

Human Rights Commission
November 28, 2000
7:00 PM

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Gabe Garcia, Nancy Clark, Pat MacLean, Liliana Silvestry, Lee Bjorndal, Gary Morgan, and Virginia Larsen.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Watsana Thiravong and John Hagen.

ALSO PRESENT: Tricia Wiechmann, City Liaison, Kervia Mertha and Nikki Merfeld of the media and George Thomas, citizen.

Since there are so many new faces, Pat MacLean provided a brief history of the Human Rights Commission. What is the purpose of the Commission? Discussed and passed out Charter information.

It was decided that one of first things this Commission should begin with is understanding it's purpose. We will need to elect a Chairperson. We will do that at the January meeting since some members will not be officially appointed until December 18.

Do members need to sign a confidentiality agreement? What has been done in the past? Do we have minutes that can be circulated? Tricia Wiechmann indicated that she is new to this position and hasn't seen any recent minutes. Most were from 1999. Pat MacLean indicated that she would check her files to see what she has, but most of everything would be with Cindy Lohn (former Chairperson of the Commission). It was suggested that someone call Cindy to see what she has for Commission information and also check to see if she has keys for the PO Box and City Hall.

Liliana spoke of the Human Right Commission of which she was apart of in South Bend, Indiana.

Question – aren't things (situations) handled within different agencies? (i.e., schools, etc.) How do people know to approach the Commission? That's the biggest threshold, getting people to approach the Commission. This should be a proactive group.

At one time, the Commission did some radio commercials. Where are these? Also need to check with Cindy Lohn about these.

Whatever happened with the Community Circles? Where is the information from these meetings? It was suggested that a member of the Commission check with Jeanne Poppe to see if she has information. What about Town Meetings? From these came Apex and Welcome Center ideas.

Virginia passed along a couple of examples of things that the Commission has done over the past couple of years. She also noted that the Commission has given an award the last two years to individuals. Is this something that we want to continue?

What about mediation training? In our brochure it says that Commission members are trained. We are not. Will the City pay for something like this? George Thomas noted that he is a trainer.

He indicated that he would gather information and provide training brochures to Commission members.

Do we have enforcement powers? Is there a Human Rights ordinance? Should we develop something like this? How about a hate crime ordinance and a response plan, do we have these in place?

Discussion...

We have brought up some “grand” ideas. What we need to do is develop a wish list of what we need/want to do. First, we need to elect a Chairperson or Co-Chairs.

The Commission is a large group and only meets monthly. Does every member of the commission need to be in on investigations, etc.? It was suggested that a sub-committee be developed to handle investigations and grievances. Maybe we need to develop several sub-committees and divide up the tasks. We should check into starting up the Community Circles again. Pat suggested a Public Relations committee as well.

Should we invite people to the next meeting to get input/ideas?

Lee suggested that we put together a wish list including goals, etc. Have everybody put something together and share. It was asked that everybody put something together and bring to the January meeting.

We will continue to meet on the 4th Tuesday of the month with no meeting in December. We will start fresh in January.

Agenda for January will include selecting a Chairperson, selecting a Secretary, reviewing budget for 2001, and discussion of mediation training, how much? who? etc.

Commission would like to have Tricia, City Liaison, be the secretary, but since she is not an actual member of the Commission, she will be unable to do this. She will send information out to Commission members though.

Commission suggested having an open meeting in February to update the community. Tentatively set for February 27 at 7:00 PM at the Library. We will need to come prepared, have updated brochures (in several languages) available. People will come with questions, we should be prepared with answers.

Liliana will invite Jeanne Poppe to the next meeting to discuss Community Circles and will bring the mediation training information.

Next meeting will be Tuesday, January 23, 2001 at 7:00 PM at City Admin. building lower level conference room.

Submitted by:

Tricia Wiechmann