

**MINUTES**  
**HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**  
**January 26, 2017**

The regular meeting of the Ames Human Relations Commission was called to order by Chair John Klaus at 5:32 p.m. in Conference Room 235 of City Hall. Members present were John Klaus, Victoria Knight, Joel Hochstein, Heidi Thompson, and Amy Tehan. Staff member Brian Phillips was also present.

**2. PUBLIC FORUM:** Rick Exner indicated he coordinates a group within AMOS regarding immigration. He explained that since the election, there was a lot of fear in the immigrant community and bullying within schools. He indicated that Iowa City took a position regarding sanctuary stats, without calling itself a sanctuary city. He stated he wished Ames would reaffirm its position regarding the issue of enforcement of federal law.

Brian suggested that, since there are potential implications for City policy regarding this issue, that perhaps the City Council would want to weigh in regarding whether the Commission should spend time investigating this issue. John expressed his belief that the Commission has the authority to select its own issues to pursue. Joel stated he would want to understand the current practices prior to making recommendations.

It was moved by Joel, seconded by Victoria, to add this topic to the next meeting's agenda and ask that Brian provide the Commission with any policy from the Ames Police Department. Motion carried unanimously.

**3. DECEMBER 29, 2016 MINUTES:** It was moved by Heidi, seconded by Joel to approve the minutes with the capitalization of "Imam" under item 8. Motion carried unanimously.

**4. WAYS IN WHICH THE COMMISSION CAN ASSIST THE AMES MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN INTERACTING WITH THE LARGER AMES COMMUNITY:** John explained that the Imam understands he has a standing invitation to attend a meeting, but that he had no other information to give. It was moved by Amy, seconded by Heidi to have Victoria send information regarding the Ames Area Religious Leader Association to John, who will forward it to the Imam. Motion carried unanimously.

**5. INCLUSIVE AMES SUBCOMMITTEE:** Amy reported that a meeting will be held February 6<sup>th</sup>, after which a report will be provided back to the Commission.

**6. MUNICIPAL EQUALITY INDEX:** Joel reported that a group had reviewed the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index to see if there were areas where additional points could be obtained. Regarding the transgender-inclusive health benefits, Joel reported the only city in Iowa that receives points for this is Cedar Rapids. Cedar Rapids contracts with Wellmark for insurance, as does Ames. Wellmark offers an additional coverage for transgender health care. Joel will collect information from Cedar Rapids regarding the cost increase to premiums to add this coverage.

Joel explained that Ames has a policy for contractors regarding non-discrimination in hiring, not an ordinance. He noted that the policy does not provide for coverage for gender identity and

sexual orientation. He explained the group reviewed the policy and inquired whether it would be possible to lower the threshold where this policy is applied from \$25,000 to \$5,000. The question is whether the policy would meet the requirement for the HRC, rather than an ordinance.

Joel stated the group discussed the concept of the liaison in the Mayor's office or Police Department. The previous discussion revolved around whether if there was a liaison for one group, that there would need to be liaisons for other groups. He suggested that a response to this may be to create an equity council to review City policies from a variety of perspectives. He noted that the Commission was serving in that capacity currently, but that in other cities in Iowa, a separate group often exists to review these policies. In Iowa City, a full-time staff person serves in this capacity. John suggested perhaps a pitch could be made to the City Council to provide funding for a full-time person.

Joel reviewed the remaining areas within the index, relating to legislative efforts. He felt these would be areas that could be easy to address, such as issuing proclamations or publishing statements regarding legislation of concern. Brian suggested the Commission could identify these opportunities for the City Council, which may be unaware of them. It was moved by Joel, seconded by Amy to place this item on the next agenda for further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

**7. AHRC STATEMENT REQUESTING REPORTS ON DISCRIMINATORY**

**PRACTICES:** Amy has prepared a statement and would like to know whether the Commission is comfortable putting this information out to the community. She suggested it would be timely to do so. Amy read a statement she had prepared and agreed to forward it to the Public Relations Office to have it posted on the City's Facebook page. Joel inquired as to how the Commission would respond to the email contacts received. John expressed that the Commission should be educating themselves as to what is going on, and email responses help accomplish that. Joel agreed with that, but wanted to ensure the expectations are not raised that cannot be met.

**8. KHOI APPEARANCES:** John explained that he originally thought the Commission would participate in regular appearances, but through further discussions with KHOI, they are interested in having someone learn their systems and train as a producer. This person would develop the content and host it. KHOI has interest in weekly appearances. Joel said he would be happy to work with Victoria if she was interested in becoming a producer. Amy and Heidi expressed concern about the frequency of weekly appearances. Joel stated he was interested in the process, but was not willing to commit at this point. It was moved by Amy, seconded by John, to place this item on next month's agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

**9. AHRC ANNUAL REPORT:** Amy explained she went through the timeline and addressed formatting issues. She added events that the Commission had been involved in.

Amy left the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Heidi indicated she would work on the partnership sections and asked Amy to write up the Inclusive Ames work. Victoria worked on the Humanitarian Award.

**10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:** Heidi stated she was in a group with John Shierholz, of Healthiest Ames. One of their goals is to increase community interactions through health and fitness. She wondered if there would be an opportunity to partner with Healthiest Ames to

promote interaction in a unique way. Heidi also mentioned a report she had prepared regarding complaints data, which was connected to the Ames Chamber's interest in a lunch and learn.

Victoria indicated she may not be here for the next year, and her Commissioner term is up for reappointment this year. She asked for advice from other Commissioners regarding whether she should reapply for her one year term this year.

Joel offered that there was he/she issue in the AHRC brochure that should be addressed. He will identify the issue and send it to Brian for updating.

Heidi stated the Home For Everyone award application approval needs to be on the February agenda. She asked Brian to send out the application materials. She also pointed out the Strategic Plan is due to be updated this summer.

**11. NEXT MEETING:** The next Commission meeting is scheduled to be held February 23, 2017.

**12. ADJOURN:** Joel moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.