



# MINUTES

## Civil Rights Commission

6:30 PM - Wednesday, May 5, 2021  
City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue

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*\*Minutes are in draft format until approved at the next meeting\**

The Civil Rights Commission of the City of Marion, Linn County, Iowa met virtually on Wednesday, May 5, 2021, at 6:30 PM, with the following members present:

PRESENT: Selita Jansen, Frederick Brown, Okpara Rice, Angelica Vannatta, Kent Jackson, Chris Stoner, Jennifer Tibbetts, Brett Nilles, Dave Baumler, and Renae Forsyth-Christy

STAFF PRESENT: Amal Eltahir and Alicia Abernathey

OTHERS PRESENT: Stefanie Munsterman-Scriven

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

### **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners, staff, and guests introduced themselves.

### **PUBLIC FORUM**

No one came forward to speak.

### **PRESENTATIONS/GUEST SPEAKERS - None**

### **REGULAR AGENDA**

#### **Motion to approve the April 7, 2021 minutes**

Moved by Rice, seconded by Vannatta, to approve the April 7, 2021 minutes.  
Approved unanimously

#### **Chairman's Report**

Jackson stated the Executive Committee would like to try to keep meetings at one hour or less. Jackson stated discussion may be limited on some topics and the Commission can table items for further review or continued discussion at a future meeting. Jackson asked if there were any concerns. Commissioners were in support of keeping the meetings to one hour or less, but agreed not to terminate any robust discussions because a meeting has reached the one hour mark.

## **Executive Committee Report**

Brown stated along with the discussion of keeping meetings to one hour or less, the Executive Committee also discussed ways to address people talking over each other during meetings. As a result, Commissioners are asked to utilize the "raise hand" feature of Zoom meetings and Brown will call on individuals to speak. Commissioners were in agreement with utilizing the "raise hand" feature. Rice recommended some in depth discussions be handled at the committee level.

Brown stated there is a current opening on the Commission and the City is looking to recruit a female Commissioner to keep the gender balance. Jansen asked if the vacancy would be advertised. Eltahir stated the City's communications manager will post the vacancy on the City's website and on Facebook. Vannatta asked if there would be a racial balance as well. Jackson stated the selection committee will work to provide a gender and racial balance. Rice suggested applicants be made aware the term will expire on December 31, 2021, with the opportunity of reappointment.

## **Cedar Rapids Executive Director's Report**

Stefanie Munsterman-Scriven, Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission, provided an update on the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission's (CRCRC) 2021 Art Contest. Munsterman-Scriven shared initiatives of the CRCRC that took place in April and what is coming up in May.

Brown asked if it was correct that Marion has not had any intakes in 2021. Munsterman-Scriven stated that is correct. Nilles asked how that compares to Cedar Rapids complaints. Munsterman-Scriven stated numbers for Cedar Rapids complaints decreased last summer, but are starting to increase again and numbers for Marion complaints have always been low. Vannatta asked if the CRCRC expects an increase in complaints with regards to Section 8 due to the recent bill approval. Munsterman-Scriven stated lawful source of income is not a protection in Cedar Rapids.

Jackson stated the Commission may want to consider hosting an art contest in the future.

## **Review and Approve Statement Regarding Marion Independent School District's Mascot**

The Commission reviewed the draft statement regarding Marion Independent School District's mascot. Tibbetts requested the statement be modified to focus on the entire district, not just the high school. Tibbetts stated parents received a list of 20 different mascot ideas that have been narrowed down to the top three for voting. The top three options include Storm, Wolves, or the school district not having a mascot.

The Commission had a brief discussion on Francis Marion.

Tibbetts stated the school district will announce the new mascot soon. Abernathey stated the City has recently started modifying language to be more inclusive and uses the word resident instead of citizen. Abernathey requested the statement be modified to replace citizen with resident.

Moved by Vannatta, seconded by Tibbetts, to approve the statement as written, with the modification of removing high school, changing the word citizen to resident, and making any necessary changes to the statement if the school district decides not to have a mascot.

Rice left the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Vannatta stated the goal is to release the statement after a decision has been made by the school district. Tibbetts requested the statement be released within a reasonable timeframe of the decision being announced.

Approved unanimously

### **Outreach**

- **Report from Communication and Outreach Committee**
- **Community Education Discussion**
- **Pride Month Proclamation Discussion**
- **Upcoming Proclamation-Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month-May 6**

Jansen stated events that typically take place in June include Juneteenth and LGBTQ/Pride celebrations. Brown asked if the Juneteenth and Pride events will be virtual or in person. Jansen stated the Juneteenth event will be held at NewBo City Market in Cedar Rapids on June 19th with attendance in person. Tibbetts stated there will not be a large Pride event this year and instead will be a poster parade. Eltahir stated there will be proclamations for both Juneteenth and Pride month. Vannatta asked if there were other Pride events the Commission could support in place of supporting the Cedar Rapids event. Tibbetts stated Iowa City is postponing their event until September, and the Cedar Rapids area will have smaller events to celebrate pride.

Tibbetts volunteered to accept the Pride proclamation on behalf of the Commission. Brown volunteered to accept the Juneteenth proclamation on behalf of the Commission.

Nilles asked if the Commission will have a table at Juneteenth. Forsyth-Christy stated the Commission shared a booth with the CRCRC in the past. Brown asked what the deadline is for sponsoring the event. Munsterman-Scriven stated she was not sure of the deadline but agreed to have the Commission join the CRCRC at their booth and CRCRC will cover the cost. Jackson requested staff check the Commission's budget to see if funds are available to sponsor the event.

Vannatta asked how to handle media requests. Jackson indicated media requests should be forwarded to staff, the Chair, and Vice Chair and they will make a decision on who the most appropriate person is to respond. Vannatta requested responses be handled in a timely manner. Eltahir stated media requests for the City typically go through the City's communication manager. Tibbetts requested the Executive Committee create a document outlining the process.

### **Community Equity Task Force Report**

Tibbetts stated the task force is reviewing tools to identify work that needs to be done. Tibbetts stated the task force wrote a mission statement that all members can use if the

community inquires about the work of the task force. Tibbetts stated it was also decided proxies will not serve on subcommittees. Brown stated the City Manager indicated staff does not have the bandwidth to take on all the work of the task force and is looking to hire someone to lead the effort. Brown stated the policing subcommittee of the task force recently started meeting. Eltahir clarified proxies only serve on subcommittees if they are serving on behalf of the task force member. Eltahir stated staff is looking to hire a consultant to serve as a facilitator.

#### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Vannatta encouraged Commissioners to keep their cameras on during the meeting. Vannatta requested two items be placed on the next agenda including a discussion on closed captioning and a plan for community education in 2022 focused on Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers.

Nilles asked if Cedar Rapids still requires landlords to attend Section 8 training. Munsterman-Scriven stated landlords are required to take part in SafeCR training. Nilles stated he would like the Commission to have training on Section 8 in the future.

#### **ADJOURN**

Moved by Vannatta, seconded by Forsyth-Christy to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m.  
Approved unanimously

Respectfully submitted by:  
Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant