Human Relations Commission
Remote via Zoom
Live streamed via Facebook
Minutes
August 27, 2020

Meeting called to order by Werksma at 5:33 pm.

Present: Rhonda Kleyn, Barbara VanHorsen, Dennis Swartout, Louann Werksma, Madigan
Lautzenheiser, Shyle Lyons, Wes McGee, Shannon Farmer, Reyna Masko, Angela Tran and Alexa Redick

Absent: N/A

Approval of Agenda: Motion by VanHorsen, Seconded by Masko, all in favor.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes of July 23, 2020 approved; motion by Swartout, seconded by VanHorsen
all in favor.

Welcome Guests: Mayor, Bob Monetza, City Council member Mike Dora, Loutit Library staff Ben Knight,
City of Grand Haven Public Safety Lieutenant Lee Adams, Assistant to the City Manager Ashley Latsch,
City Council member Mike Fritz, Assistant Superintendent Brian Wheeler, City of Grand Haven resident
Leslie Armentrout, Steve Thompson Watermark Church, Lynette Keene Robinson Township resident,
Crosby,

General call to the audience-At this time guests were allowed to call in and post questions via Facebook chat. Guest Leslie Armentrout presented a written statement voicing her concerns over a Letter to Editor published in the Grand Haven Tribune on July 30, 2020, see attachment 1. Also attached is the letter to the editor referenced by Armentrout, attachment 2.

At this time a motion was made by Swartout, seconded by Masko, to amend this August 27, 2020 agenda to allow comments to Armentrout’s statement and to allow the comments to take place before Old Business on the agenda. All in favor.

New Business
Amended a.-Comments-

1) Swartout-shares Armentrout’s concerns addressed in her letter however did not follow through as she did by calling the Grand Haven Tribune editor. Swartout stated he would support Human Relations Commission members reaching out to the newspaper to ask how decisions are made regarding published letters to the editor.

2) Shyle Lyons-Lyons stated she likes the idea of the Human Relations Commission publishing its diversity and inclusion statement in the Grand Haven Tribune.

3) VanHorsen-stated she supports communication with the Grand Haven Tribune much like Swartout suggested.
4) Masko stated she would like to know if the Tribune has a formal procedure for publishing letters to the editor such as how do they decide which letters to include. Masko also believes a statement from City leaders is needed in this type of situation but also would like to encourage the City to do more than just make a statement.

5) Werksma suggested inviting the Grand Haven Tribune editor to the next Town Hall on Racism.

Public comments from Facebook Live—No comments at this time.

Old Business

a. **AntiRacism Task Force**—Next event is Monday September 28 from 6:30 to 8 pm. The meeting will be via Zoom and the topic is talking about racism. The panel speakers will be George Barfield, Deanna Rolfs, and Angelica Colon. The task force is encouraging participants to read the book, *So You Want To Talk About Race* before the event. This is not a book club but the organizers encourage the reading for added context. QPR suicide prevention training will be the same day at 5 pm.

Werksma noted that the United Way 21 Day Equity Challenge begins August 28, 2020. Anyone who signs up will receive daily exercises and challenges supporting equity and diversity.

b. **Visionary Award**—Committee currently has 3 adult nominations and no student nominations.

c. **Hispanic Fiesta Update**—The revised Fiesta is ready to roll. There will be a virtual Mercado with information about/from local Hispanic businesses. There will be virtual Hispanic dance lessons. A survey will be taken by Jared Cramer to decide what films to watch for the film festival; each day a virtual discussion will take place about the films watched. September 21 – 26 the fiesta is partnering with local restaurants and bars to feature their chosen countries food, drink and/or dessert. A day with socially distanced food trucks will take place. Motion made by Masko requesting a $500 sponsorship of the 2020 Fiesta by the HRC, Werksma moved, seconded by McGee, all in favor.

d. **Strategic Planning Next Steps:**

   a. Werksma reported she had a meeting with the volunteer liaisons on August 26. At this time the liaisons spoke; Lieutenant Lee Adams provided a City and State ordinance fact sheet regarding protests to Louann at their meeting and stated that majority of the groups having protests in the area are contacting Public Safety and following the protest rules. Brian Wheeler stated the GHAPS continuing support of the Hispanic Heritage Fiesta. Ben Knight shared the library’s support of the Hispanic Heritage Fiesta and the Anti-Racism Task Force.

