

Owatonna Human Rights Commission – Minutes
April 9, 2019

The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Tuesday, April 9, 2019 in the Second Floor Conference of the City Administration Building. Commission Chairman Cords called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m. and took roll call. Present were Commissioners Ethan Cords, Fred Ventura, Jim Gunderson; and John Worden; City Administrator Kris Busse and Administrative Specialist Jeanette Clawson. Commissioners David Emanuelson, Ryan Gillespie and Jamie Vanoosbree were unable to attend.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Commissioner Cords welcomed everyone to the meeting and Minutes of the February 12th, February 20th and March 12th OHRC Meetings were reviewed. Commissioner Worden made motion to approve these minutes as prepared, Commissioner Gunderson seconded the motion; all members present voted aye in approval.

During Commissioner Comments: Commissioner Ventura reported he attended a Diversity & Inclusion webinar at Spherion with City Administrator Busse and Human Resource Director Gorski. He offered to share his meeting notes with other commissioners. Commissioner Ventura then distributed pamphlets received from the MN Department of Human Rights, “Your Rights: The Minnesota Human Rights Act”, there are available in several languages.

During Old Business, Commissioner Ventura shared information about the event planned with the Steele County Historical Society, “Building a Community of Dignity & Respect”. The event is Thursday, May 23rd at 6:00 p.m. at the Steele County History Center. Sergio Aguilar, Director of Latino Affairs at MSU-Mankato will lead an open conversation on race, hate and healing. Event information will be posted on the City’s website and in the Weekly Meeting Schedules. Jeanette will contact Stephanie Kibler for the event poster and then forward to the OHRC Commissioners to distribute. City Administrator Busse suggested contacting persons who attended the February OHRC Meetings and the Owatonna Ministerial Association about this event.

Commissioner Cords reported he will be a member of the City’s Complete Count Committee. The committee will be promoting the 2020 Census to capture accurate count of the city’s population.

Commissioner Cords reported on Friday, March 22nd, the OHRC sub-committee for Racial Equity met to organize; Commissioners Emanuelson, Vanoosbree, Cords and Ventura attended this meeting. This committee will consist of 11 members: 2 Latino representatives; 2 Afro American representatives, 2 Caucasian representatives; 2 Somali representatives and 3 OHRC Commissioners. The committee will serve as a sounding board to hear multi-cultural diversity issues; they plan to meet quarterly or as needed.

Commissioner Cords reported he attended a meeting held by ISD #761 on March 19th. The school district is making plans for Bukata Hayes, speaker with the Greater Mankato Diversity Council for three presentations in Owatonna to promote cultural togetherness. Mr. Hayes recently made presentations to the students which were well received. No dates have been set for these meetings which will be open to the public.

During new business, information received today from the League of MN Human Rights Commission’s for the 2019 Essay Contest was reviewed. The commissioners present agreed the OHRC would not participate as entries are due within three weeks.

With no additional business, Commissioner Cords made a motion to adjourn at 6:10 p.m.; Commissioner Gunderson seconded the motion and the meeting ended. The next OHRC Meeting will be Tuesday, May 14th at 5:00 p.m.