



MINUTES

Civil Rights Commission

6:00 PM - Wednesday, August 4, 2021

City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue

Minutes are in draft format until approved at the next meeting

The Civil Rights Commission of the City of Marion, Linn County, Iowa met on Wednesday, August 4, 2021, at 6:00 PM, in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue, with the following members present:

PRESENT: Frederick Brown, Okpara Rice, Angelica Vannatta, Kent Jackson, Jennifer Tibbetts, and Bret Nilles

ABSENT: Selita Jansen, Chris Stoner, Dave Baumler, and Renae Forsyth-Christy

STAFF PRESENT: Amal Eltahir, Alicia Abernathey, and Tom Treharne

OTHERS PRESENT: Cal Schoepske, Tony Schoepske, Ana Clymer, and Steve Moshier

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners, staff, and guests introduced themselves.

PUBLIC FORUM

Tibbetts introduced Cal Schoepske and indicated he would like to have his voice heard on an incident that happened on the last day of school at Excelsiur. Schoepske shared some kids brought confederate flags, Blue Lives Matter, and Trump 2020 flags to school. During a discussion, some kids harassed and screamed profanities at individuals with LGBTQ flags and one kid was injured. Schoepske stated teachers did nothing about the incident and he is not aware of the school responding to any student regarding the incident.

Ana Clymer stated she wrote to the superintendent about the incident and the superintendent was not aware the incident took place, but was going to look into it. Clymer stated Linn-Mar is looking to create an equity group and has also asked for a meeting with the Marion Alliance on Racial Equity (MARE).

Tibbetts stated the Commission should reach out to the school to assist with training and education to the students and staff. Rice suggested the school district task force present to the Commission on what they hope to get done. Tibbetts stated she agreed, but it is

also important for the Commission to get involved and support changes that keep kids safe in school.

Tibbetts suggested the school put out information on the Commission so people are aware of how to contact the Commission. Clymer stated Marion Independent and Linn-Mar are looking to meet with MARE after MARE sent information introducing their group and the work they do. Tibbetts suggested the Commission contact both school districts and put together something with the Commission's contact information and a description of what the Commission does, while ensuring it is appealing for students to read. Tibbetts volunteered to reach out to the school districts.

Tony Schoepske recommended the Commission put a one page flyer in the city paper to have more visibility on the topic. Nilles stated the Marion Times is no longer circulating but the Commission can look into other means of communication. Vannatta suggested information be shared in the Marion Messenger.

PRESENTATIONS/GUEST SPEAKERS

Brooke Bige, Marion Police Department Law Enforcement Liaison (MPD LE Liaison), provided a presentation on her work with the Marion Police Department (MPD) including statistics on the number of calls for service, demographics of the individuals involved, and results of the calls for service.

Rice asked who responded to these types of calls for service before the MPD LE liaison position. Bige stated the Foundation 2 Mobile Crisis Unit was available to assist prior to the liaison position. Bige stated the MPD LE liaison position allows for high risk individuals to have easier access to mental health services.

Eltahir stated at a Community Equity Task Force meeting it was asked if the liaison asks the race of individuals or if an assumption is made on their race. Bige stated she always asks what the person identifies as their race. Tibbetts stated it would be helpful if gender statistics were also shared. Adrienne Korbakes, Mobile Crisis Outreach Program Manager, stated Foundation 2 is responsible for the data collection, not the MPD, but gender is something they can pull out and share with the MPD.

Bige shared success stories of individuals working with her as the MPD LE liaison and shared other services provided by Foundation 2. Rice asked Bige about her background. Bige shared her employment and educational background.

Jackson asked if Cedar Rapids has mental health liaisons. Korbakes stated there are two liaisons working with Cedar Rapids, along with a dedicated officer. Korbakes stated other LE liaisons are with the Linn, Benton, and Dubuque County Sheriffs. Eltahir asked how the dedicated officer in Cedar Rapids is different than LE liaisons. Korbakes explained the role of the dedicated officer in Cedar Rapids. Korbakes stated each community has their own specific needs and Foundation 2 keeps positions flexible to meet the needs.

Tibbetts asked if there are differences between Cedar Rapids and Marion as far as things Marion can build on to make the position easier. Bige stated the things that would make the job easier go beyond a city level. Bige stated she has seen a change in how things

are communicated with officers and officers open to learning. Korbakes stated in Cedar Rapids the same officer is always responding to calls with the liaison, while Bige responds with any officer. Vannatta asked if there is a benefit of having a liaison available 24/7. Bige stated follow up to calls for service and relationship building with high risk individuals is the vast majority of her time spent on the job. Bige stated a second liaison would be helpful but the Mobile Crisis Team is also a very helpful resource when she is unavailable. Moshier asked if there is criteria of determining when a police department should have two liaisons instead of one. Korbakes stated assistance is available 24/7 and 365 days a year to Marion as there are three teams of the Mobile Crisis Unit running at any given time.

