

MARION CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday June 3rd, 2020, 6:30 pm
Location: Zoom Webinar ID:831-5852-9909

Commissioners Present:

Okpara Rice
Frederick Brown
Renaë Forsyth-Christy
Dave Baumler
Selita Jansen
Jenifer Tibbets
Bret Nilles
Kent Jackson

Commissioners Absent: Chris Stoner
Danielle Brazant
Kim Eiler

Staff/Other Present: Amal Eltahir, City of Marion
Stefanie Munsterman-Scriven, Executive Director, CRCRC

- I. **Call to Order**
Noting there was a quorum, Commissioner Jackson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.
- II. **Roll Call/Introductions**
Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.
- III. **Presentation--** Bernard Walther, Investigator, CR Civil Rights Commission
Walters presented a complete guide on the Fair Housing protection. Special highlight was given to support and service animal reasonable accommodations.
- IV. **Public Response**
There was no public response.
- V. **Director's Report**

Munsterman-Scriven presented the complaint case report. Regarding COVID-19 impact on logistics, Munsterman-Scriven said that staff is expected to work remotely through July 6th on investigations and mediations with all outreach efforts being virtual. Munsterman-Scriven said that the fact that we have not seen an uptick in complaints can be attributed to two reasons: one being that people

are in survival mode and second because there is the moratorium on evictions. Now that Moratorium is over, it is expected to see increase in complaints soon.

Reading on Facebook and virtual book club for adults is still on and the book “How to be an anti-racist” will be on a second round. Cedar Rapids started the two projects: story time reading on Facebook with temporary rights from publishers and a virtual book club project.

Regarding community engagement, Munsterman-Scriven is participating in SET task force (Safe, Equitable, and Thriving Communities) with local organizations to mitigate COVID-19 impact. Commissioner Nilles asked for recent stats on evictions. Munsterman-Scriven will be sending statistics if data is available.

Commissioner Tibbets stated that the Linn County Continuum of Care looked at eviction data and planning on releasing a report soon. Munsterman-Scriven is also working with legal aid on rights and resources panel to help with evictions. Commissioner Rice suggested inviting someone from the task force to brief the commission about the SET group work.

VI. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Rice moved to approve the May minutes as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Forsyth-Christy, motion passed.

VII. Report from Chair

Commissioner Jackson reflected on the George Floyd incident suggesting the commission talking a stance through a proclamation or a public statement. Commissioner Forsyth-Christy suggested a shared proclamation with the city condemning what happen. Munsterman-Scriven said she is pushing for a community conversation around the issue and she is supporting a solution driven approach because there are issues with disproportionality in the community. Munsterman-Scriven is planning on reaching out to leaders to bring people together around the table. Commissioner Rice said that Criminal Justice Reform and the Disproportionality are totally different conversations, and this has been the topic of the round table panel. Commissioner expressed his full support for a discussion of that sort. Commissioner Jackson told Munsterman-Scriven that the Marion Civil Rights Commission is interested in partnering with Cedar Rapids on the event. Munsterman-Scriven welcomed the partnership noting that the two are stronger together.

Happenings: Project Pride Fall: A group of people has been harassing and intimidating LGBTQ people and their allies. Threats of violence were shared through social media. Munsterman-Scriven noted however that there are no credible threats in the community.

VIII. Committee Reports

- a. *Executive Committee*- Commissioner Brown stated that the committee met on the 22nd to set the agenda. Commissioners discussed inviting

Walters to this meeting, reviewed the budget and discussed partnership with Cedar Rapids and online presence.

- b. *Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission Liaison* - Renae Forsyth-Christy
There was robust discussion about the George Floyd incident and bringing law enforcement to the table.
- c. *Grants & Strategic Planning Committee* -Commissioner Brown stated that Willis Dady Homeless shelter wrote the commission a thank you letter expressing their gratitude for the grant.
- d. *Communication and outreach Committee* -
Commissioner Baumler stated that the committee created a group chat to discuss ideas. Commissioners are planning to update the mission statement and will focus on social media presence and will explore the possibility of setting an independent Facebook page. Committee will consult with the city's communication manager.

IX. **Unfinished Business**

- a. Partnership with the Marion Public Library
Nothing to report.

X. **New Business**

Juneteenth Sponsorship: The commission received in invitation from the Museum of African American to sponsor a week-long Juneteenth event. The event will help promote the commission. Commissioner Nilles motioned to approve sponsorship, seconded by Commissioner Brown, motion passed.

XI. **Good of the Order**

Commissioner Tibbetts is requesting a proclamation for the CR pride event. Meeting is virtual and date is set for July 11th. Friday at 10:45 Iowa Senate Judiciary committee is voting on the restoration of voting rights. Commissioner Tibbetts emphasized the importance of contacting representatives on the committee.

XII. **Adjournment**

Commissioner Rice moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Jensen, the meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 8th, 2020 at 6:30 pm Via Zoom

Respectfully submitted by Amal Eltahir, City of Marion