

## Owatonna Human Rights Commission – Minutes February 12, 2019

The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Tuesday, February 12, 2019 in Council Chambers. Commission Chairman Cords called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. Commissioner Gillespie took roll call with all seven Commissioners present: Ethan Cords; Jim Gunderson; David Emanuelson; Fred Ventura; Jamie Vanoosbree, John Worden and Ryan Gillespie. Also, present were Police Chief Hiller; Police Captain Mundale, Owatonna School District Superintendent Jeff Elstad, Owatonna High School Principal Mark Randall; Mayor Tom Kuntz; City Administrator Kris Busse; Administrative Assistant Jeanette Clawson and approximately 75 members of the public.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Commissioner Cords welcomed everyone to the meeting. Commissioner Ventura made a motion to approve Minutes of the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, Commissioner Gunderson seconded the motion; all members voted aye for approval.

Commissioner Cords asked Chief Hiller to comment on the incident that happened at the Owatonna High School on Monday, February 11, 2019. Chief Hiller explained he could only give generalities as there is an ongoing criminal investigation in process. The police received call about a disturbance at the high school in the commons/gymnasium area. Officers responding to the call were representative of the Owatonna Police Department, Steele County Sheriff Department and the Minnesota State Patrol. Things were beginning to get out-of-hand, so a decision was made to lockdown the building. Students in the gym became very disruptive and were demonstrating prejudice against law enforcement. Two female students were charged with assault for their actions during the lockdown. School surveillance videos will be viewed and anticipate additional charges may be filed against 30 to 40 students for their actions during the lockdown.

Students and parents attending were encouraged to voice their concerns. Racial tensions at the high school increased after derogative racial comments posted on social media over the weekend. Comments were heard from these individuals as they came forward, signed in and made comments: Admeur Uk, Guleiman Mursd, Mary Onyogo, Obang Okom, Nour Ali, Abdeeshai Osman, Aderi Okuu, Eden Ojuui, Moses Ochalla, Oronojuly Ochalla, Faiza Muktan, Olimma Goto, Ojulu Ochalla, Janessa Moore, Amun Gubrl, Fanima Jama, Lara Ali, Ikan Daria, Laura Charles, Raj Charles, Evan Lewil, Khaleb Chalres, Rebecca Moore, Beth Gilthvedt, Myagach Thuoh, and Rebecca Sigin. Most requested assistance to relieve the racial tension and acquire a better understanding of the school's policies for tolerance and actions. Several students and parents were upset law enforcement was involved in the incident at the school and wished school administration would have handled this internally. Several encouraged students to use this incident to fuel change and instill reforms.

School Superintendent Elstad, Principal Randall, Chief Hiller and Captain Mundale responded to questions. Mayor Kuntz encouraged opening lines of communication so everyone will work together to create a safe community. Owatonna is all of our community and safety of all students and the community is the top priority.

At 10:05 p.m., the last speaker's comment was heard, and Commissioner Cords advised the meeting was adjourned.