

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
Human Rights Commission
City of Norman

September 23, 2019

The Inclusive Community Subcommittee of the Human Rights Commission of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in the Municipal Complex located at 201 West Gray Street on September 23, 2019, 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: Mayor Breea Clark, Co-Chair Marjan Seirafi-Pour, Co-Chair Dan Dukes, Ashley Morrison, A. Miles Francisco, Betty Robbins, Charlotte Gordon, Christina Owen, Farzad Khalili, Helen Grant, Jacob Tsotigh, James Chappel, Jared Gomez, Jeff Yamada, Jennifer Ahren-Sims, Jeremy Lang, John Drayton, Julianna Kershen, Lobna Hewedi, Marcie King, Mariann Lawson, Merleyn Bell, Michael Givel, Miranda Steffen, Pixie Quigley, Randy Henning, Samuel Woodfork, Sanho Steele-Louchart, Shannon Vickrey, Stephanie Williams, Steven Davis, Summayah Anwar

ABSENT: Jeff Yamada, Miranda Steffen

STAFF PRESENT: Assistant City Attorney Kristina Bell, Consultant Tamara Lebak, Officer Ali Jaffrey, Officer Jeff Casillas, Legal Admin Tech Sarah Encinias

Item 2, being: COMMITTEE CHARGE

Mayor Breea Clark welcomed members and thanked them for playing such a critical part in furthering her goal to build a more inclusive community. She said she would not be staying during the meetings so as not to interrupt the process but that she invested in a facilitator to help and she looked forward to see what ideas this committee comes up with that she can use to help the City become a better place to live. Mayor Clark stated that although the City motto is “Building an Inclusive Community,” she acknowledged there was plenty of room to grow in a positive way. From reading through the applications, Mayor Clark felt this committee represented what was at the heart of Norman.

Item 3, being: INTRODUCTIONS

Assistant City Attorney, Kristina Bell, introduced herself along with Legal Admin Tech, Sarah Encinias, as staff for this committee. Both work in the City Attorney’s Office and staff the Human Rights Commission. She asked members to please reach out to either person for any questions or concerns.

Ms. Bell also introduced Officers Ali Jaffrey and Jeff Casillas of the Norman Police Department. They were invited to attend specifically at the request of Mayor Clark, and they will observe and take an active role as a learning opportunity and to answer questions on behalf of the department. The police department considers these particular opportunities especially valuable to help enhance community-oriented policing.

Co-Chair Marjan Seirafi-Pour introduced herself and thanked the group for their commitment to this project. She has served on the Human Rights Commission since 2011 and works at the University of Oklahoma as a Director for the College of International Studies. She teaches the Persian language. She has lived in Norman for the last 25 years, and she decided to play a more active role in the community when her children began to experience difficulties from others after the occurrence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. She looks forward to helping to improve inclusivity in the City and hopes to spare others from the negative experiences her family had.

Co-Chair Dan Dukes introduced himself and said he has served on the Human Rights Commission for about four years. He is part of the transgender community here in Norman and represents the LGBTQIA+2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Ally plus Two-Spirit). When he began transitioning, his children began experiencing negativity in the high school due to having lesbian parents. When his children then tried to join the Straight-Gay Alliance, they were ridiculed. He has always tried to be part of the community, but he feels like there is still much to improve. He also looks forward to making progress regarding inclusivity.

Meeting facilitator Tamara Lebak introduced herself and referred to her Curriculum Vitae that was included in each members' binder for her background information. She encouraged members to contact her, either Co-Chair, or any one of the staff previously mentioned.

Item 4, being: ETHICS AND OPEN MEETING TRAINING

Ms. Bell handed out contact information for the members and staff as well as copies of the Ad Hoc Committee Ethics Pledge and discussed the City's Ethics Policy and the requirements of the State Open Meetings Act and City Resolution making the Open Meetings requirements applicable to City committees and subcommittees. Ms. Bell explained that all meetings would be duly posted and open to the public. She also advised that Minutes would be taken and warned against electronic meetings via emails or other electronic group correspondence. She also advised that meeting discussions would be limited to the topics posted on the Agenda.

