

**Human Rights Commission
Minutes for November 18, 2008**

Present: Janet Anderson, Stephanie Haedt, Sue Stevenson, Ron Langrell, Kirsten Lindbloom, Liliana Silvestry, Bob Vilt, Kathryn Martin, and Tricia Wiechmann (city liaison).

Absent: John Hagen.

Guest: Dan Kane and Representatives from the Advocates for Human Rights, Becca Riedell and Aysem Senyurekli.

Meeting called to order at 6:09 p.m.

1. Agenda

Commissioner Langrell made a motion to adopt the agenda as written. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Silvestry. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Approval of the Minutes from October 28, 2008

Motion was made by Commissioner Martin to approve the October 28, 2008 as written. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Vilt. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Presentation for Advocates for Human Rights

Advocates for Human Rights is a nonprofit organization which promotes Human Rights nationally and internationally through education, research, and advocacy. The representatives that came to visit our Commission, Aysem Senyurekli and Becca Riedell, are from the educational department for the Advocates of Human Rights. The Advocates for Human Rights is a volunteer based organization with over 600 volunteers. The Advocates for Human Rights provided the Commission with a folder containing numerous educational pieces, in particular, related to immigration. Contact was initially made by the Advocates for Human Rights to the Austin Human Rights Commission after an article in a neutral newspaper. Thereafter, the Human Rights Commission followed up with the Advocates and asked them to come speak to our organization.

One of the primary focuses of the Advocates for Human Rights is education. They not only create educational pieces, but provide seminars and educational speeches for teachers, groups, and other organizations. Their website, which is located at www.energyofanation.org also contains teaching curriculums and other educational pieces for public use.

They have also created a website, One Voice Minnesota Project, which is a way to connect with other coalitions across the State to stop bias and a resource for sharing and collaborating information. The Commissioners were provided with a website user guide.

The Advocates for Human Rights is more than willing to assist the Commission as we create our visions and brainstorm with ideas and projects for the upcoming future and in dealing with the immigration issues that are arising in our community.

4. Reports/Updates

A. Grant Award.

The grant was approved.

B. Human Rights Day.

Human Rights Day will be held on December 5 and 6 at the River Center in St. Paul. There is a Bremer grant available that will pay for all Human Rights Commission members to attend the Human Rights Day event, so long as the Commissioner attends a required course on grant writing. Commissioner Silvestry has already registered for the event. Commissioner Lindbloom will also be attending.

C. Riverland HRC Presentation

Commissioner Vilt and Commissioner Anderson will be providing a presentation at Riverland Community College on Wednesday, November 19, at 12:30 p.m. to the Riverland student body as a part of Human Rights awareness week. The Commissioners will seek a dialog with the students to determine what are the issues that the students feel are important for the Human Rights Commission to address, in addition, to providing them information as to who we are and what we do. They will also handout our brochure and conduct the surveys.

D. MLK Celebration

Our Saviors Lutheran Church has agreed to be the host location for the MLK Celebration in January 2009. There will be a supper at 5:15 p.m. sponsored by the Welcome Center with the event following at 6:30 p.m. Following the event, Our Saviors Lutheran Church will sponsor a reception including cookies and juice.

Mr. Vilt was unable to get a hold of Dave Larson, Associate Professor of Indian Affairs at Mankato State University, with regard to being our keynote speaker. Therefore, Commissioners Silvestry will try and contact George Thompson to inquire if he is interested, Commissioner Langrell will contact Dr. Fagan, and Commissioner Stevenson will contact the Superintendent of Schools in Rochester, Minnesota.

A committee was formed to plan the Martin Luther King (MLK) celebration. The committee will consist of Commissioners Silvestry, Stevenson, Lindbloom, and Martin. The committee will plan the program, including speakers and music. A planning committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 2, at 7:00 p.m. at the Austin Public Library.

E. Video/Close the Gap

Ann Hokanson at the Austin Public Library has order one copy of "Close the Gap" for the library and two additional copies for the Human Rights Commission.

F. AR15 Event (11/6/08)

Unfortunately, the event did not draw as many people as expected. There was very good media coverage prior to the event. The surveys were conducted at the event. This was the first meeting of the series. The hope is that participation and attendance will increase with future events.

5. Additional Survey Outlets

The surveys will be provided to the Hispanic parent groups at both Ellis and the Austin High School.

6. Other Business

A. Youth for Human Rights DVD

A bill was submitted for the cost of the youth for Human Rights DVD for \$20.00. The motion had previously passed to purchase the DVD, and the bill was provided to the city liaison.

B. Issues in our Community

Commissioner Stevenson raised two issues which she has become aware of in our community, the first was with regard to an issue regarding a used car purchased by a minority in our community and the transmission went out less than a month later, and the second was with regard to a landlord tenant issue for a window that will not close in an apartment. The issues were discussed by the Commission. Commissioner Haedt had indicated that there are some outlets where there may be some assistance, including public housing, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, and the Attorney General. Commissioner Haedt will circulate telephone numbers for these organizations.

C. Planning Session

Commissioner Lindbloom checked with the moderator for her availability and she was not available on January 24, 2009 for the planning session. Therefore, Commissioner Lindbloom will check the moderator's availability for January 10, 2009. She will follow-up with the Commission after talking to the moderator.

7. Citizens Addressing Commission

Dan Kane addressed the commission. Mr. Kane had suggested that maybe some students should read their essays at the Martin Luther King Day celebration, that he was pleased to hear that the grant was approved and sought permission to discuss the grant in public, inquired as to the plans for the remaining money and the 2008 budget for the Human Rights Commission, inquired about interest and a pamphlet regarding women's rights, an immigration issue with regard to a young man in Moldova, and thanked Commissioner Langrell for requesting data on the student body makeup for Riverland students.

Commissioner Haedt did address Mr. Kane's concerns with regard to the young man from Moldova and provided Mr. Kane with the number to the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA) in Rochester, Minnesota. The organization does not handle amnesty issues directly, however, have indicated that they have a list of organizations and/or attorneys which they can refer people to. Commissioner Haedt will also circulate this information to all of the Commissioners.

8. Next Meeting:

The next Human Rights Commission meeting will be held on December 16, 2008, at 5:15 p.m. at the Austin Public Library. **Please note the date and time change.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Submitted by Stephanie Haedt