

Minutes

AMES HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Conference Room 135
City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue
Thursday, May 23, 2024

Call to Order: Chair Chunhui Chen called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. Commission Members Annabella Marquez, Shawn Kenny, Pablo Suarez Beltran, Marty Martinez, and Brennan Sorkin and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Coordinator Casandra Eames were also present. Commission Member Wayne Clinton joined the meeting electronically at 5:57 p.m.

Public Forum: Chair Chen opened the Public Forum.

Richard Deyo shared his experiences with Ames Public Library and Ames Community School District. Chair Chen explained that the Commission does not have authority over the school district, and Coordinator Eames encouraged Richard to focus on the positive.

Chair Chen closed the Public Forum.

Approval of Minutes: Moved by Sorkin, seconded by Kenny, to approve the minutes of the April 18, 2024, meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the 2023 Annual Report: Coordinator Eames explained that the Annual Report is presented at a brief joint meeting with the City Council as an overview of the Commission's activities and complaints data from the Iowa Civil Rights Commission (ICRC) for the calendar year. Chair Chen will make the presentation at the joint meeting on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. All commissioners are encouraged to attend. Coordinator Eames also shared that the Director of the ICRC, Kristin Stiffler, will be attending the Commission's June 27 meeting to explain the ICRC's purpose and processes.

Moved by Marquez, seconded by Sorkin, to approve the 2023 Annual Report. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the FY 2024-2025 AHRC Budget: Coordinator Eames explained that the Commission had two separate funds for separate purposes. Local Option Sales Tax provides funding for public events, while the operating budget comes from the General Fund. Requests to increase the base allocations for either fund must be made through the City budget planning process. The planning process for the FY 2025-26 budget begins this September. For FY 2024-

25, the Commission can still make one-time requests for additional funding for specific events or projects.

The Commissioners discussed several unbudgeted special events. Chair Chen noted that adding a new event should involve meeting with the group sponsoring the event to discuss its needs and how the Commission can best provide support.

Moved by Sorkin, seconded by Marquez, to request \$500 for the Pridefest special event. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioners Beltran, Marquez, and Sorkin suggested several ideas for future Quarterly Meet & Greet events including partnering with Parks and Recreation for an event at a Parks facility, recognizing past awards winners, and showcasing area nonprofits. Coordinator Eames encouraged the new commissioners to experience a standard Quarterly Meet & Greet to get acquainted with the format before branching out into something much bigger. Commissioner Martinez suggested that discussing the goals of these events would be a good topic for the planning retreat.

Moved by Kenny, seconded by Sorkin, to request \$1,500 for the 50th Anniversary Celebration, Quarterly Meet & Greets, and other future events. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Sorkin, seconded by Martinez, to approve the FY 2024-25 Ames Human Relations Commission Budget as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Chen left the meeting at 6:48 p.m. Vice Chair Sorkin presided over the rest of the meeting.

Juneteenth Celebration: Coordinator Eames explained that this was the third year of the event, which is organized by the Ames NAACP. The celebration will take place on Saturday, June 15, 2024, from 12:30 – 5:00 p.m. at Bandshell Park. Vice Chair Sorkin volunteered to be the point person coordinating the Commission’s participation, and Commissioners Marquez and Clinton planned to be in attendance. Coordinator Eames noted that she would be out of town for the event. Vice Chair Sorkin planned to email the commissioners regarding shift signups.

Moved by Sorkin, seconded by Kenny, to reallocate the unused \$500 from Fair Housing Month to the Juneteenth Celebration for a total sponsorship of \$1,000. Motion carried unanimously.

AHRC Planning Retreat: Coordinator Eames reported that a facilitator from ISU Extension had confirmed his availability for the retreat and that Legal was reviewing the proposed contract.

Moved by Sorkin, seconded by Marquez, to use a facilitator from Iowa State University Extension for the Planning Retreat. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Kenny led the group in identifying possible dates for the three-hour retreat when all commissioners could attend, landing on the options of Friday, June 28, and Saturday, June 29. Staff planned to inquire about Chair Chen's availability on those dates and email out an update.

Commissioner Martinez left the meet at 7:12 p.m.

Several possible locations for the retreat were discussed, including the Homewood Golf Course Clubhouse, the Rotary Room at the Ames Public Library, and separate rooms in restaurants. It was noted that a cheaper venue would leave more room in the budget for food. Coordinator Eames planned to inquire about the facilitator's technology needs for the space. Everyone was encouraged to brainstorm possible venues and email their ideas to Vice Chair Sorkin, who would compile the suggestions and email out the complete list.

50th Anniversary Celebration in October: Commissioners Beltran and Marquez volunteered to be the point people for planning the event. Possible dates to consider include Saturday, October 12, and Sundays October 6, 13, and 20. Coordinator Eames noted that staff had created save the date cards for the month of October which could be distributed at the Juneteenth event.

Brainstorming on the type of event ensued. Suggestions included a masquerade, fireworks, cake and ice cream, a bonfire with smores and hot chocolate, trunk-or-treat, and a scavenger hunt. Vice Chair Sorkin emphasized that the celebration should be a representation of what the Commission stands for.

Commissioner Announcements: Coordinator Eames highlighted that the T-Shirt Design Contest is live and encouraged everyone to share the information with their connections.

Next Meeting: Joint Meeting with the City Council - Tuesday, June 11, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.
 Regular Commission Meeting - Thursday, June 27, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

Adjournment: Vice Chair Sorkin adjourned the meeting at 7:39 p.m.