A member of the public (name unknown) asked if training is provided to officers on how to respond to individuals as they wait for the liaison to arrive. Bige stated Marion officers are good at knowing when to take a step back and let her do what she needs to do and vis versa. Bige stated she has built a relationship with the officers and they've had teachable moments on what to say, how to react, etc. Eltahir stated officers go through training on de-escalation and crisis intervention. Korbakes stated officers also go through CIT training which is mental health/crisis intervention training.

Clymer asked if funding streams for liaisons are different in each city. Korbakes stated each city is different and some liaisons are city funded while some are grant funded.

REGULAR AGENDA

Motion to approve the July 7 and July 10, 2021 minutes

Vannatta asked the July 7, 2021 minutes be corrected to reflect Bret Niles as in attendance. Vannatta asked the July 10, 2021 minutes be corrected to reflect Jennifer Tibbetts in attendance and that quorum was met.

Moved by Rice, seconded by Vannatta, to approve the July 7 and July 10, 2021 minutes, as amended.

Approved unanimously

Election of Vice Chair

Jackson announced this will be Brown's last meeting. Jackson asked if anyone is interested in serving as the Vice Chair or if anyone had any nominations. Tibbetts stated she believes Vannatta would be a good Vice Chair. Vannatta asked Brown to share responsibilities of the Vice Chair. Brown explained what the Vice Chair is involved in outside of typical Commissioner responsibilities. Vannatta stated she is interested in being Vice Chair and has the capacity to do so, but will push for things to be done by the Commission.

Moved by Tibbetts, seconded by Nilles, to elect Angelica Vannatta as Vice Chair.

Approved unanimously

Executive Committee Report

Jackson stated the Executive Committee, along with Eltahir and the Mayor, held interviews for the current female vacancy on the Commission. Vannatta asked if someone was

selected. Eltahir stated Ann DiGiacomo was selected and her appointment will be approved by City Council on August 5th.

Cedar Rapids Executive Director's Report

Jackson stated the report was included in the packet.

Communication and Outreach Committee Report

Brown stated volunteers are needed for upcoming outreach events. Vannatta recommended the Commission use SignUpGenius to coordinate volunteering for events. Brown recommended the Commission look to hold or partner for events in Marion. Rice stated there are not any current events in Marion that are culturally focused. Tibbetts stated the Commission can participate in events like Marion by Moonlight, Farmers Markets, events at the new Library, etc.

Tibbetts volunteered to assist with the Veterans Stand Down event. Jackson and Nilles volunteered to assist with the Festival Latino event.

Subcommittee Discussion

Vannatta stated during the strategic plan special meeting Commissioners discussed disbanding all subcommittees to allow all Commissioners to be involved in communications and outreach. Tibbetts stated the Chair and Vice Chair may have to ensure things are moving along if the subcommittees are disband. The Commission was in agreement on disbanding the subcommittees.

Jackson stated it will be outlined in the updated strategic plan and approved with the plan. Commissioners shared outcomes of the strategic plan special meeting. The Commission agreed to review and discuss the outcomes at the next regular meeting and have a special meeting in September to discuss action items and finalize the plan.

Community Equity Task Force Report

Tibbetts stated information on the mental health liaison was shared at the July task force meeting. Tibbetts stated a policy review is taking place within different areas of the City to eliminate potential bias or disparate impact in City policies and procedures. Tibbetts stated the task force has not had an in depth discussion on policing, but the August meeting will be setup to be focused on policing. Brown stated that meeting will be held August 12. Eltahir stated the task force has not discussed policing yet because the task force originally agreed to discuss policies first.

Vannatta asked if the task force discussed transferring work to the Commission. Brown stated the task force will discuss next steps at a future meeting. Brown stated as the task force makes recommendations it will be communicated to the Commission.

2021 History Makers Gala Sponsorship

Moved by Rice, seconded by Tibbetts, to move forward with the table purchase.

Approved unanimously

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Vannatta shared the Women of NAACP are holding a training on October 16th for black and brown women who are interested in board/commission service. Vannatta stated more information will be forthcoming.

Rice asked if masks will be required at public meeting. Tom Treharne, Acting City Manager, stated City leadership is discussing masks tomorrow morning before discussing with City Council tomorrow evening. Vannatta asked if meetings will switch back to being held virtually. Treharne stated his hope is to continue to have in person meetings, but with masks. Treharne stated staff does not intend to shut the doors to public buildings.

Tibbetts stated the eviction moratorium was lifted but the CDC is stepping in to assist in high risk areas. Tibbetts stated with the moratorium being lifted there is potential for a high amount of evictions happening at once.

ADJOURN

Moved by Bret Nilles, seconded by Angelica Vannatta to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 p.m.
Approved unanimously

Respectfully submitted by:
Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant