

Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 31, 2004

Attendees: Nancy Clark, Gabe Garcia, Susan Wagner, Jeanne Poppe, John Hagen, Masuka Mogambo

City Liaison: Jim Hurm, City Administrator

Media: Matt Merritt, Austin Daily Herald

Public: Dan Kane

The minutes stood approved. Susan mentioned that she has clarification regarding the Ethnic Festival Art contest – all Art forms will be accepted including computer generated art. The Ethnic Festival date is August 29, 2004.

Request from Gary Williams (Albert Lea HRC) asking what we would like to see on the agenda for the regional meeting. The meeting will be Monday April 19 at 7 pm. It will be at Christ Episcopal Church, 204 Fountain in Albert Lea. Notes have not yet been distributed from the last regional meeting. We all agreed it was worthwhile to get together as a region.

Nancy attended a conference where she saw Vicki Olivo who is the enforcement officer from MN Human Rights. Nancy brought back anti-discrimination buttons.

The HRC began to review the draft of the code that the subcommittee is presenting. We will work to make changes and then will request the city council will approve our recommendations.

Subdivision 2 – Gabe said he felt we didn't understand the mechanism to advise the council. Jim Hurm stated it could come through a work session of the city council where issues are brought. He also suggested either he or Tricia would be the administrative people to whom we need to bring issues.

We suggest we change subdivision 2 to read like Winona's Article III.

Hurm asked "do the functions under subdivision 7 fit the purpose as listed in subdivision 2?" We felt the things we want to do would be:

- Educate

- Let others know a group of people exist – there is a place to turn if they have human rights issues

- Self-promotion – awareness

Hurm suggested there may be another category of people to educate – new people within our community – the first generation Americans, with the rest of the population fitting into another category

The process for revising the code will be the subcommittee will do the drafting of changes it will go to the Human Rights Commission for their final approval it will then go to the City Attorney for review and when it is then ready it will go to the city council.

Again going through the process step by step:

Article 1 – ok

Article 2 – ok

Article 3 – change to reflect first meeting of year

Article 4 – use city staff as resource – we need to work on this part to have reference to duties in the code

Article 5 – ok

Article 6 – include language about “at discretion of chair”

Article 7 – subcommittee needs to review

Articles 8 and 9 – ok

There was a question about Human Relations – what does that mean exactly and is that the terminology we want to use?

Nancy brought some ideas to purchase and show videos on certain human rights issues. It was decided to bring these ideas to the regional meeting to see if we can pool resources to purchase these tapes and then play them locally.

Jeanne mentioned a Native American Awareness Gathering at Ridgewater College in Willmar. Nancy also had a calendar with artwork from the Hopkins HRC perhaps we might want to do something similar from the Ethnic Festival art winners. The Hopkins HR mission statement is “To foster a community that embraces diversity, mutual respect, and principles of equal opportunity. The commission will take a forthright stance against discrimination and prejudice of all kinds to ensure the fair treatment of all Hopkins residents.”

Public comments by Dan Kane: Dan asked what if anything had been done with his 14 suggestions that he gave to the HRC in the past, he thought they would be on old business tonight but they were not included. He doesn’t know the status of the list – Nancy said the list has been taken under advisement. He asked what dues Austin pays to the State Dept of HR? He also asked if there had been any special meetings since the last meeting and when was the date for the subcommittee meeting – that date was March 10. He also asked if the executive director of the Welcome Center was a member of the HRC and yes Liliana Silvestry- Neilon is a member.

John Hagen moved and Susan Wagner seconded to adjourn. The next Austin HRC meeting is Wednesday, April 21 at 7 PM. Final reminder of the April 19 regional meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Poppe, secretary