

NORMAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES
CITY OF NORMAN

July 27, 2020

The Human Rights Commission of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met via video conference and in the Municipal Complex located at 201 West Gray Street on July 27, 2020, at 5:30 p.m., and notice and agenda of the meeting were duly posted 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Item 1, being: ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Commissioners Daniel Dukes (Chair), Marjaneh Seirafi-Pour (Vice-Chair), Jackie Farley, Chris Nanny, Sage Mauldin, Ellen Kraft, Christina Owen

ABSENT: Samuel Woodfork

STAFF PRESENT: Mayor Breea Clark, Assistant City Attorney Kristina Bell

Kristina Bell called roll and announced a quorum.

Item 2, being: INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMISSIONER SAMUEL WOODFORK

Ms. Bell said Commissioner Samuel Woodfork was absent from today's meeting but that she anticipates his attendance at the next meeting and introductions would be held at that time.

Item 3, being: APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 27, 2020, HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

Commissioner Jackie Farley moved to approve the Minutes of the January 27, 2020, meeting, and the motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Ellen Kraft. Chair Daniel Dukes called for a vote and Ms. Bell called roll: all approved, and none opposed. The Minutes for the January 27, 2020, meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

Item 4, being: PRESENTATION OF CHAIR'S VISION FOR 2020-2021

Chair Dukes said he wants to increase the commission's visibility with the public and increase focus on issues involving human rights. He suggested commissioners could attend events such as parades or public gatherings in order to meet people within the community. Mayor Clark suggested the commission consider hosting listening sessions because when she held these sessions herself, it helped her to connect with people about important issues and to gauge community concerns. The sessions were structured like planned meetings. Commissioners liked this idea and Chair Dukes said he would familiarize himself with this method for possible implementation after group meetings can be held again without COVID-19 concerns.

Chair Dukes would also like to have more of a presence at City Council meetings. He suggested that a commissioner be in attendance at meetings when a proclamation is presented by the HRC, to give a short speech about why the subject matter is relevant, and to explain why the recipient

was chosen to receive it. Also, he suggested the commissioner take a photo with the proclamation recipient. Mayor Clark expressed full support for this idea and Chair Dukes said he would make a plan for implementation of this idea.

Regarding current events involving human rights issues and concerns and in furtherance of his vision, Chair Dukes suggested the commission issue press releases or public statements that address the stance the Human Rights Commission takes on these issues. Vice-Chair Marjaneh Seirafi-Pour agreed but added that the statements should be made in a consistent manner as any inconsistency would reflect poorly upon the commission and its goals. Commissioner Sage Mauldin asked that statements to be issued in a timely manner. Mayor Clark suggested setting criteria for making the statements to measure their impact and to ensure consistency.

Item 5, being: DISCUSSION REGARDING COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHIES FOR CITY WEBSITE

Chair Dukes said as a part of improving public visibility, he feels it is important to update the City's HRC webpage with each Commissioner's biography. Each biography will be of similar length, should include each member's backgrounds, future goals, and include a headshot photo. Although biographies may bring criticism from the public, it's important for all to see why commissioners are there to serve the public.

Chair Dukes asked all members to submit their biography photo to Ms. Bell so she can have them posted online along with their biography.

Item 6, being: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING ROLE AND DUTIES OF THE NORMAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Ms. Bell said the duties of the HRC will remain unchanged when a Diversity and Equity Officer (DEO) is hired and when the Inclusive Community Subcommittee (ICS) is formed. The HRC will continue to concentrate its focus on larger, general issues of human rights whereas the ICS will focus on implementing its recommendations from its study groups and the DEO will focus on training and liaison duties for the City. Mayor Clark said the HRC will continue to serve as the voice of the community.

Item 7, being: UPDATE ON, AND DISCUSSION REGARDING, IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS, HIRING OF DIVERSITY AND EQUITY OFFICER, AND CREATION AND APPOINTMENT PROCESSES FOR FUTURE INCLUSIVITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chair Dukes asked to review why a DEO and ICS would be necessary when it seemed that the HRC was supposed to task the City with human rights issues. Chair Dukes also expressed concern for the cost of hiring a DEO during a time of budget constraints within the City.

Mayor Clark said a budget was set aside for the hiring of a DEO and a task force has been meeting to help decide how additional allocated funds will be used for community services, social services, and outreach. The feedback she is getting from this task force is that more training is needed, not

just for police, but also for non-profits that provide services. The DEO would provide this training or assist in gathering resources for training. They would also be tasked with ensuring diversity in hiring and recruitment processes and serve as liaison between advocacy groups, resource groups, committees, and City staff. The DEO will attend department head meetings with the City Manager, and will be involved in all aspects of the City to ensure public concerns are being raised in a proactive manner. It is also expected that the DEO would take over staffing the HRC instead of or in conjunction with an employee with the Legal Department.

Vice-Chair Seirafi-Pour said when the ICS had the idea of hiring a Diversity & Equity Officer, the HRC would serve as a resource to this position by acting as a liaison for the community whereas the DEO would serve the community as a whole. The HRC is recognized as playing an advisory role for the City Council but the DEO would have a responsibility directly to the City Council and City Manager. As HRC abilities are limited, the DEO would have the ability to directly communicate to entities what their faults are and how they can be corrected. The DEO and the HRC are meant to compliment one another.