   b. Werksma presented a formal structure and positions for the HRC members, see attachment 3. Werksma made a motion for the HRC to have the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Second Vice Chair and Past Chair. Swartout moved, VanHorssen seconded, all in favor.

   e. Community Foundation Grant Application—Werksma reported the application was not submitted most importantly because the City does not have a staff person to handle the grant management.
New Business

a. **New Commission Member Introductions**-Shannon Farmer and Madigan Lautzenheiser

b. **Communications/Correspondence**-Werksma shared a thank you from Sam Woitesheck for his graduation gift.

c. **2021 Meeting Schedule**-Kleyn shared it is being updated and will be shared when available.

d. **Liaison Updates**-skipped

e. **Agency Updates**-VanHorsen shared the Momentum Center is now having outdoor gatherings for members. They are purchasing safety equipment for small indoor gatherings. Just Goods retail store is moving The Depot and they will be hiring a store manager. Kleyn shared there is a Planning Commission Public Hearing on September 28 regarding the zoning ordinance changes. If anyone hasn’t given input now is a good time. Masko questioned continuing the strategic planning that started in January. Masko will contact Al Vandenberg regarding next steps and hopefully begin something in October.

f. **Werksma and Lyons presented a proposed motion to be made to the City of Grand Haven**. The full proposal is included as Attachment 4. Lyons made a motion to request action from the City regarding discriminatory statements and actions by members of the public in the City of Grand Haven. Questions and comments about the motion:

   i. **Masko**-well written statement

   ii. **Swartout**-who is being asked to respond? Meaning the motion says “City of Grand Haven”, who is that?

   iii. **McGee**-Should an attorney review the motion?

   iv. **Armengtrout**-What is meant by a public Statement?

   v. **Mayor Monetta**-With all of the communication options there can be lots of negative communications. What is the City being asked to respond to? Werksma stated the motion is in reference to events that happen within the City that rise to the level of armed Michigan Militia members coming to town, local news vans showing up, protests. The motion is asking that a quicker response to these events happen rather than waiting until the next scheduled public meeting. Lyons stated the motion is asking for a more widespread statement from the City other than just a City Council meeting. Masko stated her agreement with Lyons. Kleyn asked the City Council members present to provide their input to the motion as written. Mike Dora responded that he believes the motion should be reviewed by an attorney. The City has never had a procedure and believes it could be helpful. Dora suggested there possibly be a line of communication that starts at the HRC who brings the situation to the attention of the City Manager who then brings it immediately to the City Council’s attention. Conversation and questions regarding the motion resulted in it being tabled for revisions.
Second Call to the Audience-None at this time. Facebook Live comments-Lynette Keen expressed concern over the council members responses to the proposed discriminatory statement motion.

Motion to adjourn at 7:22pm by VanHorssen, seconded by Swartout, all in favor.
Thank you for inviting me to speak at this evening’s meeting. My name is Leslie Verdier Armentrout. My family has a long history in Grand Haven — my father was born in our cottage in 1915 and my husband and I have owned it since 1978.

I am deeply concerned about a Letter to the Editor in the Grand Haven Tribune by Mary Garzelloni that appeared in the paper on July 30. I do not recall ever having seen a Letter to the Editor filled with so much vitriol and hatred. I was appalled at the writer’s racism. This was shortly after the Pronto Pups fiasco. At that time, I was impressed that the City Manager made a statement that the Pronto Pups Facebook rant did not reflect the values of the City of Grand Haven.

I called the newspaper and asked who was in charge of screening Letters to the Editor and was told to speak with Matt DeYoung. I believe that Louann Werksma has sent you a summary of my conversation with him. I told Mr. DeYoung how unhappy I was with the letter and why. I asked him what the rules or parameters are for printing Letters to the Editor, since this one contained so many statements that were not true. He was unwilling or unable to give me an answer. He asked what I thought was not true. I read him the statements that I found most egregious. Then I asked him if he thought the first statement was true, the one that said that “the virus numbers are intentionally and scandalously enhanced every which way”. His reply was, “There is evidence on both sides.” I asked if he thought the other statements were true and he said, “You would not believe how many people on Grand Haven feel the same way.” I replied that just because a number of people believed something, it did not make it right or true. I asked him if he did any fact-checking. He said they do not have the resources for that. I asked him if he would have printed the letter if it had accused Pat McGinnis or Jeff Hawke, instead of President Obama and the Governor, of depleting medical supplies needed for the virus and of deeming whiskey, marijuana and abortion essential. He said no. But if a statement is untrue, why should it be printed, whether it concerns a local person or a national figure?

