

**MINUTES
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
February 23, 2023**

2023 MAR -9 AM 9:46
CITY CLERK

Item #1 Call to Order

Called to order at 6:13 p.m.

Item #2 Roll Call:

Connors called the roll.

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

Members Absent: Joyce Starr

Staff Present: Lisa Robertson, City Attorney

Item #3 Approval of Minutes

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

Item #4 Old Business (Items a-d)

Discussion

Item 4a (Recap of January 23rd Presentation to City Council) – Connors stated that he thought the presentation to the City Council was uneventful in that there were no questions, but he thought the Council was receptive overall. He made a plug for funding future HRC efforts.

Item 4b (Update on Immigrant Services Informational Flyers) – Sylvester stated that she took a number of flyers to the Family Guidance Center and posted several around campus, and in her (Criminal Justice) department. She kept mindful of InterServ’s request that we not post too many and inundate that agency. Connors relayed that InterServ only has one person assigned to handle the services being sought by immigrants. This person sets appointments (each being 30 minutes in length) and if the issues involved will require more time than this, the matter is referred out. Lowdon wonders if there will be a large influx of Russian immigrants due to their opposition to the war with Ukraine. Blancarte stated that he would circle back with OLOG and Connors will send flyers to First Christian. Lowdon suggested providing some flyers to the Word of Life Church and McGaughy stated she could deliver these and drop some off at Wyatt Park Baptist Church, as well. Stone offered to take flyers to Wyatt Park Christian Church.

Item 4c (Discussion RE Kennan and Bhatia Law Firm LLC/Lisa Cooper Benson Presentation in April) – Stone relayed that she talked with a representative at MWSU who relayed that there is a Chem-A-Thon scheduled for the proposed date. There will be a lot of spaces on campus reserved in conjunction with this all-day event, the Small Theater being one of these spaces. The Chem-A-Thon will not conclude until 5 or 5:30 so the HRC would not have access to the space for purposes of set up prior to this point in time. If the event is going to begin at 6pm, this would be a major challenge. Stone also relayed that food cannot be brought into the auditorium.

Brown asked about using a larger lecture hall and mentioned Murphy, Remington, or Agastine the latter having a tiered classroom that can seat 172 people. Connors wants to ensure these spaces can be easily accessed, noting that Remington and Agastine have much better parking, while Murphy does not. Stone relayed that the Chem-A-Thon is scheduled to take place in Agastine, as well. Brown believes Popplewell might work but someone mentioned that Popplewell would be too small. Connors responded that the anticipated attendance is between 50 to 100 people so there is no need to reserve a large space. The only issue would be the need for an associated reception area. Connors mentioned the bottom floor tiered classroom in Hearnes as a possibility. Stone indicated that her choice would be Remington, even though the HRC would need to work around the Chem-A-Thon. Sylvester stated that she does not believe Cronkite should be considered.

Sylvester noted that the Legal Studies Association (LSA) and potentially the student NAACP are interested in partnering with the HRC. She believes these organizations may have access to funding through the Student Government Association (SGA) and will check into this. Stone relayed that she had attended a SGA meeting the night before (February 22nd) during which time they discussed having no funds.

Lowdon indicated that she talked with the President of the St. Joseph Bar Association about providing funding to the extent the presentation could be used for continuing legal education (CLE) credit. She will need to fill out designated forms and submit them to the Missouri Bar to qualify the presentation as a CLE for credit specifically related to “diversity and inclusion.” Lowdon believes attorneys who attend the CLE could be asked to contribute to the student organizations. Lowdon stated that she needs to know the amount of time each speaker will need and what they generally intend to speak about. Any CLE credit will need to exclude the time within which the reception is held, so it will likely be less than two hours.

There was discussion related to costs associated with speaker travel (airfare of attorneys who will be flying in from New York, hotel accommodations, etc.) McGaughy will talk with the attorneys about this. Benson informed McGaughy that her typical speaking fee for a non-profit is \$250.00 but she might waive. McGaughy stated that she will arrange for gift baskets to be provided to each of the speakers.

