



MINUTES

Civil Rights Commission

6:00 PM - Wednesday, June 1, 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, June 1, 2022, at 6:00 PM, in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue, with the following members present:

PRESENT: Kent Jackson, Denise Bridges, Okpara Rice, Angelica Vannatta, Jennifer Tibbetts, Bret Nilles, Dave Baumler, Renae Forsyth-Christy, Steven Moshier, and Jo-Smith Brizard

ABSENT: Rafaela Cadena

STAFF PRESENT: Kara Bullerman and Alicia Abernathey

OTHERS PRESENT: Ana Clymer

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.

PUBLIC FORUM

No one from the public wished to speak.

PRESENTATIONS/GUEST SPEAKERS

Kara Bullerman, City Attorney

Kara Bullerman, City Attorney, provided an overview of what Commissioners can and cannot do as they serve on a City board or commission. Bullerman stated when Commissioners intend to speak on behalf of the Commission, it needs to be approved by the Commission. Bullerman stated Commissioners need to make it clear they are not speaking on behalf of the Commission when sharing their own thoughts and opinions. Bullerman stated the Commission cannot speak on behalf of the Commission unless authority is granted to do so.

Bullerman stated when they are urgent proclamations or issues that need to be addressed, the Commission Chair and Vice Chair can work with staff to have the Mayor issue a proclamation on behalf of the entire City. Bullerman stated the Commission have

talking points that all Commissioners use, but they need to be formally approved by the Commission. Bullerman stated the Commission can make recommendations to the City Council.

Moshier asked when Commissioners are advocates for certain issues, at what point should they abstain from discussions on relevant topics. Bullerman stated it is important the Commission remains neutral when discussing issues and if Commissioner feels they cannot remain neutral in specific situations it is best to abstain from discussions. The Commission discussed examples of when it is and isn't appropriate to speak on behalf of the Commission.

Bullerman left the meeting at 6:47 p.m.

REGULAR AGENDA

Motion to approve the May 4, 2022 minutes

Moved by Nilles, seconded by Forsyth-Christy, to approve the May 4, 2022 minutes.

Approved unanimously

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

Forsyth-Christy stated the May Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission (CRCRC) meeting was mostly a going away party for Investigator Bernie Walther, as he retired from their Commission.

Staff Liaison Report (Alicia)

Abernathey provided the staff liaison report including updates on initiatives that came out of the City's equity taskforce. The updates included the review of the City's personnel policies, an update on the new data collection software purchased by the police department, and recent implicit bias training provided to the police department. Abernathey provided additional updates including an update on the Commission's ordinance review and an update on recent inquiries and intakes filed with the Commission.

Tibbetts joined the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Commissioners provided positive feedback on the new staff liaison report. Brizard stated at an equity taskforce meeting the Police Chief indicated he reviews complaints against police officers and he did not agree with this approach. Abernathey indicated the item was not listed on the agenda so the Commission could not continue discussion on the matter. Abernathey indicated she will place the item on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting and she would invite Police Chief Mike Kitsmiller to join the meeting.

School Districts Partnership Report - Equity Statement Update (Steve)

Moshier shared a handout of a draft equity statement to be possibly be adopted by the City. Moshier stated the school districts prefer the City issue an equity statement that they can get behind. The Commission reviewed the document and provided feedback on verbiage.

Brizard asked how the school districts would get behind an equity statement issued from the City when they are all separate entities. Moshier stated the school districts will need to create their own equity statements, that support the City's statement. Tibbetts asked why the equity definition was only focused on a race lens. Tibbetts also asked why only some protected classes are included, and not all of the protected classes outlined in the Commission's ordinance. Moshier provided an explanation. The Commission agreed to send feedback to Moshier by June 15, and then a subcommittee comprised of Nilles, Brizard, and Moshier would meet to finalize the changes. The updated equity statement will be shared with the Commission at the July meeting for review and a possible vote of approval.

[Draft Equity Statement \(Handout provided at meeting\)](#)

Strategic Plan Check-In (Angelica)

Vannatta stated she will be meeting with the City Attorney, City Manager and Mayor to get approval for the Commission to do certain things in public settings, including making public statements. The Commission discussed various training ideas as part of the outreach portion of the strategic plan.

Community Outreach Discussion (All)

Abernathey shared details of the upcoming Juneteenth and Pride Fest events. The Commission discussed upcoming proclamations and upcoming outreach events. It was suggested the Commission participate in a voter registration event on September 22, 2022 and the March for Our Lives event on June 11, 2022.

PUBLIC FORUM

Ana Clymer stated she appreciates Moshier's work on the equity statement. Clymer stated she would like to determine how to the Commission's knowledge and expertise could be used to educate the public on their rights, specifically students in the local school districts.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Brizard shared information on a pride button event at the Library.

Abernathey shared information on the Foster Care Review Board on behalf of Cadena.

Tibbetts shared she is joining the CRCRC as a Civil Rights Investigator.

ADJOURN

Moved by Baumler, seconded by Rice, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Approved unanimously

Respectfully submitted by:
Alicia Abernathey, Executive Assistant