

NORMAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES
CITY OF NORMAN

September 28, 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 September 28, 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, Ellen Kraft, Christina Owen, Samuel Woodfork

ABSENT: Sage Mauldin, Cathy Billings

STAFF PRESENT: Mayor Breea Clark, Assistant City Attorney Rick Knighton, Officer Ali Jaffrey, Legal Admin Tech Sarah Encinias

Sarah Encinias called roll and announced a quorum.

Item 2, being: INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMISSIONERS, SAMUEL WOODFORK AND CATHY BILLINGS

Chair Daniel Dukes introduced new Commissioner Samuel Woodfork. Commissioner Cathy Billings was unavoidably absent from today's meeting. Commissioner Woodfork currently works at the Cleveland County Assessor's Office as Chief Information Officer and has for 33 years. He also serves as a deacon at his local church and has for the past 30 years. He has been a resident of Norman for the past 38 years and he is eager to begin working with the HRC.

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

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

Item 4, being: UPDATE ON ADA/TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE WORK

Commissioner Nanny said she recently spoke to Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, who updated her on ADA work currently taking place. Commissioner Nanny also discussed with Mr. O'Leary to have him or Jesse Hill possibly appear at HRC meetings to help give updates in the future.

To recap, she said the city released the results of its ADA Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan in June 2018, which included a Summary of Findings that outlined structural changes needed to

public roads and structures to make the city more accessible. The Public Works Department has already begun this work and goals are expanded as the budget allows. Also, Commissioner Nanny said improvements are in the works to make the city website more accessible and the City Council Chambers are also going to be made more accessible for meetings by accommodating more wheelchairs and providing a sound feedback loop. She chaired the CART Committee and accessible buses for over 600 passengers are now called EMBARK Plus – ADA Paratransit bus service. There are fewer passengers due to the COVID-19 pandemic however local fares are still free and Saturday Embark service was reinstated. Commissioner Nanny said city employees will be required to attend a virtual ADA training class as well.

When asked how the Human Rights Commission could help, Commissioner Nanny asked to add a standing agenda item for ADA Updates to keep everyone apprised of progress in the city. She also encouraged commissioners to attend as many meetings as possible, such as: ADA Advisory Committee, ADA Transportation Subcommittee, Norman Forward Parks Ad Hoc Advisory Groups. The plan for Ruby Grant Park is to make it fully accessible, which will be one of the first in the nation. At Mr. O’Leary’s suggestion, Commissioner Nanny said she could help serve as a facilitator between the Commission and the City’s ADA Technician, Jesse Hill. Additionally, Beloved Community meetings could include a speaker from the ADA community.

Item 5, being: UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON CONVERSION THERAPY

Chair Dukes said he spoke to Commissioner Sage Mauldin about his effort to create an ordinance prohibiting conversion therapy and he wanted to give members a quick update. Previous state legislative efforts by Rep. Jason Dunnington (OKC), to ban the practice of conversion therapy for minors have failed to gain momentum in the House. City of Norman’s Resolution R-1819-85, drafted by Sage Mauldin and passed by City Council, encouraged HB-2456 be passed during the 2019 legislative session. Then Rep. Dunnington introduced HB-3872 during the 2020 session but that too failed to pass the House.

Since then, Rep. Jim Olsen (Sallisaw) announced he would file a bill in the 2021 session to protect access to and providers of conversion therapy. Rep. Randy Randleman (Gore), a licensed psychologist, also supports Rep. Olen’s effort and both spoke at a recent state study. Commissioner Mauldin would like the HRC to voice opposition to this action but is unsure how to proceed.

Rick Knighton said creating a city ordinance prohibiting conversion therapy presents a problem regarding punishment and how the city would enforce a state licensure issue that it doesn’t have jurisdiction over. Also, if a bill is passed that allows conversion therapy, this would pre-empt any local effort to create another law.

Chair Dukes said the practice is often performed by clergy or unlicensed therapists and is usually religion based. He is aware of at least 2 entities that have been identified in Norman alone. Mayor Clark suggested that the HRC could issue a public statement condemning the practice of conversion therapy and any bill introduced that would protect it. Commissioners agreed to wait and see if a bill is introduced during the next legislative session before further action is taken. The next session begins in February and extends into May.

Item 6, being: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING 2021 INTERFAITH BREAKFAST

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, Mayor Clark suggested the Interfaith Breakfast be held for live stream viewing only. Chair Dukes said he would begin the breakfast with an introduction, the Mayor would give her speech, followed by the keynote speaker and the rest of the speakers. The speakers could gather in one place, like the City Hall, and have breakfast, and give their speeches. Mayor Clark said this arrangement would be better than having speakers appear by video separately.

For the 2022 calendar year, Mayor Clark asked commissioners to also consider celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by holding something like a “Day of Service” that could merge with and/or replace the interfaith designation while allowing the HRC an opportunity to give back to the community. Examples of this could be like holding a donation drive for places like Food & Shelter for Friends or the Women’s Resource Center, clean up a park, helping an elderly neighbor with yard work, etc. Mayor Clark asked commissioners to brainstorm for creative ideas and email them to her so they can be discussed at the next HRC meeting in November. The Mayor will also reach out to non-profits for input.

Item 7, being: DISCUSSION REGARDING COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHIES FOR CITY WEBSITE

Chair Dukes said the webpage for the HRC is in need of updating and Mayor Clark said she has made a list of outdated webpages to the City Clerk so that updates will be made. Also, Chair Dukes said he checked pages of other committees and saw that no other group has pictures posted on their page, so to keep with this practice, pictures of HRC members will not be needed. He asked commissioners that have not already sent their biography to him to please do so. Mayor Clark said she noticed the link to the HRC page is hard to find and Chair Dukes said he would be sure to send this and any other requests for page improvements to the City Clerk for update.

Item 8, being: UPDATE ON, AND CONTINUED 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 said the city’s human resources department has received many applications for the Diversity & Equity Officer position and interviews with the City Manager will be held soon. They hope to have the position filled by the end of October. Chair Dukes said once the Officer is hired, the HRC can then arrange to meet with them to discuss ideas regarding forming the subcommittee.

Commissioner Nanny asked if the HRC should be participating in the Mayor’s Task Force and Commissioner Owen said a City Council Special Session would be held tomorrow, Tuesday, September 29th, where the topic is a discussion regarding recommendations from the Mayor’s Task Force on the use of funds set aside for community outreach and programs. The Task Force was made up of members of non-profits, police department community liaisons, and various other

members of the community who gave input directly to the Mayor. Chair Dukes asked commissioners to watch the meeting so they can discuss it at the next HRC meeting.

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

- Native American Heritage Month (November)
- World AIDS Day (December 1)
- 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. Mr. Knighton said he and new attorney, Anthony Purinton, would be able to help with potential proclamation language. Commissioner Owen asked to clarify the use of the term “Indian” in November’s proclamation. Commissioner Nanny said she would also like to clarify the term “Native American” and that she would consult with Jacob Tsotigh for guidance since she knows him.

Item 10, being: MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION

Chair Dukes would like to present updates to City Council immediately after every HRC meeting to keep them apprised of the work by the HRC. All commissioners unanimously agreed with this suggestion.

Commissioner Owen asked about the process of setting emergency meetings. Mr. Knighton said the Agenda for such a meeting must be posted at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting time and that if such a meeting is recommended by a commissioner, to please email him, Chair Dukes and Admin Tech Sarah Encinias so planning can begin as soon as possible.

Item 11, being: ADJOURNMENT

Chair Dukes motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Farley so moved and motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Kraft. Chair Dukes called for a vote and the vote was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.