

MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
May 25, 2017

This regular meeting of the Ames Human Relations Commission was called to order by Chair John Klaus at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was a phone meeting that originated in Conference Room 233. Commissioners Anneke Mundel, Joel Hochstein, and Heidi Thompson were present. Amy Harris-Tehan was not present. Staff member Brian Phillips was also present.

PUBLIC FORUM – Richard Deyoe explained he tried to speak at the City Council meeting on May 9th, at the end of the meeting. He then sang a song for the Commission, and explained that Mayor Campbell did not allow him to finish. Richard provided a written document to the Commission. It was moved by Joel, seconded by Anneke to receive and file Richard’s report. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM APRIL 27, AND MAY 4, 2017 – Moved by Heidi, seconded by Joel to approve the minutes from April 27 and May 4. Motion carried unanimously.

INCLUSIVE AMES SUBCOMMITTEE – Anneke asked for clarification regarding this subcommittee. John provided background of the Inclusive Ames Subcommittee. Joel noted that if anyone has something to bring back to the Commission, they do so during this time on the agenda. Anneke asked if the subcommittee was needed further. Joel stated he didn’t feel the subcommittee was being used in the manner it was originally envisioned. Joel suggested in the future it be on the agenda as “Inclusive Ames Updates” rather than “subcommittee.” Joel moved, Heidi seconded, to add Anneke to the Inclusive Ames Subcommittee. Heidi pointed out that if there was an Inclusive Ames Subcommittee that had the attendance of Joel, Anneke and Amy, it would have to be on an agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

FOLLOW-UP FROM CITY COUNCIL MEETING – John asked if there was anything to discuss following up from the Council meeting. Heidi said she took away the idea of identifying events for City leaders to participate in, further refining the staff person role, working with the Chief of Police to see what resources are out there to translate the Safe Community Resolution. Heidi offered to contact CyRide to see what resources it uses to translate documents for riders. She also offered to review the most recent census for language information and to check online translation services. Joel agreed to research ISU services for translation. Joel wondered whether the Commission needed to consider how all City documents are translated for different languages, such as instructions for how to set up utilities. Joel moved, Anneke seconded to have the next meeting agenda include the topic of translation of City documents and services. Motion carried unanimously.

Anneke noted with the Municipal Equality Index, that the City Council wanted more specifics regarding individual components. The discussion turned to the proposal for a staff person. Brian suggested that the Commission focus on what activities are not being accomplished that the Commission would like to have accomplished, rather than designating a specific position for a proposed staff member.

Joel discussed the philosophical issues related to using the Municipal Equality Index. He said he didn’t disagree with the notion that the City should not pursue a point system. The discussion

turned to using the Municipal Equality Index as a way to identify things that could be improved for various sub-groups, not for points but for its own sake. Joel noted that Dubuque had a more comprehensive community equity profile of the climate for various sub-populations. Anneke expressed interest in having discussions with people to understand their issues in more depth than a closed-ended survey could. Heidi provided the history of the listening sessions. Joel noted that Dubuque hosted listening sessions in the development of its Community Equity Profile.

John expressed that he felt the Council was divided and that it was difficult to separate what one Council member wanted versus the entire Council. Joel reiterated that he wanted to ask the City Council for funding for a comprehensive study about the lives of different groups of people in the community.

Joel stated he felt the discussion is really about what the City Council felt the role of the Commission to be. If the Commission did all the components of the existing Code, it would not have time and resources to do so. Brian stated his opinion that this issue seems to be the underlying issue with the Commission: that it and the Council have not had a discussion to get into alignment as to what the Council is supposed to do.

Heidi and Joel explained that they would like to review the follow-up regarding the Municipal Equality Index with the community group interested in the issue. Heidi proposed a special meeting may be called as needed to discuss the next steps prior to the regular meeting.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS – Anneke noted that Council Member Betcher inquired about the Commission’s contact with the School District. She asked whether she should carry that forward or if it should be set aside as the Commission conducts its other work. She explained she is working with a group looking at racial and ethnic disparities within the district. John offered to go to the school board meeting and ask if there could be a role for the Commission. Heidi suggested that the Commission should wait until it has a more fundamental discussion with the City Council.

Heidi asked Brian if there was any email into the Commission’s email address. Brian responded there was none recently to his knowledge.

NEXT MEETING: JUNE 22, 2017

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.