

Minutes

AMES HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Conference Room 235
City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue
Thursday, March 29, 2023

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:42 p.m. by Vice Chair Wayne Clinton. Commission Member Lynette Plander, City of Ames Staff Liaison Deb Schildroth, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator Casandra Eames were also present.

Guest: Vanessa Baker-Latimer, Ames City Housing Coordinator

Public Forum: Vice Chair Clinton opened the Public Forum. No one was present to speak, and Vice Chair Clinton closed the Public Forum.

Discussion of Options to Promote Fair Housing Month: Housing Coordinator Vanessa Baker-Latimer shared that the theme for Fair Housing Month 2023 would be “Choices for All Voices: Building an Equitable Future.” She explained the plan to have a social media initiative titled “I Stand for Fair Housing.” The goal is to have leaders in the community make a social media post once a week at a certain time promoting fair housing values. Coordinator Baker-Latimer invited the Commission to participate, noting that a variety of posters raising awareness of different kinds of discrimination would be made available to participants.

Commission Member Chunhui Chen entered the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

Vice Chair Clinton expressed interest in participating in the challenge but requested reminders.

Moved by Chen, seconded by Plander, to approve participation in the “I Stand” Fair Housing Challenge. Motion carried unanimously.

Housing Coordinator Baker-Latimer stated that a proclamation recognizing Fair Housing Month would be presented at the City Council meeting on April 11. Staff Liaison Schildroth added that the Commission would present the Home for Everyone award at this meeting, encouraging outgoing commissioners to attend and participate along with current and incoming members.

Approval of Minutes: Moved by Plander, seconded by Chen, to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2023, meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Introduction to the DEI Coordinator: Staff Liaison Schildroth introduced Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator Casandra Eames. Coordinator Eames shared about her background and path to DEI work.

Selection of Home for Everyone Award Recipient: Vice Chair Clinton observed that four nominations had been received. Commission Member Chen expressed support for doing one award in order to avoid exhausting the pool of potential candidates and preserve the importance of the award.

Moved by Plander, seconded by Chen, to select Lori Allen for the Home for Everyone Award. Motion declared carried.

Commission Member Chen suggested having staff send an email to those who were not selected to acknowledge the nomination and encourage them to submit again in future years. Vice Chair Clinton agreed to present the award at the City Council meeting on April 11.

Discussion on Updating the Strategic Plan: Vice Chair Clinton explained that the Commission held off on finalizing the strategic plan in hopes of allowing an opportunity for the new DEI Coordinator to provide feedback. Staff Liaison Schildroth noted that the current draft reflected the changes approved at the February meeting. She also explained that the Strategic Plan and the Annual Report are often presented to the City Council together in late April or late May. It was decided to present both to the City Council on May 23. It was agreed to table approving the strategic plan until the April 27 meeting. Coordinator Eames agreed to review the plan and offer feedback via email for discussion at the April 27 Commission meeting. Staff Liaison Schildroth also observed that while the Strategic Plan was a three-year plan, future amendments to the plan were possible.

Planning for the 2022 Annual Report to the City Council: Staff Liaison Schildroth explained that the Annual Report captures the Commission's work throughout 2022 alongside data from the Iowa Civil Rights Commission (ICRC) about discrimination complaints from the past year. It will be presented to the City Council on May 23 alongside the updated Strategic Plan. Vice Chair Clinton agreed to spearhead the efforts to write the report with support from staff and Commission Member Chen.

Discussion ensued about the data provided by the ICRC. Staff Liaison Schildroth explained that the City has a contract with the ICRC to handle complaints and investigations each year. Coordinator Eames raised questions about the investigation process and inquired whether further detail about the parties involved in complaints could be made available, as further information could inform outreach and education efforts. Vice Chair Clinton noted that the current Executive Director of the ICRC is relatively new in the position, so it might be an opportune time to

connect and ask questions. Staff Liaison Schildroth also suggested inviting the ICRC to conduct a training session for the Commission to explain the system used to collect and track information.

Postings and Social Media Content: Vice Chair Clinton stated that the focus of social media content for April would be the “I Stand for Fair Housing” initiative.

Commissioner Announcements: Vice Chair Clinton noted that it was the last meeting for Commission Member Plander and Commission Member Jahmai Fisher, recognizing their service and commitment. Staff Liaison Schildroth indicated that she and Coordinator Eames would be doing an orientation meeting with incoming members Angie DeWaard and Marty Martinez, whose terms begin April 1.

Commission Member Chen referenced the second annual AAPI Heritage Month essay contest in the month of May. He planned to send out information about a related event on May 6.

Next Meeting: April 27, 2023

Adjournment: Vice Chair Clinton adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.