

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES

Approved 2-27-18

The Human Rights Commission met on Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at 5:00 p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society.

Members present were: Shelly Huseby, Jill Benson, Shawn Mueske, John Salgado Maldonado, Fernando Alvarado, Maria Larson, Ben Larson, Marlin Breems, Richard Engan and Janell Sommers, Administrative Assistant.

Item No. 1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Shelly Huseby at 5:00 p.m. Chairperson Huseby acknowledged new Commission Member John Salgado Maldonado and members gave brief introductions and shared their interest for being on the Commission. Representative Dave Baker arrived at this time.

Item No. 2 Approve Minutes of Meeting

Chair Huseby presented the minutes of the December 19, 2017 meeting for discussion. Commission Member Breems moved to approve the Human Rights Commission minutes of December 19, 2017 and Commission Member Ben Larson seconded the motion, which carried.

Item No. 3 Public Comment

Steve Mayer, Pastor of Eagle Lake Lutheran Church, offered a comment relating to recent City Council meetings and the importance of the "Welcoming City" resolution and the role the Human Rights Commission has with the City.

Item No. 4 Discussion with Representative Dave Baker Regarding Report from Mn Council of Latino Affairs

Chair Huseby welcomed Representative Dave Baker and thanked him for joining the meeting. She explained that the Commission has gone through the report from the Mn Council of Latino Affairs and there are two issues in Willmar that they would like to discuss as possible opportunities legislatively for Mr. Baker to present. One of them is ID's - (drivers' license) and the second one is affordable workforce housing. Representative Baker stated he has read the report and how in depth it was. He identified the driver's license issue as very important and does support the Safe Roads bill. Workforce housing is a large issue that keeps moving and shifting and he is happy to hear the concerns of the Commission and share in discussion with them.

The Commission started discussion of the driver's license issue with the undocumented residents noting a better pathway needs to be found. Mr. Baker stated he is excited about the conversation on the Federal level and hopefully we will be seeing some movement in the right direction to start recognizing DACA. He felt we need to continue to support the Safe Roads bill so these individuals are able to drive safely and be able to get insurance. There are ways to accomplish this without people being fearful it will become more than just a driver's license or ID card. He advised the Commission to reach out to the other Human Rights Commissions in the state asking them to talk to their police chiefs and legislators as well. He will continue to talk with his

colleagues to work on this issue. Jeff Howe in Paynesville is also working on this effort and he mentioned inviting Representative Rod Hamilton to a Commission meeting to hear his ideas as he is a true fighter for New Americans. It was mentioned the City of Northfield is currently moving toward a municipal ID; a state-wide basis would be preferred.

Pastor Steve questioned the sentiment of Representative Baker's colleagues. Unfortunately some have the mindset that if you are here illegally you crawled under a fence and you are doing bad things. Unfortunately some individuals are here because of that, but they are a very small minority. The cable news shows get you caught up and there needs to be more conversations to identify this issue and not just let millions of people leave this country thinking it will just fall back in line. In some cases people have been here for 20-30 years and there is nowhere for them to go back to.

Chairperson Huseby brought up the second topic for discussion – the lack of affordable workforce housing. Representative Baker gave his background in representing workforce housing issues and stated money is actually going out to communities and thought Willmar recently received an award for a grant. The problem is trying to bring developers to the table as there is a problem with banking and the equity component that forces an increase in rent so it is a real challenge. He encouraged working with cities and counties on an infrastructure standpoint to set up low-priced land for development which could make a greater difference. He will continue to work on this issue.

Representative Baker touched on the bonding bill and three major projects locally being requested: 1) infrastructure needs for Ridgewater College, 2) Highway 23 from New London to Paynesville 4-lane completion and 3) Willmar Wye Bridge Project. He informed the Commission he is working really hard on opioids proposing pharmacies would place a fee on them when sold in Minnesota also known as a stewardship fee.

Item No. 5 Other and New Business

Chairperson Huseby announced the upcoming Citizenship Ceremony which will be held on April 10th at 11:00 a.m. at the Barn Theatre. The League of Women Voters has secured the event and the Commission has been asked to co-sponsor and coordinate the reception. This is the first one ever to be held in Willmar. There will be up to 25 new Americans that will do the final step of their citizenship that day. More details to follow. Representative Baker was thanked by Commission members for his attendance.

Follow-up discussion consisted of updates on competency training, the Unitarian Church presentation of the history of the Commission and future ideas which were very well received, also the presentation to the Willmar Ministerial Association which was also well received with good discussion.

Announcements were the Vision 2040 Refresh event scheduled for January 30th from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. and the Grow Your Own Community Conversations offered on three dates (February 3rd, 6th or 7th).

There was a brief discussion regarding the City Council and the Welcoming City resolution.

The next meeting date of the Commission will be Tuesday, February 27, 2018 at 5:00 p.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Benson, seconded by Commissioner Maria Larson and passed

to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell Sommers
Administrative Assistant