

**Austin Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
July 26, 2021**

Members Appearing in Person: Jenni Braaten, Miguel Garate, Sarah Hartman, Laura Helle, Stephanie Holtorf, Vickie Spyhalski, An Le, Trish Wiechmann and Jeff Austin.

Absent: Lia Culbert

Commissioner Hartman called meeting to order at 5:31 pm with quorum present in the City Council Chambers.

1. Adopt/Approve Agenda – Commissioner Helle motioned to adopt and approve the reading of the agenda. Commissioner Le seconded to adopt and approve the reading of the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Approve Meeting Minutes – Commissioner Le motioned to adopt and approve the reading of the minutes. Commissioner Garate seconded to adopt and approve the reading of the minutes from June 28, 2021. Motion passed unanimously.
3. Budget Report – We have \$3,074 and ear-marked Write on Race \$2,500 so \$574 remaining for rest of the year. No new expenses since last month. \$258 left from t-shirts sales. Need to decide how to use this money. We will table that discussion for now.

Unfinished Business:

4. Write on Race Journaling Project
 - Commissioner Spyhalski – starting September 13 of welcoming week. 22 of 50 spots filled already. Formal outreach will start this week. Dates are set and will be sent out.
 - Commissioner Holtorf – meeting with Hormel Institute Director and Chief of Staff.
5. Welcoming Week
 - City Liaison Wiechmann – Reached out to groups that have participated in the past. July 1 meeting was for participants to share ideas about events to host. John Garry from DCA will take over and handle business tours. Our next meeting is Thursday, July 29.
 - Dani Heiny sent out email seeing if anybody was interested in hosting a community sing welcoming week event. Maybe something for 2022?
 - Commissioner Helle – reached out to Hormel Institute and planning reveal of sculpture from 4th Ave Fest. It will be on Sunday, September 12 with a Multicultural Potluck and sculpture reveal at the Hormel Institute. Culture and arts commission will look into doing a mural project in Welcoming Week 2022.
 - Commissioner Garate – September 17 Friday – Tienda Y Taqueria Guerrero music event 7 pm to 11/12 pm. Also, we want to have a street dance – we have a band, but no budget. Need to close street and get a restroom. Suggested Spam Museum or YMCA.
 - Commissioner Helle – Friday September 10, 3 to 7 pm Farmer's Market maybe street dance then.

- Get information out earlier – August 2 is the deadline to get the information turned into Tricia. She will put everything together and get something out so that we can start circulating around the event details.

6. Demographic data collection & discussion

- Commissioner Helle – We should establish a process to gather information about demographics including employees and employee applications, Park and Rec serviced, law enforcement and equity on best practice to track data. With no data tracking then we are not able to find predictable patterns. This is something we will need to do in steps.
- City Liaison Wiechmann – Demographics collected from applicants for City employment through voluntary Equal Employee Opportunity form. Looked at data from 2019, 2020, and 2021. There were 200 male applicants and 131 female applicants. Of applicants there were 290 Caucasian, 13 Hispanic, 13 Black, 7 Pacific Islander, and 24 unknown/unmarked. There are 113 male and 24 female fulltime employees. There are 19 male paid on call fire fighters, but 5 are employed by city as well and counted in the 113 males. Of fulltime employees, 133 are Caucasian and 4 are not.
- City Liaison Wiechmann – Zoning violations – right now they do not track. It is complaint based so it is usually a neighbor or renter. They receive a complaint and just provide the address with no other information. Zoning violations are on the outside of the house, so they usually observe and send out a letter. Then, they identify owner through county accessor. So, there is usually no contact between them.
- City Liaison Wiechmann – Building permits – contractors are filing building permits the majority of the time. The contractor gets permit on homeowner's behalf, which makes it hard to track.
- City Liaison Wiechmann – Citations and traffic stops – spoke with Police Chief David McKichan about system they currently use – a county system that city contributes a portion towards. There is no tracking ability to track these demographics. Not everyone pulled over gets a citation so there is no record if no citation. State of Minnesota citation, which the City uses, does not have demographics as an option. Ethnicity is not on the driver's license. Only identifiers they have listed are gender (m/f).
- Commissioner Helle – How do other communities collect demographics? Understand there are guard rails, but what can we do within that. How about for the city employees? Could we collect information on disability, veteran status, education levels, LGBTQ, age? Austin Area Arts uses survey monkey collect those data in an anonymous survey. What does the City of Austin feel comfortable with doing?
- Commissioner Spyhalski – we should build a case for why we want to track metrics to explain why collecting demographic information is important. Would it help with funding? This will have to be a long-term project. As a committee we will come back to this at the start of the year when Commissioners are no longer engaged in planning Welcoming Week and Write on Race. Commissioners Miguel and Vickie interested in.
- What other communities are we thinking? Census would have some of those data.

7. HRC social media and Email Accounts

- City Liaison Wiechmann – have Email, Facebook, Twitter. The Two Chairs and City Liaison handle community correspondence. Commissioners can post events and information.

8. Other Business:

- Commissioner Garate – Riverland vaccination and food distribution event. There were 230 people in attendance with baskets of food and vaccinated 17 people. Then at Tienda y Guerra and Alicia's bakery vaccinated another 17 people. Celebrated Mexican holiday with a parade and costumes.
- City Liaison Wiechmann – only have 2 applications in for Human Rights Commission. Still encourage people to apply as we haven't brought anything forward to the City Council yet.
- Commissioner Spyhalski – Dinner/Discussion with Sheriff Sadvick and local families hosted at UCC. Came up with 13 questions ahead of time and addressed additional questions from kids and parents. Already have interest to do again. National night out is a good starting point. Good opportunity to eat a meal together. Sharing a meal allows for better dialog on difficult conversations. Additionally, Austin UCC is planning on having a 5 mile/run for Pride next June.
- Panel with leaders from Austin talk about racism and ask police about racism. A lot of fear and want to open to the community. See if we can come up with some solutions.

9. Citizens Addressing the Commission

- Lewis Aase, Austin MN
- Melissa Nagel, Liaison for LGBTQ Austin High School group
- Dan Franklin, Austin MN

10. Round table:

- Brought the pride board, "What does pride mean to me?" What do we want to do with it – there is some interest at Austin High to post in a classroom there or digitize.

Commissioner Braaten moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Garate seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

With no further business identified, the meeting was adjourned at 6:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Holtorf
Secretary