

Human Relations Commission  
CMO Conference Room  
519 Washington Ave.  
Minutes  
December 19, 2019

Meeting called to order by Werksma at 5:30 pm.

Present: Louann Werksma, Wes McGee, Alexa Redick, Alyson Brummitt, Sam Woiteshek, Dennis Swartout, Reyna Masko, Rhonda Kleyn, and Angela Tran. Quorum in place.

Absent: Barbara VanHorsen

**Approval of Agenda:** Agenda approved, motion by Redick, seconded by Swartout, all in favor.

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes approved, motion by Swartout, seconded by McGee, all in favor.

**Welcome Guests:** Robyn Afrik. Afrik is Ottawa County's first Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. She is attending after receiving an invitation from the commission and is here to discuss her role as the director as well as to provide resources available to the commission and the community as a whole.

There was no business under the **general call to the audience**.

### **Old Business**

- a. **Dinner & Dialogue Update:** Swartout proposed the idea of hosting a forum to the commission, which he, McGee, and VanHorsen came up with in their committee meeting. The purpose of the forum is to allow discussion to take place in a larger group setting, as people may be more comfortable this way. Swartout also said that the forum is planned for January 27th at the Grand Haven Community Center, with it being sponsored by the commission and possibly the Momentum Center and the theme being diversity and inclusion. Werksma and Redick had concerns about the feasibility of the plan, given that it may be difficult to organize an event as large as this one in time. Kleyn added that the forums should not replace Dinner & Dialogue, given that forums cannot take place as frequently as the dinners. In addition, Woiteshek indicated that the theme of diversity and inclusion may be too broad and the discussion may be more productive if the theme was more specific. Masko suggested that previous Dinner & Dialogue attendees be invited to the forum and ask if they would be willing to host their own in the future. Overall, everyone was in agreement that the forums are a great idea, but was also in agreement that more information was needed before moving forward.
- b. **Visionary Award Committee Update:** Masko reported that the committee met to iron out the details of the award, such as the criteria and application process. She also communicated that, because this is an award open to anyone who lives or works in the Tri-Cities area, it is critical that the award is advertised and that people are aware of it. Swartout raised concerns as to why the award is open to the Tri-Cities, since the commission operates in the city of Grand Haven and its

name indicates as much. Tran mentioned that she interprets the award as one that focuses on a person's or group's impact in Grand Haven, and that, because of this, the award should not exclude people or groups because of where they are located. Masko also said that she would like to get the rest of the commission involved, as there is not much the committee can do on its own at this point in the process. In addition, Swartout and other members of the commission wondered if the committee had already requested approval or if approval from City Council was necessary. Werksma said she would send the Visionary Award document submitted by the subcommittee to City Manager McGinnis and ask for his guidance on next steps for implementation, and whether council approval is needed.

## **New Business**

### **a. Report on December 5 Dinner & Dialogue on The Hispanic Immigrant Experience:**

Werksma and Masko reported that the dinner was well-received by those who attended, and that the conversation was an in depth and productive one. Werksma and Masko also mentioned that Maria Espinoza, founder of the Remembrance Project, asked Werksma if she could Skype into the dinner as she was unable to accept an invitation to attend in person, but Werksma responded that would not be appropriate to the nature of the dinner. As a result, two of the dinner's attendees withdrew in deference to Espinoza.

The facilitator of the dinner, Sarah Van Oosterhout of Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates, gave the HRC a binder of resources showing the positive impact and other statistics about immigration in the USA. Werksma has the original binder but had its contents scanned and shared with Rhonda Kleyn for the HRC archives and also with C3 and St. John's, co-hosts of the dinner. Werksma also has all the completed attendee surveys and is in process of compiling.

### **b. Response to the Remembrance Project at the Loutit District Library:** Werksma expressed concern with the lack of communication from Loutit Library to the HRC about this display, given that the only reason she was aware of the display was because of a message she received via the commission's Facebook page from someone who lived in Norton Shores. Masko proposed the idea of partnering with the Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates to give a presentation at the library in response to the Remembrance Project and its display. She indicated that she would contact John Martin, library director.

### **c. 2020 Goals and Planning:** Werksma reported that, given how busy December was, she needs more time to create the commission's annual report. In addition, Werksma mentioned that she will extend an invitation to Mayor Monetza and other council members to attend future meetings in order to further discuss the commission's role in the community. She is hopeful that the council will get more involved, as Mayor Monetza has expressed interest in community outreach.

### **d. Correspondence Sent / Received:** Topic was not discussed at the meeting.

### **e. Agency Updates:** Topic was not discussed at the meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:36 pm, motion by Tran, seconded by Woiteshek, all in favor.

Next meeting is Thursday, January 23, 2020, at 5:30 pm.

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