I asked Mr. De Young if he could tell me that I would not see letters in the paper in the future that were so divisive and full of false statements. He said he would take my opinion into consideration. That was not enough for me. There is a difference between free speech and hate speech. There is a difference between opinion and false statements. It is not difficult to have standards for Letters to the Editor. It is not difficult to fact-check outrageous statements. It is not difficult to print a disclaimer. I told him I was disappointed and was reluctantly canceling our subscription after 40 years.

I have a niece who is majoring in journalism and communication sciences in college. I showed her the letter when I visited my family in Northport. I asked if she thought the letter would have been printed in any newspaper she had seen. She said she did not think so. She then added that if she were Muslim or Black, she would not feel safe in that community. While I was there, one of the Road Commissioners made some horrific comments about Blacks in Detroit. Not only did he use this language at an open meeting, he repeated it in interviews with the newspaper and on telephone calls. The community response was swift—calls for him to resign.
or be recalled (he did resign) and County Government starting a Task Force to study race relations within the community.

I think I was as upset with the editor's decision to publish the letter without fact-checking or adding a comment or a disclaimer as I was with the letter itself. There are many people who think that if something is printed in the newspaper, it must be true, or it would not have gone uncorrected or unchallenged.

I hope that the Commission on Human Relations can make some sort of comment stating that the views expressed and statements made in Ms. Garzelloni's letter do not reflect or represent the values of the City of Grand Haven. It might be helpful to include the City's Statement of Diversity and Inclusion. Perhaps the Commission could have a meeting with Matt DeYoung and discuss what the policies, rules, and parameters are for publishing Letters to the Editor. Maybe he would be willing to add a disclaimer to questionable letters stating that the views expressed by the writers are not checked for correctness and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial staff or the Grand Haven Tribune. Perhaps Mr. DeYoung would be willing to print the Statement of Diversity and Inclusion periodically in the newspaper.

Thank you for your attention.
Wolves in sheep's clothing

To the editor,

Social distance, social justice, socialism, one and the same. You cannot divorce the recent virus, BLM and the dictatorial rules we are subjected to. Eighty-thousand people died from seasonal flu a year ago, as every year. The virus numbers are intentionally and scandalously enhanced every which way, to cause fear and control. The riots were planned decades ago, and were predicted to happen this summer. The heinous murder of George Floyd was an excuse, not a reason, to start early.

BLM goals are to bring down America. Indeed, the shadow government was in the wings, ready to go on stage, and have destroyed numerous other nations, backed by the hate-driven George Soros. His coffers are fed by 70 millionaires/billionaires who provide endless funds. BLM is a front name for a militant, radical, Marxist group founded by two self-admitted feminist, Marxist women. They’re affiliated with Muslim groups, CAIRE, Planned Parenthood, etc.

Where are they when thousands of Black-on-Black shootings/killings occur in L.A., Chicago, Detroit, etc.? BLM members are predominately white females who provide young Blacks bricks, hammers, fire accelerants, and prod these juveniles into violence, getting them arrested, in jail and ruining their lives.

This is spiritual warfare, and demonic. We had eight years of division by Obama, who is a major player in this scheme. He depleted medical supplies, needed for such a virus. He left the cupboards bare, at the cost of lives from this planned attack.

Government schools, false churches have bred this environment with decades of indoctrination. Our governor deemed whiskey, marijuana and abortion essential, not church. She is power driven. Her “rules” are based on political science, not medical science. Isolation (shelter in place) was one of Russia’s first regulations. How quickly we succumb to her demands.

The cadre of men, women, counterfeit pastors who constantly bombard this page with their mean-spirited, unbiblical lies need to be challenged.

