHRC Meeting and will give update then.

Commissioner Cords reported plans for to co-host a Court Listening Session with the District Court have not been finalized. Trinity Lutheran Church has offered space for the meeting at no cost. Judge Duncan has proposed four possible dates for the meeting. Commissioner Cords made a motion to table action to co-host this event; Commissioner Ventura seconded the motion; all members present voted aye in approval.

Commissioner Ventura suggested Sergio Aguilar, Director of Latino Affairs at Mn State University, Mankato be a guest speaker at a future event. Mr. Aguilar recently spoke to the Steele County Public Health Department which was well received. Commissioner Vanoosbree suggested contacting him to speak at a co-hosted event at the Steele County History Center. Commissioner Ventura will contact Mr. Aguilar and report during the April OHRC Meeting.

Commissioner Ventura and City Administrator Busse reported they attended a webinar presentation on Diversity & Inclusion at the Spherion Office on Vine Street on February 28th. Floss Aggrey lead discussion with insight into what it means and how you can harness the power of diversity in an organization. The first half of the presentation explained what Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) was and how to implement a D&I Strategy. They felt the second part of the presentation was more employer focused.

Commissioner Cords announced School Superintendent Elstad invited him to attend the School District Meeting on Tuesday, March 19th. During the meeting there will be discussion on the recent

event at the high school and follow-up activities. He will report to the commission during the April OHRC Meeting.

The Commissioners discussed amending the current By-Laws to include guidelines for appropriate social media usage. City Administrator referred the commissioners to the Social Media Policy adopted by Council on November 20, 2019 as direction to deliver and communicate with citizen to encourage engagement. The commissioners agreed there was no present need to amend the commissions By-Laws for this. Commissioner Worden made a motion for the commission to prepare a Facebook Page account, Commissioner Vanoosbree seconded the motion, all members present voted aye in approval.

With no additional business, Commissioner Ventura made a motion to adjourn at 6:50 p.m.; Commissioner Gillespie seconded the motion and the meeting ended.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 9th at 5:00.