

**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
September 28, 2020**

Members Appearing Electronically: Sara Karki, Oballa Oballa, Goutham Putta, Dan Mueller, Jenni Braaten, Sarah Hartman, Miguel Garate, Stephanie Holtorf, Tricia Wiechman

Absent: DeShana Belden

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic and restrictions on meeting in groups, the meeting was held via a Zoom conference call. Commissioner Karki called the meeting to order at 6:16 PM with quorum present.

Adopt/Approve Agenda – Commissioner Garate motioned to approve and Commissioner Oballa seconded the motion to approve the meeting agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting minutes – Commissioner Garate motioned to approve and Commissioner Oballa seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes from August.

Budget – Current operating budget balance is \$2,752.16. Expenses include audio books for the book club featuring the book, *American for Americans*, and \$126 from the park clean-up.

New Business

Debrief from Welcome Week – Commissioner Garate reported despite the COVID pandemic, the efforts to recognize Welcome Week went well.

- Immigrant Voices – Commissioner Garate thought it went extremely well with many stories shared by 15 students at Riverland. All the presentations were from personal experiences and were done live and not recorded. Some participants were anxious and nervous but each story enriched the event.
- Story Stitch – the turn-out was low. Commissioner Putta reported he thought some of the people did not know each other as well as the previous event. There could be more promotion of the event to get different people there.
- Book Club – featuring *America for Americans* – Commissioner Putta shared there was a decent amount of people but not as well attended as the previous book club. This may be due to a heavier book to read, too soon after the other book club, and just a busier time of the year.
- Business Tour – Commissioner Karki shared that the promotion of the event was late due to the preparation of businesses. There needs to be a lot more promotion and to start the process much earlier than this year to get all of the details worked out. There also needs to be more

personal invitations extended to encourage others to come and learn more about immigrant businesses in Austin.

Racial Disparities in Austin? Community member Lori Henry had reached out to Commissioner Karki regarding the overall jail population of African Americans is currently higher than the Caucasian population. Discussion within commissioners ensued as to policing in Austin, incarceration rates, asking about jail population statistics to learn more. Potentially AHRC could sponsor a town hall meeting or a discussion with Austin Police Department if this is something the commission sees as valid and wants to pursue.

Immigration Integration Day is 10/26/20 – Commissioner Garate discussed getting a speaker for mid-October for Hispanic Heritage Month and to continue to sponsor Dia de los Muertos at Riverland. Due to COVID an in-person event may be impossible so may offer something online?

Billboard for Human Rights Day – Commissioner Hartman agreed to reach out to see if AHRC could get a message to run on the billboard for International Human Rights Day in December and inquire about availability for January and MLK day.

MLK – Commissioner Braaten shared there is a professor at St. Cloud State University that may be open and willing to do a presentation with discussion about racism and connections to slavery in Minnesota. Commissioner Braaten agreed to reach out to Dr. Christopher Lehmen and inquire on the availability of speaking engagements and fee charged.

Book Club – various potential books were discussed for upcoming book clubs. Discussion on getting audio books for busy people who may commute seemed to be popular last month. Commissioner Garate moved and Commissioner Oballa second to spend up to \$1,600 on audio books for the next book club.

Budget for 2021 is still in process and has not been officially set yet.

Roundtable

1. Commissioner Oballa suggested a recognition of some type be made to retiring city mayor, Tom Steihm, for his work in support of AHRC and the broader immigrant community in Austin.
2. Commissioner Oballa discussed political yard signs which have been reported stolen recently.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:39 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenni Braaten
Secretary