



MINUTES

Civil Rights Commission

6:00 PM - Wednesday, April 2, 2025
Marion Public Library, 1101 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, April 2, 2025, at 6:00 PM, in the Boardroom of the Marion Public Library, 1101 6th Avenue, with the following members present:

PRESENT: Denise Bridges, Renae Forsyth-Christy, Katie Tanner, Joseph Peterson, and Andrew Wixel

ABSENT: Kathy Hagler, Cody Crawford, Mary Beth O'Neill, and Etherton Muchirahondo

STAFF PRESENT: Alicia Abernathey and Kim Downs

OTHERS PRESENT: Ana Clymer

CALL TO ORDER

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

REGULAR AGENDA

Motion to approve the March 5, 2025 minutes

Moved by Bridges, seconded by Wixel, to approve the March 5, 2025 minutes.
Approved unanimously

Staff Liaison Report

Alicia Abernathey provided the staff liaison report including an update on intakes and inquiries and changes to the meeting structure. Abernathey also shared Forsyth-Christy will provide the Commission's annual presentation to City Council tomorrow evening and Commissioners Muchirahondo and Hagler were featured in a State of the City video featuring new residents. Abernathey also shared information about SF 579, a civil rights related bill. Commissioners asked questions about the potential impact SF 579 would have on them if approved. Abernathey explained the major change for the Commission would be the reduction of Commissioner terms to two years.

Strategic Plan Check-In

Forsyth-Christy shared the current strategic plan expires in June 2025, and asked if there were initial thoughts for updating the plan. Peterson asked if the Commission would

consider the current plan successful. Forsyth-Christy indicated she would consider it successful to a certain degree, and indicated the outreach plan helped to better define certain initiatives.

Wixel asked if there was anything that can be checked off as unsuccessful or already in the outreach plan. Tanner shared the intention was to introduce the topic ahead of work group discussions with the hope conversations will make it clear if the outreach plan and strategic plan are in alignment or if changes need to be made. Tanner indicated the strategic plan is meant to be an overarching guide, rather than a checklist.

Abernathy shared the Commission will want to consider if any elements in the strategic plan are duplicate of the newly adopted outreach plan. Abernathy shared SF 507 is being considered and would prohibit certain things in relation to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). With the Commission's strategic plan making reference to DEI, adjustments may need to be made if the bill passes.

Outreach Plan Initiatives Check In

- **Minority owned business data collection**
- **Pride celebration**
- **Public forum**
- **Social media prepared statements**
- **Outreach event participation**
- **Part time employee**

Minority owned business data collection

Tanner stated the working group is meeting for the first time tonight.

Pride celebration

Tanner stated she and O'Neill are assisting staff with setting up a pride display. Abernathy and Tanner provided additional details regarding setup of the display.

Public forum

Abernathy stated she and Hagler met with a representative with the Department of Justice to gather information on hosting a hate crimes public forum. The working group will meet tonight to discuss details.

Social media prepared statements

Wixel and Forsyth-Christy indicated they need to drill down on the scope a bit more. Abernathy clarified prepared statements for social media was identified in the outreach plan, and are separate from media releases and letters of support or opposition. Wixel shared draft social media statements he prepared.

Outreach event participation

Abernathy confirmed the Commission is setup to attend the City Showcase event. Abernathy will keep the Commission informed of other events including Spark in the Park and any other Marion event of interest for the Commission.

Part time employee

Tanner will look into a possibility of an internship program.

PUBLIC FORUM

Ana Clymer, resident, provided comments on how actions of the federal, state and local government impact things like diversity, equity and inclusion. Clymer provided comments discouraging any premature action and encouraged the City to stand by the equity statement.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Tanner asked about the Iowa League of Civil and Human Rights. Abernathey stated she should have an update at the next meeting.

Wixel shared information about an app that assists with contacting legislators.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Alicia Abernathey, Executive Assistant