

Owatonna Human Rights Commission – Minutes

The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Tuesday, August 13, 2019 in the Second Floor Conference of the City Administration Building. Commission Chairman Cords called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. Secretary Gillespie took roll call: Commissioners Ethan Cords, Fred Ventura, Ryan Gillespie, David Emanuelson, Jamie Vanoosbree and John Worden were present. Also present were City Administrator Kris Busse and Administrative Specialist Jeanette Clawson. Commissioner Jim Gunderson was not present.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Commissioner Cords welcomed everyone to the meeting. Minutes of the July 9th OHRC Meeting were reviewed, Commissioner Ventura made motion to approve the minutes as prepared. Commissioner Emanuelson seconded the motion; all members present voted aye for approval.

Commissioner Worden made motion to add two agenda items: Blandin Leadership Training and the OHRC Mural Project. Council Member Vanoosbree seconded the motion; all members present voted aye in approval.

During Commissioner Comments, Commissioner Vanoosbree suggested OHRC submit a SMIF Grant Application for funds towards a Welcome Center; the application deadline is early October. Commissioner Vanoosbree questioned which commissioners would be able to attend the Racial Bias Training planned at ISD #761. This is a six-session training opportunity to be held during the 2019-2020 school year, the first session is Friday, September 13th. City Administrator Busse recommended two OHRC attend this training, there is a \$100/person participation fee. Commissioners were asked to review their calendars and advise Busse within two weeks if they will be available to attend this training, sessions are planned on Friday mornings at the school's Administration Building.

Commissioner Ventura read a statement to the OHRC: "As I reflect on my last five years and 8 months plus, I will say it has been fun and a good learning experience for me. I am at the point that there is nothing more I can offer to our citizens of Owatonna or the Commission any longer. Truth be told, I am tired, and it has been very evident to me that I cannot serve you all in the capacity I wish. Hence, tonight will be my last official meeting as your Human Rights Commissioner. Going forward, I will still fight for equity and justice in our community. So, I thank you all for your support over the years and of course most recently. I have sent my letter of resignation to Mayor Tom Kuntz to be effective on August 31st. In my letter I have expressed to Kris and Jeanette my thoughts and best wishes. So, I thank you all."

Everyone thanked Commissioner Ventura for his service. Mayor Kuntz will present his Letter of Resignation to Council during their meeting on August 20, 2019.

Commissioner Vanoosbree drafted an invitation to Mayor and Council to attend two We are Better Together events planned on September 10th and October 24th. Commissioners reviewed and approved the proposed memo for staff to send later this week. City Administrator Busse suggested the commissioners attend the City Council Meeting next week to personally extend this invitation. Commissioner Vanoosbree anticipates members of We are Better Together may also attend the Council Meeting to provide summary of their activities. Vanoosbree explained, We are Better Together is asking partner organizations to financially invest in their process. Commissioner Emanuelson made a motion to donate \$100, Commissioner Ventura seconded the motion; this

payment will be directed to the United Way for this group. The first We are Better Together event held in June was well attended, there were small group discussions on some very open-ended questions which were then presented to everyone. They hope their future meetings will have a more diverse population present. Youth groups, Hispanic residents; Somali residents and other diverse groups are being contacted by school administration and the ministerial association. Commissioner Emanuelson offered to contact Sacred Heart to reach out to those attending their Spanish services.

During New Business, commissioners discussed requesting an increase in funds received from the City. City Administrator Busse explained budget requests should be submitted in writing with anticipated expenditures by early June each year. The City's Preliminary 2020 Budget and Levies will be presented during the Council Study Session next week, \$2,700 is included in the 2020 Preliminary Budget for the OHRC. Busse suggested the commissioners meet in a work session to strategic plan and define the group's long-term and short-term goals and budget consideration.

Commissioner Ventura advised the Blandin Foundation will offer Owatonna a Leadership Training session next October (2020) in Grand Rapids, MN. He encouraged OHRC Commissioners to attend this training and recommended applying early for consideration. Ventura has sent commission members an e-mail with training information for their response.

Commissioner Worden is preparing applications for grant applications for the OHRC mural project. Last year, he submitted six applications to various groups and was unsuccessful in obtaining funds. He explained he believes this the norm for grant requests and plans to submit a similar amount this year. City Administrator Busse recommended he contact groups applied to last year for suggestions to enhance this year's applications. Commission members suggested applying to the Owatonna Foundation, SMIF, the McKnight Foundation and continue searching for other funding opportunities. Commissioner Worden is currently preparing applications to the Owatonna Foundation (due in September) and to SMIF for application due early October. The commissioners discussed various SMIF grant opportunities available: Commissioner Worden plans to apply for cultural expansion for the mural project; Commissioner Vanoosbree will apply for an economic development grant for a Welcome Center. Several questions were asked regarding establishment and sustainability of a Welcome Center which will be discussed during the work session planned during the September OHRC Meeting.

With no additional business, Commissioner Ventura made a motion to adjourn at 6:24 p.m.; Commissioner Emanuelson seconded the motion. The next OHRC Meeting will be Tuesday, September 10th at 5:00 p.m.