*CITY OF WILLMAR*

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**
**5:00 PM, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2016**
**MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM**
**KANDIYOHI COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

# AGENDA

1. Meeting Called to Order
2. Approval of Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes from 10-18-16
3. Public Comment
4. Willmar Wye Project Update/Presentation
5. Discussion of Educational Ideas and Topics/Mechanics for Public Forums
6. New Business
7. Next Meeting Date: January 17, 2017
8. Adjourn

Future agenda items:

# HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
# MINUTES

The Human Rights Commission met on Tuesday, October 18, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society.

Members present were: Kristal Dahlager, Richard Engan, Barbara Little, Shelly Huseby, Shawn Mueske, Denis Anderson, Lynn Travaglio, Bashir Abdi and Janell Sommers, Recording Secretary. Jill Benson was excused from the meeting. Also present were Ann Stein, Kandiyohi Health and Human Services Director and Deb Grunwald, Family Services Supervisor.

Item No. 1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kristal Dahlager at 5:00 p.m.

Item No. 2 Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Item No. 3 Approve Minutes of September Meeting

Commission Member Anderson moved to approve the Human Rights Commission minutes of September 20, 2016. Commission Member Engan seconded the motion, which carried..

Item No 4 Kandiyohi County Interpreter Discussions

Ann Stein, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Director and Deb Grunwald, Family Services Supervisor were present for the meeting to address questions of the members relating to interpretive services at Kandiyohi County Family Services subsequent to correspondence sent to the County regarding Somali interpreters. Ms. Stein stated they were very interested in hearing about the issues as they were unaware of any complaints. They are willing to listen and provide any information they can about what they are doing to accommodate the public.

Chair Dahlager expressed the Commission's concerns of how the available interpreter services are being communicated to the Somali community. Commission Member Mueske brought forth the matter of the language barrier and whether or not the individual can read Somali, let alone English, and would need some sort of navigational skills to access the system.

Ms. Grunwald explained the setup of the lobby area in the Family Services area. She stated "Intakes" are usually scheduled and take priority so you may have to wait a short time until the interpreter is available. A Somali interpreter is available three half-days a week in person, but at any time there is the phone interpreting service available immediately. There are also posters in the lobby in both Somali and English stating when the in-person interpreters are available, but service is available at all times. There are also "I Speak" cards that the State has put together to help people identify and get to the correct language.

Commission Member Bashir Abdi expressed the concerns of the Somali community who have gone to the County for assistance having no knowledge of the English language and unable to read or write to complete the application. These individuals would like to have interpretation available every day, all day.

Health and Human Services Director Ann Stein explained that the County has tried to recruit Somali individuals to work in their department and have been unsuccessful. The applicants need to pass a skills test to be an eligibility worker as they are funded by Federal dollars and are required to hire staff on a merit system. When an opening does occur, they are required to select candidates from a list of prequalified applicants on the merit system. To qualify, individuals need to pass an exam to be placed on the merit list and become a potential candidate. Ms. Stein indicated anyone with a high school education should be able to pass

the test. They were unaware of the communication issues and felt they had a good working relationship with the Somali community.

Commission Member Mueske questioned if there are any options of picture signs that can be placed in the reception area for those that cannot read Somali to show the time slots available and how to direct individuals to use the interpreting phone service. He expressed his concern for people not being able to navigate through the system.

Ms. Stein presented the application form that is required to request assistance from the County to the Commission Members. She touched on how complicated the form can be and from an integrity standpoint the applicant cannot be assisted with the entire application process as there are certain things that are confidential, although they are able to designate an authorized representative to assist.

Chair Dahlager brought forth the question of some type of technology-based program that would have prerecorded links connected to the application spoken to them in Somali. Ms. Stein agreed this would be a good option and will bring it to the attention of the Department of Human Services as they develop the application process on the State level. Another suggestion was an oral announcement in Somali in the reception area when there are say 20 people waiting.

Health and Human Services Director Ann Stein appreciated having the concerns of the Somali community expressed to them and the opportunity to come to the Commission meeting to discuss the situation.

Item No. 5 Miscellaneous

The Commission set the next meeting date for November 15, 2016.

A motion was made by Commission Member Engan and seconded by Commission Member Anderson to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janell Sommers
Recording Secretary