

## Owatonna Human Rights Commission - Minutes

The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 in the Second Floor Conference Room at City Hall and accessible via Microsoft TEAMS Call-in Number 507-242-3225; Conference ID 374 940 357#. Commission Chairman Gunderson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. with Commissioner Emanuelson, City Administrator Busse, Administrative Specialist Clawson and Mayor Kuntz present. Attending virtually were Commissioners Effertz, Vanoosbree, and Worden. Commissioner Gillespie was unable to attend.

Commissioner Gunderson welcomed everyone to the meeting and lead the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Mayor Kuntz explained City Council is reviewing the process of appointing members to various city boards and commissions and he would like current member input. Each member was asked to prepare a list of four to five qualifications future OHRC members should possess to share with him and City Administrator Busse.

Minutes of the December 8, 2020 OHRC Meeting were reviewed. Commissioner Worden made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented; Commissioner Effertz seconded the motion; all members voted aye in approval and the motion carried.

During Old Business, Commissioner Vanoosbree commented no change in the Community Reading Circles, they have meet separately over the past two months. Members of Better Together and the Cultural Diversity Network plan to meet this Thursday regarding merger of their groups. Anticipate it will take 2-3 months to finalize the group's structure. This week they will select their new name so they can proceed with grant applications. Commissioner Gunderson hopes OHRC will work with this group and encouraged the OHRC Commissioners to participate. Commissioner Vanoosbree is actively involved, and Commissioner Emanuelson attended their last a meeting with request to serve on a committee but not as a board member.

The OHRC 2021 Winter Newsletter prepared by Commissioner Effertz was presented. Copy will be posted to the City's website and sent to OHRC Commission Members and OHRC Contacts. OPU and the Owatonna Chamber will be asked to include in their newsletters.

The OHRC ad on the LED Billboard is currently



Commissioner Gunderson commented the bright colors are eye catching and he hopes the OHRC continues use of the LED Billboard to promote community awareness of the commission. City Administrator Busse will follow-up with the billboard company to confirm the ad will change to MLK Day message next week.

During New Business, Commissioner Vanoosbree said she recently became aware of two incidents which may have been racial bias by Owatonna Police Officers and she contacted the MN Human Rights Commission as an individual, not as an OHRC Member. The state office advised her the victim of potential violations must file a complaint with their office, so she plans to meet and assist an individual later this week. City Administrator Busse asked if she spoke with Chief Hiller about these incidents to allow the City to investigate and respond to the complaints. The City investigates all complaints and a

disposition prepared, if someone does not agree with the disposition, they could contact the state office to request further investigation. Mayor Kuntz commented good communication is always needed and suggested she contact Police Chief Hiller, Human Resource Director Lynn Gorski, or City Administrator Kris Busse with these complaints and future complaints if received. Commissioner Worden commented the OHRC's mission is to educate the community and advise Council of Human Rights matters. Commissioner Gunderson asked if OHRC action is needed on these complaints. Commissioner Vanoosbree said one individual will file a formal complaint with the City and the other individual is pursuing other options. City Administrator Busse commented the City conducts a complete and thorough investigation of all claims when reported.

Commissioner Gunderson thanked Commissioner Vanoosbree for being available to serve as a sounding board for complaints for these individuals. Commissioner Emanuelson asked how the OHRC can become more of a sounding board for the community. Mayor Kuntz commented any contact with Somali residents should be directed through the mosque. Commissioner Gunderson recommended OHRC Members participate in the Courageous Community Leaders Program offered by ISD#761; Commissioner Gunderson, Commissioner Cords and City Administrator participated in the program during 2020 and another session is planned to begin this spring. Commissioner Worden commented he was contacted by several small business minority business owners concerned about meeting their rent payments during the COVID Pandemic and asked if the OHRC or City could assist. City Administrator explained the City provided small businesses grants of over \$500,000 with CARES Act Funds during 2020. Currently, the City has no funds, but Steele County just received \$716,000 to assist small businesses so businesses should be advised to contact Steele County Administrator Scott Goldberg.

City Administrator Busse confirmed the Library is preparing an event for Black History Month, the month of February. Information will be on the City's website and posted when available.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 9, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. and will be option to access by TEAMS.

At 6:15 p.m., Commissioner Emanuelson made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Effertz seconded the motion; with no objections, the meeting was adjourned.