Mary Garzelloni
Approved Human Relations Commission Structure
As approved by motion made and carried at HRC meeting 8-27-2020

7 members appointed for 3-year terms
   Adult
   Citizens of City of Grand Haven
   Voting Members
2 students – term varies, expires upon high school graduation
   Voting members
   Sophomores, Juniors & Seniors eligible
   As many as seven additional task force members who do not vote; may live outside city limits

Terms for all positions below begin on July 1 and end on June 30 (exception: 2020, terms begin on September 1 and end on June 30, 2021)

Suggested Positions:

1. **Chair:** Chairs meetings; prepares agenda; works with City Staff Liaison, communicates with liaisons to commission and represents HRC before City Council. Appoints investigators for discrimination complaints and follows through. Prepares annual report.
   Current: Louann Werksma
   Nominated: Louann Werksma (through June 30, 2021)

2. **Vice Chair/Treasurer:** Communicates with City Liaison regarding HRC budget; Chairs meeting when Chair absent. Steps in to fulfill duties of chair when absent. Becomes chair after one year.
   Current: None
   Nominated: Reyna Masko (Then Chair July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022)

3. **2nd Vice Chair/Secretary:** Handles correspondence and all communications duties, including social media posts, website updates, press releases, etc. (with assistance from one other member.) Takes meeting minutes when City Liaison unavailable. Maintains a record of all publicity, correspondence, etc. Becomes Vice Chair after one year, then chair the following year.
   Current: None
   Nominated: Shyle Lyons (Then Vice Chair July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022 and Chair July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023)

4. **Past Chair:** Onboards/orients new members; advises and supports all other chairs.
   Current: None
   Louann Werksma becomes Past Chair on July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022

The remaining members of the commission accept the following responsibilities for now through June 30, 2021:

1. Assist vice-chair/treasurer (Shannon Farmer)
2. Assist 2nd vice chair with media/social media (Madigan Lautzenheiser)
3. Liaison to Hispanic Heritage Fiesta (Wes McGee)
4. Liaison to Anti-Racism Task Force (Barbara Lee-VanHorssen)
5. Chair Visionary Award (Alexa Redick)
6. Development: Solicit sponsorships /grants for any activities agreed upon by commission and maintains donor/ sponsor/grantor relationships, follows up to insure that sponsor/donor wishes are acknowledged and fulfilled and, in case of grants, results reported (Vacant)
7. Chair/co-chair the ad-hoc committee rewriting HRC policies and procedures (Denny Swartout & Angela Tran)

Liaisons

1. Loutit District Library
2. Grand Haven Public Safety
3. Grand Haven Area Public Schools
4. Chamber of Grand Haven, SL & Ferrysburg
5. Faith Community
6. United States Coast Guard
7. Tri-Cities Museum
8. Affordable housing/real estate

Ben Knight, Adult Services Librarian
Lt. Lee Adams, Community Policing
Brian Wheeler, Assistant Superintendent
Nancy Manglos, Director Talent Development
Proposed Motion re: City of Grand Haven response to discriminatory statements and actions:

The Human Relations Commission moves that the City of Grand Haven (the City), through its elected officials, act **swiftly and decisively** to respond to all **public** statements and actions that occur within the City that do not reflect the tenets of the City’s Diversity Statement. Actions and statements that fall under this motion include any that discriminate against or demean individuals or groups of people based on their race, religion, age, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Such response by the City will include a statement issued by the City to all local media and publicized on the City’s website and social media, referring to the specific action and expressing the City’s disagreement. We further move that the City respond within 48 hours, or even less if possible, and that, whenever possible, the Human Relations Commission be consulted on the appropriate action.

In the case of discriminatory statements made on July 13 by Pronto Pups on their public Facebook page, which was disseminated widely and reflected poorly on Grand Haven, the text of the City’s Diversity Statement could be employed in the City’s direct and specific response, to wit:

“*The City of Grand Haven upholds the pillars of equity, diversity and inclusion inasmuch as these are vital to a vibrant and healthy community. The statements made by Pronto Pups owner Carl Nelson on the Pronto Pups public Facebook page on July 13 do not reflect these values, and we do not support the statements made. While we respect the rights of individuals to state their opinions, we do not condone these statements, and we emphasize that this is not the attitude we wish to cultivate in Grand Haven.*”