Chair Dukes asked if the DEO job description was completed and Ms. Bell said feedback was obtained from many sources and it is now in the final stages of completion. Once the description is finalized, the job will open to applicants and the City Manager will hold interviews with the hopes of having the position filled by this October. The interview panel will consist of various members of the community who specialize in the subject of human rights. Ms. Bell displayed the job description online and asked commissioners to forward comments to her to convey to the City Manager.

Commissioners had in-depth discussion regarding the intent of the ICS recommendations as it related to forming a subcommittee versus a stand-alone advisory committee. There was a general agreement that forming a stand-alone advisory committee would duplicate efforts already afforded by the HRC but that a subcommittee would be more meaningful and complimentary to the HRC and the two groups would work closely together. Discussion was then had whether the subcommittee should be formed before or after the hiring of the DEO. Ms. Bell asked commissioners to consider the time needed to send out a press release and for applicants to apply. Also, she expects a DEO to be hired before a subcommittee can be formed. Commissioners requested the minutes of this meeting reflect that the HRC unanimously agreed to table this decision until September's meeting for further discussion about what the process should be to create a subcommittee of the HRC.

Item 8, being: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING PROCLAMATION RECOMMENDATION PROCESS

Group discussion was held as to the relevance of continuing to issue proclamations. Commissioner Farley said although the HRC wasn't specifically tasked to recommend them, she believes proclamations are an important tool to help recognize relevant issues within the community. Chair Dukes asked if this should be added to the ordinance as a duty of the HRC and Ms. Bell opined that Section 7-102(3) generally included this duty. Ms. Bell said if commissioners wished for the ordinance to be more specific, it can be changed but this would require drafting and submission of new language to City Council for approval at a regular council meeting.

Chair Dukes also asked that the commission be allowed enough time to review and approve proclamation language and to chose recipients. Ms. Bell agreed and said she would send draft proclamations by email to each commissioner a month prior to a regular meeting to allow everyone more time to add or adjust language as necessary. Chair Dukes asked commissioners to email Ms. Bell, and sending a copy to him, when they have a person in mind to accept a proclamation at a City Council meeting.

Item 9, being: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL TO PROCLAIM THE FOLLOWING:

- Senior Citizen's Day (August 21)
- Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 – October 15)
- Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October)
- LGBTQ History Month (October)
- Bullying Prevention Month (October)
- Immigrants Day (October 28)
- Cultural Diversity Appreciation Month

Commissioners reviewed the above proclamations and agreed to postpone the recommendation of Cultural Diversity Appreciation Month pending further discussion of potential verbiage. Chair Dukes motioned to approve all other proclamations as written and motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Farley. Chair Dukes called for a vote and Ms. Bell called roll: all approved, and none opposed. Said motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Item 10, being: DISCUSSION OF BELOVED COMMUNITY PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Chair Dukes explained the Beloved Community panels were an idea that originated out of a discussion he previously had with Mayor Clark, which the Mayor then implemented. Four meetings were held over a period of several months and included discussions on various topics. Chair Dukes wished to make commissioners aware of this as Mayor Clark asked that the HRC take over the panels. The panels take place in person so they have been put on hold until in-person interaction can be safely allowed again.

Item 11, being: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION'S ROLE IN PROMOTING RACIAL EQUALITY

When issues are brought to the attention to a commissioner, Ms. Bell asked that she be sent an email for discussion and possible inclusion on an HRC meeting agenda for action. Commissioner Owen said she has received multiple inquiries from the community regarding concerns over police policy, and evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Commissioner Sage Mauldin suggested using public input in order to present recommendations to City Council for possible policy changes, or drafting of an ordinance or resolution to address an issue. Ms. Bell said Section 7-102(12) would allow for this but there is an oversight board that addresses specific incidences involving police. In addition, Councilwoman Kate Bierman has asked Council to discuss police issues during Study Sessions.

Regarding evictions, Ms. Bell said City Council passed a Resolution calling for a stay of evictions; also, the district court ordered a stay on conviction proceedings for a period of time. The difficulty is the City's lack of jurisdiction in the matter however the City Council Resolution asks for awareness and acknowledgment of this topic. Ms. Bell said it is expected that the Inclusive Community Subcommittee will focus on and address the subject of marginalized communities.

Item 12, being: MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION

Ms. Bell advised Commissioner Kay Ham chose not to renew her membership, resulting in a new vacancy, and Ms. Bell asks commissioners to encourage persons interested in serving on the HRC to apply with the City Clerk. Commissioner Farley would like to formally acknowledge Kay Ham's dedication and service on the HRC and commissioners agreed. Ms. Bell said she has completed orientation with newest commissioner, Samuel Woodfork. Commissioner Owen advised she has become aware of an interim study on human rights that is being conducted by the Oklahoma State Senate and she will forward the link to that website to Ms. Bell for distribution to commissioners.

Item 13, being: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.