Ms. Bell asked members to sign the Ad Hoc Committee Ethics Pledge and advised that members could contact her for a copy of the full policy and/or if they had any questions or concerns. She then collected the signed pledges to be turned in to the City Clerk's Office.

Item 5, being: ORIENTATION

Ms. Lebak advised that the large size of the committee was intentional because there was so much to be addressed. She assured that all members would be heard and that there would be small group discussions to help. She then asked members to refer to their binders for the

meeting Agenda, a copy of the newly adopted City Civil Rights Ordinance, and several other printouts that would be helpful for each member to read over.

Item 6, being: GROUP PROCESS AND DATA COLLECTION

Ms. Lebak fielded general questions from the committee members regarding committee process. She explained all efforts would be geared toward the ultimate goal of creating a list of recommendations for the City Council of how to become a more inclusive city. She is aware there are many different ideas on how to meet this goal but emphasized that the list should include items the City Council has specific power to act upon.

Ms. Lebak referred members to their handout listing the answers to the questions included in the applications for this committee. She asked members to read through the answers so they may make further recommendations at the next meeting in October. Also, she said she had reviewed the answers previously and noticed three primary groupings of recommendations from applicants:

1. things the City Council can actually do something about;
2. things the City Council has no control over; and
3. things that people didn't know the City of Norman was already addressing.

She also advised that from the responses, she noticed three additional groupings, all of which fall under the City's purview:

1. things in Norman's history that residents feel need to be acknowledged/apologized for;
2. things in the present such as policy/procedure that could use a refreshing update; and
3. completely new ideas of things nobody has ever brought up before.

Members then wrote ideas on a shared page of easel paper at their respective table regarding the questions below. A speaker at each table presented their list to the entire room, and the results were as follows:

-WHAT IS AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY?

Members summarized that an inclusive community is one that has no labels, no stereotyping, no "Us" versus "Them," finding a commonality with everyone, ensuring everyone is represented, respect, acceptance, being heard, safety, tolerance, no hate, honesty, understanding, providing support, no shame, no fear, healing, reparation, willingness, equity, unity, and supporting diversity.

-WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR THIS COMMITTEE?

Being instrumental in helping the City Council, bringing durability and depth to results, have plans in place that will last a long time and that will have a positive impact far beyond the present time. Have something that will have a significant impact and not just superficial changes. Something that is actionable, doable, specific, measurable, attainable, reasonable,

timeliness. It should offer long term support and sustainability. The implementation needs to be intentional. It should be a structural change and avoid duplicating existing efforts. It should help support two-way communication with the City Council and increase involvement with the younger residents.

-HOW DO WE NEED TO BE TOGETHER IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

Humility, honesty, demonstrate courtesy, be open-minded and receptive, be respectful of others, compassionate, lots of active and engaged listening, reflective, recognizing different vulnerabilities for different people, be trusting, seeing one's own bias, be accepting of others' truths, be aware of your own body language, getting consensus, be able to compromise, be inviting, accepting and non-judgmental, maintain transparency.

Item 7, being: EXPLANATION OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Ms. Lebak told members that a public survey would be released the week of October 4th and be open for one week. When the link is released, she asked members to send the survey out to as many people as possible and upon its conclusion on October 11th, the resulting data would be sorted for the next meeting on October 21st.

She asked members to let her know if they'd like to help sort the responses not only from the upcoming survey but also from the answers given in the committee applications. She would also like to set up sub-task forces for topics that need research or additional information in order to make a decision.

Item 8, being: CLOSING COMMENTS

She wanted members to think about how unity could be brought across different identities and asked members to refer to the page entitled "Feelings Wheel" to pick a word that described their own present feeling about today's meeting. Members then shared their word to the entire group.

Item 9, being: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.