

Austin Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 24, 2025

Present: Vickie Spyhalski, Bryan Davis, Varinh Van Vugt, Trish Wiechmann, Stephanie Holtorf, Miguel Garate, and Bridget Halvorson.

Absent: Joyce Poshusta, Denver Ritz, Arkaysia Hampton, and An Le.

Others Present: Catherine Haslag, Carrie Braaten, Angie Hanson and two others from Albert Lea Human Rights Commission.

1. **Call to Order:** Commissioner Davis called the meeting to order at 5:37 PM with a quorum present.
2. **Old Business**
 - Approve Current Meeting Agenda
 - Commissioner Van Vugt motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Garate seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously.
 - Approve Previous Meeting Minutes – January 27, 2025
 - Commissioner Spyhalski motioned to adopt the previous meeting’s minutes. Commissioner Holtorf seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously.
 - Budget Report – balance \$6,130
 - The only expense that’s been paid so far is the expense for B&J Invoice for Soup: \$370.00.
 - Still outstanding/yet to be paid
 - *Hy-Vee Invoice for Dessert:* estimated \$85.00
 - *Welcoming America Membership:* \$1,500.00
 - *Spanish Driver’s License class:* \$250.00
3. **New Business**
 - a. Request – Taste of Nations Sponsorship
 - Taste of Nations is May 17, 2025. Platinum level sponsorship is \$1,500. The HRC has been a top-level sponsor for many years.
 - Commissioner Holtorf motioned to allocate \$1,500.00 for Taste of Nations as a Platinum level sponsor. Commissioner Garate seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously; with Commissioner Van Vugt abstaining.
 - b. Volunteer Opportunities
 - Commissioner Davis indicated that there are volunteer opportunities on Thursdays from 1:30 – 3:30 PM and then again from 3:30 – 5:30 PM for the backpack program. He will send out additional information through text or email to the group.
 - c. Yard Sign Sponsorship
 - Commissioner Spyhalski shared a sample yard sign – “Working Families Belong in Austin;” the cost for sponsorship of the signs would be \$91.00 for 20 signs. Catherine Haslag was present to discuss the signs and answer any questions. If the

HRC was interested in sponsoring, would we like to have them in other languages as well? Commissioner Van Vugt indicated that these signs are probably good for allies. Vulnerable groups might not put them in their yards/windows.

- Putting value in producing/working right now, is an issue. Suggested changing the word Working to All; also suggested having the words “You Belong” in other languages, not the whole thing. Five most common languages:
 - Spanish
 - French
 - Karen
 - Karenni
 - Anuak

d. Citizens Addressing the Commission

- Angie Hanson and two others from Albert Lea Human Rights Commission were in attendance to listen and learn from Austin’s HRC, see how our meetings are run, etc. What it is that we do, and what we don’t do – Austin’s HRC doesn’t investigate human rights complaints, we refer citizens to the State’s Department of Human Rights and let them know how to go about filling a claim with the state. Austin’s HRC facilitate conversations and we are about community education. All our past minutes, bylaws, code of ordinances, etc. are on the city’s website under the Human Rights Commission.
- Catherine Haslag was in attendance as a community member; and shared and discussed the yard signs.
- Carrie Braaten is from Summerset Theatre and was interested in learning more about the HRC.

e. “For the Good of the Order”

- Commissioner Davis provided a Good of the Order for Commission Van Vugt, thank you for speaking out tonight on the yard signs.
- Commissioner Davis provided a Good of the Order for Trish for everything that she does for the Commission.

f. Commission Roundtable

- Commissioner Davis shared about a possible Juneteenth program – he is working on some ideas/new things. He will be putting together and will send something out to everybody.
- Commissioner Holtorf shared that Commission Le held the first Pride meeting, it went well and there was quite a bit of participation.
- Commissioner Garate shared that the Spanish driver’s license for all classes has been full.

Adjournment: Commissioner Spyhalski motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Garate seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Next Meeting: Monday March 24, 2025 @ 5:30 PM.