

CITY CLERK
2023 FEB 13 AM 9:16

**MINUTES
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
January 17, 2023**

Item #1 Call to Order

Called to order at 6:02 p.m.

Item #2 Roll Call:

Connors called the roll.

Members Present: Ray Blancarte, Sean Connors, Terri Lowdon, Danielle McGaughy, Joyce Starr, Leslie Stone, Petronilla Sylvester

Members Absent: Juniper Brown, David Mason

*Connors relayed that he has talked with Mason who has moved outside the city limits. This will leave a position open on the Commission, which will need to be filled.

Staff Present: Lisa Robertson, City Attorney

Item #3 Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Terri Lowdon, seconded by Ray Blancarte. Motion carried.

Item #4 Introduction of New Member

Petronilla Sylvester (Petra)

Item #5 Old Business (Items a-c)

Discussion

Item 5a (Presentation to City Council) – Connors reminded Commission that the presentation to the City Council will be next Monday, January 23, 2023. An overview of HRC activities during 2021 and 2022 will be provided to the City Council, which will have a few “slides” to follow along with. Connors encouraged all members to attend. Lowdon thinks the slides should include the HRC’s plan to invite a couple of plaintiff’s attorneys to conduct a presentation on the rights of those who may have been discriminated against.

Robertson emailed the slides after the December meeting but will send them out again for additional review. Starr asked if the HRC could file a quarterly report for the City Council. Connors mentioned that the Council receives copies of the HRC’s meeting minutes which provide a monthly overview of HRC activities.

Item 5b (Update on Distribution of Immigrant Services Informational Flyer) – Connors asked if each member who took flyers home with them after the December meeting had distributed them to the agencies and businesses discussed at that time. McGaughy relayed that the only business she was unable to get to was the Mexican restaurant at Belt and Messanie. Connors provided Sylvester with an overview of the original plan (inserting the flyer in sewer bills) and how that morphed into posting inside of businesses that serve members of the immigrant population. Sylvester relayed that there is a service held at the Lutheran church on Sunday afternoon for Sudanese. She could drop flyers off to the priest who conducts these services. Sylvester noted that she had read the minutes from last months’ meeting, which stated that a Commission member was going to drop off flyers at MWSU. She stated that she could assist with this, as she works at the university. Sylvester continued by saying she advises the Legal Studies Association and student members could assist with distribution, as well. She is also on the Family Guidance Center Board and could talk with Kristina Hannon about distributing them. Stone inquired about distributing the flyers at the mosque and everyone agreed this would be a good idea.

Robertson will send the flyer to Starr and Sylvester. Starr asked if Maria Ramirez has copies of the flyer because she (Starr) is planning to attend the Latinos Connect dinner tomorrow evening (January 18th) at the YWCA. Blancarte stated that he has extra copies that he can share with Ms. Ramirez.

Item 5c (Events/Activities held since December Meeting) – Connors reported that there have not been many events held, given the holiday season.

Item #6 New Business

Item 6a (Adjusting Meeting Time) – Connors relayed that Brown had sent an email to Commission members indicating that they have a lab during the 6:00 time frame throughout this semester and asked about changing the meeting time from 6:00 to 4:30. After discussion, the Commission decided to move meetings to the third THURSDAY of each month at 5:00 (rather than 6:00). Lowdon made this motion, which was seconded by Starr. Motion carried.

Item 6b (HRC Facebook Page) – Connors relayed that he posted about the MLK service that was held at Mid-City Excellence. McGaughy asked if it would be acceptable for her to post upcoming events on her “Community Garden” Facebook page if/when such events come up. Connors indicated that this is acceptable and that he shares information like this on his Facebook page all the time.

Item 6c (Upcoming Events and Activities/General Announcements) – Stone relayed that the Drum Major for Justice Award Banquet will be held at MWSU at 5:30 tomorrow evening (January 18th). Call the Diversity Office if you would like to attend. Connors noted that Black History month is February. Starr relayed that the Black Archives was awarded a grant to assist with Juneteenth and that this organization is teaming up with the Juneteenth Committee to make the celebration special. McGaughy suggested that the Commission continue having two or three meetings “off-site.” Lowdon agreed and suggested that the Commission revisit some of the places they have previously been – just to let these agencies know they have not been forgotten (e.g. InterServ). Lowdon also suggested Mid-City Excellence as a potential off-site meeting location.

There was discussion about planning required for the presentation by the plaintiff's attorneys. Sylvester stated that spring break at MWSU is the week of March 20-24 and students will be gone. She continued by stating that the week of March 13-17 would be a good week, as well as the first two weeks of April. McGaughy will make contact with the attorneys to determine what their schedule is for these time periods. They will be traveling from New York. She will plan around the Mondays of each of these weeks, as well as St. Patrick's Day. Lowdon stated that the Commission will need to determine how it wants to advertise the event and thought maybe the Chamber could assist with funding. Connors mentioned the billboard display that some of the performing groups have received through the CVB. Once a date has been set, the planning details related to venue, refreshments, advertising, etc. will proceed.

Item 5c (Other) – It was noted that Stanley Dale provides a community overview and recently noted that the DMV no longer has chairs, so everyone is required to stand in line. McGaughy stated that the DMV has four chairs up front, for use by those who are older or disabled. All of the chairs that had originally been in the DMV were moved out due to COVID and never put back in. Stone relayed that there is a sign on the door stating that if a customer is disabled, they may seek accommodation by asking to jump ahead in line, so they are not required to wait as long. Sylvester indicated that she believes she saw an individual who was approached by a DMV employee and moved toward the front of the line. Blancarte stated he believes customers should be able to provide DMV staff with their phone number so that DMV staff can call or text them about moving ahead in the line. Connors relayed that he witnessed Hispanic customers being treated poorly by DMV staff. He inquired about whether the City's ADA Board could assist (as they did with Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard several months earlier). He will research further.

Sylvester relayed various courses and programs that she is exploring. One, in particular, would be a "Street Law" class, which would involve students conducting research to provide to citizen groups within the community -- a legal literacy clinic for the community.

Item #7 Public Comment

None.

Item #8 Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Next Meeting: THURSDAY, February 16, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted,
Lisa Robertson, City Attorney