

**Austin Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 22, 2021**

Members Appearing Electronically: Sarah Hartman, Jenni Braaten, Vicki Spyhalski, Laura Helle, Stephanie Holtorf, Miguel Garate, City Liaison Trish Wiechmann and Council Member Jeff Austin.

Absent: Goutham Putta, Dan Mueller and Desahna Belden

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the meeting was held via a Zoom. Commissioner Braaten called meeting to order at 6:15 PM with quorum present.

1. Adopt/Approve Agenda – Commissioner Helle motioned to approve and Commissioner Spyhalski seconded the motion to approve the meeting agenda. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Approve Meeting Minutes – Commissioner Spyhalski motioned to approve and Commissioner Braaten seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes from January. Motion passed unanimously.
3. Budget Report – Current operating budget balance is \$3,475. Budgetary expenses included \$25 for advertisement on Facebook for the Martin Luther King, Jr. event.

New Business:

4. Discussion – Diversity Council Ethiopian Community Focus Group:
 - Commissioner Hartman introduced Dee Sabol and Samantha Poehler of the Diversity Council in Rochester to discuss the Ethiopian Community Focus Group (<https://www.diversitycouncil.org/communitytownhalls>)
 - Dee Sabol presented the initiative going on in Olmsted County as a community coalition started with CARES Act sponsorship. It is a townhall for 12 different population groups in Rochester where questions are asked and answered in their own languages regarding COVID19 and vaccinations. People in the community are connected with critical information in a platform that is trusted and accessible. The local Ethiopian community requested this resource be available in Austin as well. Dee Sabol knows Commissioners Hartman and Garate and wanted to bring this to our attention to see if we could point her in the right direction. They are looking for an organization in the community to spearhead adapting this project in Austin.
 - Discussion was centered on details of the program, amenities offered, resources required, and possible interested organizations to contact locally. The Austin Human Rights Commission does not have the resources to lead this initiative currently. Deb Sabol of the Diversity Council was directed to other possible local organizations that could assist them.
5. Discussion – possible Juneteenth event:
 - Commissioner Helle had Cheryl Bergland and Bonnie Rietz reach out to her about planning a Juneteenth event on Saturday June 19, 2021. They want this to be a

standalone event to take place in person at the McPhail Center. This event would celebrate black artists. Commissioner Helle with the Austin Area Arts might present a genre or artist and asked if the AHRC would want to participate or cross promote this event to different audiences. This was tabled to the March meeting.

6. Update – Write on Race journaling project:

- Total budget for this project we will be \$9,600. Commissioner Braaten has written to the coalition for a \$500 grant. Commissioner Spyhalski is in the process of writing a \$1,350 grant. We discussed other forms of sponsorship towards this project, including a possible participation fee to encourage participation.
- Commissioner Braaten pointed out the Write on Race is a huge project that will take a lot of our resources for the year. We discussed our priorities for the year: Pride, Write on Race, Juneteenth, Welcoming Week, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Commissioner Helle suggested we focus on Write on Race, but could speak at Juneteenth. Fourth Avenue Fest is already happening and would need little participation from AHRC and pride event could possibly be added to the Fourth Avenue Fest. Taste of Nations already has \$1,000 that rolled over from last year so there will be no additional expenses needed.
- After discussing the upcoming expenses for the year, Commissioner Braaten moved to contribute up to \$2,500 towards the Write on Race project, seconded by Commissioner Helle. Commissioner Hartman voted Nay. Motion passed 5 to 1.

7. Report – Pride event: Sarah Hartman

- Commissioner Hartman would like a stand-alone Pride event. We will need \$500 at least for a billboard. We discussed possible sponsors for a pride event and the location, whether virtually or outside. Commissioner Hartman will reach out to the other groups she has spoken with in the past and will have more information for the March meeting.

8. Roundtable –

- Danni Heiny with Riverland spoke with the Austin Public Library about recommendations for the social justice book club and a possible Development Day.
- Commissioner Braaten attended a DHS meeting with former Commissioner Sara Karki. DHS would like to attend a meeting of AHRC and provide resources for us.
- Councilman Jeff Austin attended our meeting as a representative from the City Council and indicated there may be some additional funding possible if the commission identified a specific project and there was a need. He realizes that the HRC budget for 2021 was reduced by \$1,500.

With no further business identified, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Holtorf, Secretary