

MARION CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday August 5th, 2020, 6:30 pm
Location: Zoom Webinar ID:840-4433-6162

Commissioners Present:

Frederick Brown
Renaë Forsyth-Christy
Jenifer Tibbets
Bret Nilles
Kent Jackson
Chris Stoner
Kim Eiler

Commissioners Absent:

Okpara Rice
Dave Baumler
Danielle Brazant
Selita Jansen

Staff/Other Present: Amal Eltahir, City of Marion

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. Public Response

There was no public response.

IV. Director's Report

Commissioner Brown presented the case report. Regarding logistics, staff continue to work remotely with all outreach efforts being virtual. Multiple events were held at the June timeframe.

Regarding ongoing outreach, virtual book club for adults is still on featuring the book "How to be an Anti-racist".

Munsterman-Scriven, Executive Director continues to work with leaders and community members on race discussions. A civil rights panel discussion will be held at 5:30 pm August 11th or the 13th.

Civil Rights virtual book study will be discussing “So you want to Talk about Race” by Ijeoma Oluo. Discussion is August 28 at 1pm. Will be held monthly on the 4th Friday at 1pm for three months.

V. Approval of Minutes

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

VI. Report from Chair

Commissioner Jackson reflected on issues of equality and police brutality noting that it is time and opportunity for civil rights advocates to make a difference.

VII. Committee Reports

- a. *Executive Committee*- Commissioners met to set the agenda.
- b. *Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission Liaison* - Renae Forsyth-Christy
Nothing to report.
- c. *Communication and outreach Committee* -
Commissioner Stoner stated that the committee met on July 15th worked on outreach options. Commissioners will work with the City’s communications manager on social media regular civil rights educational material posts.

VIII. Unfinished Business

- a. M. A. R. E. Recommendations items:1,3,5,
Amal briefed the commission on the MARE request to set a working group to address racial equity concerns. The makeup will have representation from City Staff, Council, Civil Rights Commission, MARE, and the community at large.
The Commission discussed the Citizen Review Board role and the nature of the commission’s relationship with MARE.

Commissioner Tibbets stressed the commission’s role in making recommendations to council, as an expert in Civil Rights and as an integral part of the process. Commissioner Nilles stated that given the commissioners training, the commission is suited to review and make recommendations on civil rights infringements and willing to participate and assist community in any manner. Amal pointed out that the scope and authority of the commission is defined by the civil rights ordinance and that the commission is an independent recommending body. If there is willingness to expand scope to include review, council would take action to amend the ordinance.

Commissioner Tibbetts motioned to assist and provide guidance to council with the formation of a citizen review board and to express to council that the commission believes it should part of discussion and development of

an action plan as an integral part of civil rights and equity efforts including communications, seconded by commissioner Nilles, motion passed.

Commissioner Tibbetts motioned to elect Chair and Vice Chair as the commission's representatives to serve on the Community Equity Work Group, seconded by Commissioner Brown, motion passed.

IX. New Business

Commissioner Tibbetts report on Linn-Mar School presentation: Commissioner received questions about process and how the commission relate to Cedar Rapids. Commissioner recommends career fair presence and training for school personnel as well as advocacy and education surrounding school mascot.

X. Good of the Order

Commissioner Nilles expressed interest in analyzing the available police response data. Commissioner Brown stated that the preliminary data is showing higher African American numbers in traffic stops. Amal shared that according to the chief, Marion PD is setting up a web-based application to publish data and they are already in the process of employing a mental health liaison. Commissioner Tibbetts suggested inviting the Cedar Rapids mental health liaison to an MCRC meeting to gain some insights from her experience and the model they are using, to provide guidance and recommendations to Marion PD.

Commissioner Tibbetts expressed gratitude for the Mayor's proclamation on pride day and shared news about governor's executive order restoring voting rights. Disproportionality in felony convictions means a need to educate those marginalized groups about rights and how to vote. Commissioner Forsyth-Christy will send out a link to the movie "The 13th". Commissioner brought to attention concerning tweet came from the president of United States on July 29th condoning to redlining. Commissioner Tibbett stated that transgender population already overrepresented in homeless population and now they can be denied shelter based on their biological sex.

Amal reported that the commission received a request from the African American museum requesting sponsorship of their History Makers Gala. Commissioner Nilles made a motion to put the item on the table for discussion, motion passed.

Commissioner Nilles made a motion to approve spending \$300 to support the African American's History Makers Gala, seconded by commissioner Forsyth-Christy, two votes in support, one abstention, one no, motion carries.

Commissioners are in support of attending community conversation meetings and having civil rights commission representation at the table.

XI. **Adjournment**

Commissioner Forsyth-Christy moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Stoner, the meeting adjourned at 8:06 pm.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 2nd, 2020 at 6:30 pm Via Zoom

Respectfully submitted by Amal Eltahir, City of Marion