

MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
November 30, 2017

This regular meeting of the Ames Human Relations Commission was called to order by Chair John Klaus at 5:30 p.m. in Conference Room 235 of City Hall. Commissioners Heidi Thompson, Joel Hochstein, and Anneke Mundel were present. Staff member Brian Phillips was also present.

PUBLIC FORUM – There was no one present to speak at public forum.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 26, 2017 – Anneke requested a clarification that the open letter to the school district during the response protocol discussion would be an open letter of support. Moved by Joel, seconded by Anneke to approve the minutes from October 26 with that clarification. Motion carried unanimously.

AHRC STRATEGIC PLAN – John indicated he had reviewed the latest draft. Joel noted he had not seen the document since Amy last made changes. The Commissioners reviewed the most recent version. Anneke proposed consolidating the public awareness and effective communication goals together. Heidi agreed to review the draft before the next meeting. It was moved by Anneke, seconded by John, to consolidate items the public awareness and effective communication goals. Motion carried unanimously. The item will be finalized at the next Commission meeting.

FALL EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR – Heidi noted she had sent information to representatives of CySHRM, who will take the concept to SHRM. The proposed topic would be workplace discrimination.

DISCUSSION OF AHRC BROCHURE – Joel proposed correcting the use of he/she on the back of the brochure. Joel also proposed striking the word “volunteer” from the discrimination complaint process, since complaints investigated by the state commission are not investigated by volunteers. Brian proposed adding a box on the back with all the contact information in one place.

MUNICIPAL EQUALITY INDEX SCORECARD – Joel noted the new version of the scorecard had been released. He outlined the areas that could yet be pursued to obtain additional points on the index. Joel outlined changes that would be made by the Human Rights Campaign in 2018, such as City Services – Youth Bullying Prevention Policies, deductions for religious exemptions that discriminate against LGBTQ people, bonus points for City facilities and public restrooms that are gender-neutral, and others. John asked if the Commission wanted to encourage the City Council to pursue these efforts. Joel offered to continue pursuing these areas.

The question was raised regarding whether the City Council had ever responded to the follow-up emails from the Commission regarding the Municipal Equality Index. John proposed these recommendations should be part of the Annual Report. Heidi asked whether it was customary to invite the incoming Mayor to a Commission meeting to provide an update regarding the Commission’s activities. John indicated that could be done, perhaps in January.

It was moved by Anneke, seconded by Heidi, to strive for the Commission to have the Annual

Report submitted to the City Council at a meeting in March. Motion carried unanimously. It was moved by Joel, seconded by Heidi, to keep the Municipal Equality Index on the agenda for the next meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

It was moved by Heidi, seconded by Anneke, to have John invite Mayor-elect Haila and Council Member-elect Martin to the January Commission meeting to provide an overview of activities the Commission is working on. Motion carried unanimously.

It was moved by Joel, seconded by Heidi, to add a conversation to the December agenda to plan for that January meeting with the new elected officials. Motion carried unanimously.

REPORT FROM IOWA CIVIL RIGHTS SYMPOSIUM – Heidi and Anneke noted Amy had attended. No report was available.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS – Anneke noted at the last meeting, the discussion included preparing an invitation to a town hall regarding race. She felt the purpose for this invitation was not yet clear, and wanted clarification from the Commissioners regarding what their intentions were. John noted he felt the community was aware that the issues had occurred and that the school board and police were taking steps to address it. John felt it was appropriate for the Commission to intervene if appropriate attention was not being paid to the issue of race. Joel stated he would love for a group to engage with the high school students who wanted to bring attention to discrimination. Anneke agreed, and offered to contact the students and let Brian know if a discussion with them should be added to the next agenda.

Heidi expressed desire to add a discussion to the December agenda of identifying a rotation of quarterly topics for educational seminars.

Joel stated he had been on the Commission for over a year and was still confused about the purpose of the Commission. The Municipal Code outlines the enforcement function of the Commission and that is being handled by the state. He wondered whether this was a Commission that should be dealing with complaints, and if so, we should probably educate ourselves regarding how to do that, and be prepared to do it. Heidi offered that this could be a conversation with the new elected officials. John outlined the responses he had received from Council candidates when he asked at their forum what the Commission should be doing. Joel noted the comments Dr. Stewart had made shortly before Joel joined the Commission. Heidi remembered that one of Dr. Stewart's cautions was to not chase issues. Joel suggested the Commission should discuss its purpose, and collect feedback from the community about what it needs from the Commission. Heidi asked that this be on the December agenda. It was moved by Joel, seconded by Heidi, to add to the December agenda a discussion of the Commission's purpose. Motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING: DECEMBER 28, 2017

The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.