



MINUTES

Civil Rights Commission

6:00 PM - Wednesday, March 2, 2022
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, March 2, 2022, at 6:00 PM, in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue, with the following members present:

PRESENT: Jo-Smith Brizard, Rafaela Cadena, Denise Bridges, Angelica Vannatta, Kent Jackson, Jennifer Tibbetts, Renae Forsyth-Christy, and Steven Moshier

ABSENT: Okpara Rice, Bret Nilles, and Dave Baumler

STAFF PRESENT: Amal Eltahir and Alicia Abernathey

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Commissioners and staff introduced themselves. Brizard, Cadena, and Bridges shared their background and what interested them in joining the Commission.

Jackson joined the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

PUBLIC FORUM

No one from the public wished to speak.

REGULAR AGENDA

Motion to approve the February 2, 2022 minutes

Moved by Tibbetts, seconded by Forsyth-Christy, to approve the February 2, 2022 minutes.
Approved unanimously

Staff Liaison Report (Amal)

Eltahir stated she is meeting with Human Resources this week to discuss the review of City policies and work on the diversity training for City employees. Tibbetts asked if the Commission could be involved in trainings for City employees. Eltahir stated she can reach out to the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission (CRCRC) regarding train-the-trainer on welcoming and inclusion training.

Cedar Rapids Executive Director/Liaison Report (Stefanie/Renae)

Forsyth-Christy provided an update on the mapping project CRCRC is working on and stated the first reading of the changes to their ordinance, Chapter 69, went through the Cedar Rapids City Council and passed. Forsyth-Christy stated one of the changes in the ordinance is increasing their commission size from seven members to nine members. Forsyth-Christy stated Maurice Davis from the African American Museum of Iowa gave a presentation at the last CRCRC meeting.

Cadena asked about the Legislative 101 sessions CRCRC is hosting. Tibbetts explained what occurred at the February 25th session. Moshier stated a legislative forum will be held on March 19th at Beams Auditorium.

Inquiry & Complaint Update (Alicia)

Abernathy stated there were no inquiries or complaints filed since the last meeting. Eltahir shared a call she received from a local landlord regarding service animals. Commissioners requested that call and future calls that are similar in nature be added to the document.

Equity Report (Angelica)

- **School Districts Partnership (Jennifer)**
- **Marion Alliance for Racial Equity Partnership (Steve)**

Tibbetts explained the partnership between the school districts, the Commission, and the Marion Alliance for Racial Equity (MARE). Moshier provided an update on the most recent meeting. Vannatta asked for a volunteer to join a subcommittee, on behalf of the Commission, to develop an equity statement with the school districts. Cadena volunteered.

Bridges and Moshier explained the partnership with MARE. Moshier stated he communicated the Commission could provide assistance to MARE as needed.

Low & Moderate Income Housing Assistance Grant Update & Committee Selection

Vannatta stated the applications for the low and moderate income housing assistance grant are due March 15. Vannatta stated one item to address is how to handle requests for extensions in the grant funding and if it should impact future funding. Eltahir stated there will be changes to the rubric used for scoring applications and changes to the agreement with award recipients to address these items.

The Commission discussed reviewing the framework of the grant funding and establishing more concrete policies. Vannatta stated following the current round of applications a subcommittee can work on reviewing the framework and making changes. Brizard and Moshier volunteered to serve on the review committee for the current applications. Cadena and Tibbetts volunteered to serve on a committee to review the framework and policies.

Strategic Plan Discussion

- **How we got here**
- **Objective #2**

Vannatta shared an overview of how the Commission determined the objectives and action steps for the 2022 strategic plan.

The Commission discussed how to work on objective 2: educate the public about human and civil rights. Commissioners indicated they would like to address Know Your Rights and the Overview of the Complaint Process trainings first, with the first one taking place at the April Commission meeting. The Commission discussed various ways to participate in more events taking place in Marion, rather than the usual events in Cedar Rapids. Staff will bring a list of outreach events to the next meeting for discussion.

Proclamation Discussion

Vannatta indicated the current list of proclamations and two requests for additional proclamations were included in the packet. The Commission discussed current proclamations and possible additions. Commissioners volunteered to accept upcoming proclamations. The Commission agreed to add Native American Heritage Month to the list of proclamations.

Women's History Month Discussion (Jennifer)

Tibbetts shared what she plans to do for outreach for Women's History Month including social media posts.

PUBLIC FORUM

Trinity and Mimi, Coe College students, indicated they were observing to see how civil rights meetings are run and asked how the Commission keeps up with outreach, engaging with the community, and interacting with one another. Vannatta explained the Commission is governed by Iowa Open Meeting Laws which leads to restrictions on meetings and communicating with each other. Tibbetts shared how the Commission handles outreach.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Bridges shared an event that is coming up in May that will focus on gun violence.

Brizard stated he was not aware of some of the recent outreach events and asked how to get that information. It was indicated some events are shared in CRCRC reports and Commissioners can share events with each other through staff.

ADJOURN

Moved by Forsyth-Christy, seconded by Cadena, to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant