

Minutes

AMES HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Conference Room 235
City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue
Thursday, July 22, 2021

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:35pm by Chair Jahmai Fisher.

Members Present: Jahmai Fisher, Lynette Plander, Madesh Samanu

Member(s) Absent: Wayne Clinton

Staff Liaison: Deb Schildroth

Guests: Chunhui Chen and Mayor John Haila

Approval of Minutes: Moved by Samanu, seconded by Plander to approve the minutes of the June 28th, 2021 meeting.

Public Forum: There was no one present for public forum. Time was dedicated to make introductions.

Follow Up/Comments to Joint Meeting with City Council and Presentation of the 2020 Annual Report: Chair Fisher expressed that the presentation to Council went well overall. Helpful feedback from the Council included the note to make data more longitudinal along with the comment to continue community outreach. Regarding community outreach, Chair Fisher commented that she is open to more events and community partnerships moving forward while still being mindful of the virus.

Samanu noted that reworking the data to include more information is something the Commission should work on for the next report.

Chair Fisher seconded that notion with the thought that the Commission could work more with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission (ICRC) to receive and use more data, noting that it may be a possibility to have monthly contact or receive monthly reports.

Reviewing at the current data, the Commission discussed how they could use it to drive community engagement and build social capital. It was noted that many of the complaints filed are employment related. This may provide a good opportunity to work with the Chamber of Commerce to host an event or initiative on the topic.

Commissioner Announcements: While on the topic of Commission involvement in the community. Chair Fisher took the opportunity to inform Plander and Chen about the

Commission's partnership with Craig Kaufman of Ames Parks and Recreation to host an event featuring the ReMINDers next spring.

After discussing the event, the Commission expressed interest in inviting Kaufman to a future meeting to get an update.

Mayor John Haila and Assistant City Manager Deb Schildroth entered the meeting at 5:47pm.

Mayor John Haila thanked the Commission for attending the joint meeting to present the annual report. He came to speak with the Commission today specifically about his ideas around community engagement. He was recently disappointed in some community interaction, and he is wanting to move forward to greater inclusivity. Mayor Haila spoke with President Wintersteen about the things Iowa State is doing to promote inclusivity and was excited about some of the ideas.

One idea he shared with the Commission included one to two minute promotional videos to showcase some of the awesome things going on in the Community with the hope that these would help illustrate a standard on how to treat one another.

Another idea he discussed was cultivating more community celebrations that would highlight the diverse cultures of Ames, such as a food festival. This would be a great way to accomplish an objective that would be consumable for the general public.

Mayor Haila also expressed his interest in involving Iowa State in these types of events to cross pollinate. He desires for everyone to feel welcome considering half of the Ames population is made up of students.

Chair Fisher commented that these ideas are similar to what the Commission had been discussing because the Commission desires to be intentional with their community involvement. It would be great to highlight some of these notable things because there is a diverse community in Ames. Chair Fisher expressed further interest in these events to help illustrate the Commission's role within the community.

The Commission's goal through September is to attend the already scheduled events so they can be front facing. In September, they would like to put together a Welcome Back video for students. From then on, there are many opportunities to highlight the positive and diverse aspects of Ames.

Chair Fisher noted that this is a good opportunity to get a calendar started so the Commission can start preparing to make their ideas happen.

Chair Fisher stated one concern involving the budget to which Mayor Haila encouraged the Commission to write up a clear consistent plan that Council could review to potentially vote on for additional funding.

Mayor Haila noted that the Council supports and encourages the Commission in the creation of this initiative. He believes this is very important work and would like to make this happen as a team. He is interested in partnering with the Chamber of Commerce, the Ames Community School District, and Ames MainStreet to make any events possible.

Samanu mentioned that it would also be great to involve student organizations such as the Student Government or International Student Organization to further promote or support any events. He would be willing to make those connections where needed.

Chair Fisher noted that many hands make light work and said that she was energized to know that the Commission, Council, and potential community partners were on the same page about where to take their ideas.

Mayor Haila left the meeting at 6:13pm.

Update on the Repainting of Inclusive Crosswalk: The Inclusive Crosswalk repainting is planned for Tuesday, August 24 at 7:00am with the rain day being Thursday, August 26. Public Works will be handling the prep work while volunteers are needed to tape and paint the crosswalk. The City needs approximately thirty (30) people to volunteer. Assistant City Manager Schildroth said she would provide the Commission with the signup link for the event.

Approve Chair's Signature on the FY 2021-22 Cooperative Agreement with Iowa Civil Rights Commission: Assistant City Manager Schildroth talked through the agreement with the Commission.

Moved by Chair Fisher, seconded by Madesh to approve signing this year's cooperative agreement with ICRC. Motion carried unanimously.

The agreement was signed.

Postings and Social Media Content: Assistant City Manager Schildroth took time to inform the Commission about upcoming events.

The City of Ames will have a booth at Welcome Fest. It's an event that the City is normally very involved in. Assistant City Manager extended the invitation to the Commission to have their own table at the event to talk with students about the purpose the Commission serves in the community.

Chair Fisher stated that this was an event she would absolutely like to attend.

Samanu said he would be there for the event as well.

Assistant City Manager Schildroth will send the Commission a reminder about the event and also work on getting informational materials and swag for the members to hand out.

The other event coming up is National Night Out. Assistant City Manager Schildroth gave the Commission an overview of the event noting that it is a nationwide event to help create better partnerships between Police Officers and the community they serve.

Chair Fisher stated that she would like the Commission to have a table and will definitely be there.

Samanu will not be able to attend but supports the Commission in being a part of the event.

The Commission agreed that pictures from these events can serve as social media posts. Additionally, Chair Fisher mentioned that it would be great to introduce Chen to the community as the newest Commission member via a social media post following City Council approval.

Assistant City Manager Schildroth described the typical introduction post and Chen said that would be fine with him.

Chair Fisher reviewed the upcoming posts noting that in September the Commission would post the Welcome Back video.

Commissioner Announcements: Chair Fisher reminded the Commission to come prepared to the next meeting to finalize the ideas they discussed with Mayor Haila along with the ideas they had discussed last meeting. Chair Fisher also asked the Commission to start brainstorming a hashtag that could be used with social media posts.

Assistant City Manager Schildroth informed the Commission about the work of a local organization called YWCA and gauged Commission interest in inviting them to attend a future meeting. Chair Fisher would like to learn more about their work and community involvement stating that the September or October meeting may be a good time to extend that invitation.

Chair Fisher reviewed the next meeting date noting that after the August meeting, due to Commissioner schedules, they will need to look into selecting an alternative meeting date for the remainder of the school semester.

Next Meeting: August 26, 2021 at 5:30 pm.

Adjournment: Moved by Samanu, seconded by Plander to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 pm.