Costs associated with advertising were also discussed. The local television stations would be very happy to have this type of story to report about, so would not be seeking a fee. Connors indicated that the FCC requires stations to designate a certain amount of airtime as a donation for public service announcements. Connors relayed he would prepare a flyer that could be sent out to

various points of contact through an “email blast.” Publicly funded entities will need to obtain authorization prior to posting on social media. Sponsors will be recognized in the advertising. Brown mentioned that Pi Sigma Alpha, the political science honors society, may want to participate as a sponsor. Stone relayed that the Center for Diversity and Inclusion/Center for Student Involvement may be interested in sponsoring, as well. Lowdon previously mentioned the St. Joseph Bar Association as a potential sponsor. Sylvester confirmed that the Department of Criminal Justice and the Legal Studies Association will be sponsors. Commission members with specific ties to these organizations will be responsible for providing Connors with the appropriate logos to reflect their sponsorship in the advertising.

The name of the presentation will be “Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace.” The date will be Thursday, April 13th. The preferred time is 6pm to 8pm with the option of 7pm to 9pm. Sylvester stated the Department of Criminal Justice and Legal Studies will take responsibility for booking an appropriate venue at MWSU. Stone relayed that Aramark must be approached and asked to cater the event if it will be held at MWSU. Aramark must reject this request before another caterer can be sought out.

Item 4d (Events/Activities held since January Meeting) – Connors reported that it is Black History Month and he has been posting lots of good information on this subject, including a locally-produced video made in 2014. He relayed that March is Women’s History Month.

Item #5 New Business (Items a-d)

Item 5a (Dates for offsite meetings – coordinate with relevant agencies) – Connors indicated that these are often referred to as “open forums” and McGaughy relayed they have also been called “listening sessions.” It is a time for individuals to attend and provide information related to any issues they have been experiencing in the community, as opposed to the HRC making any formal or structured presentations. Connors believes the Commission should conduct another session in Midtown. The Bartlett Center was mentioned in conjunction with the date of May 18th.

Item 5b (HRC Facebook Page) – Connors stated that this was already covered under item 4d above. Stone noted that there will be a “watch party” through Webster university on February 28th and March 1st from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day related to issues involving diversity and inclusion. She will email a flyer that will have a QR code to use for those who wish to select a topic (session) scheduled over the course of those two days. You can pick and choose.

Item 5c (Upcoming Events and Activities/General Announcements) – Sylvester invited the Commission members to a training session scheduled for March 6th (in Wilson Hall - Room 206) related to the expungement of criminal records following the adoption of Amendment 3. She will email the specifics to the group. Sylvester stated that her street law students have been participating in sessions related to homelessness and it has been discovered that having a criminal record is a big contributor. Her students have expressed interest in conducting an “expungement clinic.” She would need to partner with agencies that could provide funding for the associated costs. Lowdon indicated that judges have already started this process and are currently initiating

these actions. She advised that there is quite a bit involved with expunging a criminal record – background checks/fingerprinting/etc. and many who are homeless are fearful of this process.

Item 5d (Other) – McGaughy relayed that she has been checking on the deadlines tied to various grants and has seen some grants that can be awarded to “approved political subdivisions.” [Matters such as matching funds, grant contract language, repayment obligations, and grant administration requirements would need to be considered prior to pursuing the grant and, thus, the City Manager would need to be advised prior to an application being submitted.]

Sylvester inquired about the situation at Brittany Village. Tenants are paying rent, which includes water and sewer service, but the owners of Brittany Village are not paying the water and sewer bills. Tenants are being targeted if they complain (e.g. towed vehicles). There should be some way to replace the current owner. Brown inquired about the potential of using eminent domain. Lowdon responded that this option would be difficult to pursue with these facts. Sylvester stated that the HRC should not be on the outside of this issue looking in, it should be playing an active role. Sylvester will contact Whitney Lanning or Kylie Strough about having a presence at the table when this topic is discussed by the existing working group that has already been put in place. Various other commission members expressed interest in being part of the discussion.

Brown asked if the roster of Commission members, with their contact information, could be made more readily available. Connors stated that he will place the information on Google drive for easier access.

Item #6 Public Comment

None.

Item #8 Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

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

Minutes respectfully submitted,
Lisa Robertson, City Attorney