

# Chaska Human Rights Minutes

Thursday, March 28

Meeting called to order at 6:30

1. Roll Call

Present: Bean, Carlson, Dunbar, Haga, Welvaert, Scarborough

Absent: Leggett, Spreadbury, White

*1a. Introduction of new members*

New Commissioner Scarborough introduced himself to the group.

2. Motion to adopt the agenda. Moved by Haga, seconded by Carlson. Motion approved.

3. Open Forum: No guests.

4. Motion to approve minutes.

Carlson noted two corrections: She was elected Vice Chair and on page 3 City of Richfield work plan for their HRC. Motion to approve as amended by Carlson, seconded by Dunbar. Motion approved.

5. Treasurer's Report:

No expenditures yet this year, so balance remains \$2,000.

6. New Business

a. Joint Work Session, June 17, 4:30 – 7:00 pm

Kabat gave an overview of topics that will be covered. There are a lot of new commissioners and new city council members, so it's a great opportunity to get everyone together to provide solid background and understanding of open meeting law and other responsibilities. Administrator Podrahsy will also go into city mission, values, priorities, and how commissions interact with council.

Welvaert asked for an update on a potential joint session with the City Council specific to the HRC's work to better understand what expectations are and our commission's role relative to the council.

Kabat noted it's a topic the council will discuss in the future, and likely will have an opportunity to do sometime this summer. Given there's a special election in May and the June work session, those are priority and we'll look for that opportunity after.

b. Discussion: Equity and Inclusion

Welvaert provided some background to group. At the beginning of each year, the HRC adopts a theme as a commission to work with throughout year. Last year's theme was homelessness and affordable housing. This year the commission decided in January to focus on equity and inclusion. With no meeting in February, this idea is still very new and there's

a lot to discuss. Welvaert noted she had been thinking about how to turn this theme into action this year. She wondered if it was too broad, since that work should always be central as its part of the commission's mission. She asked if the group wanted to modify the theme and have it be focused on race or identity. If not, how does the commission make that topic manageable – in smaller pieces – because there are a lot of things that fall under inclusion.

She also wanted to point out that on April 16<sup>th</sup> there will be a community equity conversation at Clover Ridge Elementary. There have been several racial incidents in Chaska in the past months and while the district is working on it she wondered how the HRC can partner. It's a broader community issue. She also noted she'd heard that the League of Women Voters was having a diversity panel in April.

Carlson noted that one of the most current human rights issues in the U.S., and certainly that can be narrowed down to Chaska, are equity issues. From her perspective the moral compass for the city comes through the commission via the City Council, and the HRC should be the navigator of issues. She noted disappointment with what she's heard about issues in the school district. She was disappointed to not see representatives of the school board, members of existing city council at the recent Chaska Uncensored event. She'd like for the commission to offer to the schools, the school board, our willingness to partner with them to have broad discussions about how we can address these issues. If we look at the history of Chaska, the immigrants that came here – this community was settled by people who weren't from here.

This is a great learning opportunity to help members of our community that are struggling, and that extends to the school board. She is concerned that if we don't speak up about this issue that the commission is not performing the human rights and duties we have and the purpose of the commission.

She noted that the League of Women Voters is hosting a program in Council Chambers at 9 am on April 13 focused on diversity within our community and opportunities for us to expand our individual roles and how we can be advocates.

Dunbar said she was a little disturbed regarding emails about attendance at a community event and the connection to open meeting laws. She believes that to discourage someone from going to something was a disservice.

Welvaert said when members saw each other they didn't make a point of talking to each other.

Haga said she understood the discomfort but that statute applies and there's not much grey area.

Kabat said he was in no way attempting to dissuade participation, but wanted to make sure we're being clear about what the law says.

Dunbar said it's an issue that will keep coming up and the commission needs to figure out a way to deal with it. She noted it will likely happen again at the diversity conversation on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

Kabat said it is best to avoid having a quorum at any public meeting. There is no situation where there are any questions raised. If there is a determination multiple commissioners are going to go somewhere the city can post that. The work session a good opportunity to get more information and education on the topic. Everyone on the commission has chosen to serve and there are statutory obligations related to that.

Welvaert asked again if the group thought whether equity and inclusion too broad a theme.

Haga noted that the issue is much larger than anything going on at the schools, and really is a community issue and wondered if there are opportunities for the commission to lead in fostering those conversations.

Scarborough said he thought equity and inclusion might be too broad and wondered how we can we get to understanding. That can be different cultures, different religions. Is there anything we could do be more specific to zero in on?

Carlson liked that idea. What our students learn in Chaska, they'll take to other communities. We need to start here.

Kabat noted that the YMCA created programming around unconscious bias and participants go through an exhibit. Chief Knight and other city staff have participated. Exploring possibilities for more staff participation.

Dunbar asked if there was a possibility we could do something like that for the community.

Kabat said there might be an opportunity to do an evening workshop.

Welvaert said that sounded like a great community event. If we learn about our own process of viewing the world that can make a big difference.

Kabat agreed and said it reinforces that experiences are different for everyone. With unconscious bias training you understand how to analyze the first few seconds of interaction with someone. Understanding your own perception, how you interact with people is an important first step.

Welvaert asked Kabat to explore and he said he'd reach out to the Y.

Carlson asked about planning for specific events.

Haga volunteered to work with Jackie Johnson at ECCS Community Ed about possibilities for partnership.

c. Census – Update on city involvement

Welvaert asked if there was an update on Chaska as a Complete Count City. Kabat said not yet, and that more information was needed.

Carlson said she would work to provide more information and figure out what next steps might look like by April.

Welvaert said it was important for the HRC to support/promote/ensure residents participate. The commission can help dispel myths and get facts out there. Dunbar also volunteered to help.

7. New Business

a. Discussion: River City Days Booth - July 26-28, 2019

The group discussed which days the commission should be present. Motion to have a booth just on Friday and Saturday was made by Bean and seconded by Dunbar. Motion approved.

Welvaert asked for interest in being on the planning committee. Bean asked what that involved, and what kind of information was shared. Kabat said it could include census information, YMCA training, things to explore. Welvaert said visuals aids are good; previously had discussed something along the theme Chaska is for Everybody.

Welvaert, Bean, White will be on the initial planning group.

8. Announcements

- Launch Ministry is having their 10th Anniversary Spring Breakfast on Sat. 4/27 at 9am at Hazeltine.
- Welvaert read a thank you card from Libby Fairchild, who received the Human Rights award.
- Welvaert shared a packet from the Jewish Community Relations Council which included a thank you for the commission's report.
- Carlson reminded the group of the candidate forum on April 4 for City Council Special Election Wards 2 and 4. There will be a YouTube recording available.

9. Our next meeting date is April 25, 2019.

10. Motion to adjourn made by Carlson, seconded by Scarborough. Meeting adjourned at 7:41.