

Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
November 19, 2003

Attendees: Liliana Silvestry-Neilon, Nancy Clark, John Hagen, Susan Wagner, Pat MacLean, Jeanne Poppe, Trish Wiechmann

Meeting called to order at 6 pm by Nancy Clark. Nancy and John apologized for missing the last meeting as it seemed to come a week too early.

Discussion: Projects for upcoming year.

Essay contest

Ideas for next year on the essay contest – have information at the conferences at Ellis MS. Sue will see about getting info to Queens yet this year since conferences are next week. Trish will do posters that can go up at the schools. Jeanne will contact Candace Raskin about getting something in Ellis E-news announcing the contest. December 15 is the deadline. Jeanne is still working on getting readers/judges for the contest. Awards will be given out at the MLK, Jr event but also at the January 20 city council meeting.

Human Rights Award

Liliana said she is aware that some people want to nominate Father Paul Nelson for the award. Trish will put something in the newspapers announcing that nominations are being accepted. Deadline for nominations will be December 15.

Martin Luther King, Jr. event

Liliana said Jim Peck wants to be a speaker and she is trying to get George Thompson who is the executive director of the Cultural Diversity Council in Rochester. Liliana will check with St Olaf church about if the St Olaf women are willing to serve the food only or if they would also prepare the food. Trish is preparing a flyer/poster for the MLK event. Question about sponsorship – will other churches also contribute money? If so we want to include them in the sponsorship listing. Times of event – march at 10 am with program beginning at St Olaf Church by 10:30 am. We will get the flyers out after the next meeting.

Ethnic Festival

Committee has met for the first time. No one from the Human Rights Commission attended because they weren't aware of the meeting time. But for the next meeting Sue Wagner and John Hagen will attend as reps from the HRC. Liliana said the committee is considering changing the name from Ethnic Festival to CultureFest or something similar to try to bring the idea that more people can be involved. Sandy Forstner from the Chamber of Commerce suggested at the meeting they change the date of the event to be during the 4th of July weekend to get it more exposure. Some discussion regarding the date change was HRC felt it shouldn't be during the 4th of July festivities but could maybe be better in early September (not Labor Day weekend). Members of the committee included Nikki Merfeld, Sandy Forstner, Carlos, Nitaya J., Jody Furinger (?Hormel). The next meeting will be December 10 at 4 pm at the Welcome Center.

Owatonna Training

Trish handed out copies of the Bias and Hate Crime Response Plan that Owatonna HRC has put together. Pat mentioned when she was in Lincoln, Nebraska she read about the local HRC hosting monthly open forums inviting community members to come and talk, share concerns, complaints. She has a newspaper article she will bring next time. The question of should we have a response plan in place that means the local HRC does more in the community got us to the question of do we want to consider being more involved as HRC? Liliana said she has been on the local board for more than three years and she would like to see us do something. Jeanne said she will check with Winona to see what they are doing and Trish will check with Owatonna to see what they are doing. We will also check on budget and grants in those communities.

Reminder of the state wide conference on Friday December 5 with Julian Bond speaking. Jeanne will be getting more information from Riverland Community College regarding the anti-racism grant they received.

Our December meeting will be Wednesday, December 17. It was decided we would have meetings on the third Wed of each month (a move from Thursday) to not interfere with Liliana's board meeting.

Meeting adjourned (Sue Wagner moved, John, Liliana, Pat seconded).

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Poppe, secretary