Human Relations Commission  
Remote via Zoom  
Live streamed via YouTube  
Minutes of December 17, 2020 Regular Meeting

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


Absent: N/A

Approval of Agenda: Motion by VanHorssen, Seconded by Farmer, all in favor to approve agenda as amended moving Anti-Racism Task Force topic to Old Business.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes of November 19, 2020 approved, motion by Swartout, Seconded by VanHorssen, all in favor.

Welcome Guests: Mike Dora, GH City Council, James O’Neal, Ryan Cummins, GH City Council, Zac VanOsdol, Human Resources Manager for City of GH, Brian Wheeler, GHAPS, Robert Monetza, Mayor City of GH.

James O’Neal – Hello and thank you HRC for your work.
Mike Dora – Hello, thank you HRC for your work and Happy Holidays.

General call to the audience - No comments at this time.

Liaison Reports: Brian Wheeler, GHAPS education is fully remote as of the date of this meeting with the exception of special education students.

Old Business:

a. Visionary Award – Masko reported there has been no movement from last month’s meeting. She feels this is a significant award that deserves attention. Tran stated there are events happening with a March for Lives group and Students demand action. She will look in to the possibility of a student nomination coming from one of these groups. A discussion ensued about how to move forward with the award process. The decision was made to promote the award one more time on MLK day on Social Media. If no more nominations are received the sub-committee will choose from the current nominations. To promote the award going forward the sub-committee will take photos and video of recipient receiving award to post on social media. The photos will include shots of the person who nominated and the winner. Redick stated she will take the lead to promote the award in newsletters. Also to be added to the award is a QR code so individuals can use that to access the award information.

b. Policy and Procedure Committee – Tran stated the group has not met. She stated while reviewing the current policies she has discovered the issue with changing them is difficult
because they don’t have a clear idea where the group is headed. Swartout questioned what should come first, strategic planning or policy and procedure changes? Werksma suggested that at this time the sub-committee only review and recommend changes for the HRC complaint procedures. Swartout thinks complaint issues are legal issues that the HRC cannot address. Swartout agreed to schedule and meet with City staff to discuss. Kleyn asked to be included in that meeting. Mayor Monetza reminded the group to keep any policy and procedure changes close to the language of the City ordinance especially concerning issues of confidentiality. VanOsdol, GH Human Resources Manager suggested presenting any proposed changes to the City attorney for review of confidentiality issues.

c. **Executive Directive 2020-09; Racism as a public health crisis committee update** – Farmer stated there is no update at this time. McGee asked to work with Farmer on this sub-committee. McGee has done some research he will share with Farmer concerning the validity of the directive. McGee will report on his research in January. Mayor Monetza asked if anyone has spoken with the Ottawa County Health Department regarding this directive. VanHorsen stated she is following the movement at the county level and what actions might come out of the directive for Ottawa County.

d. **Alleged Discrimination Complaint 2020-01** – Werksma opened this conversation by sharing the request for review that resulted from the November 5, 2020 complaint the HRC received and ensuing investigation. The complaint is filed with November meeting minutes. For review, the complaint was made against the GH City Council regarding an appointment of a member to the Duncan Park Commission. The complainant believes the appointment of this particular person is a negative representation of the City of Grand Haven based on past behavior of this appointee.

**REQUEST FOR REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION**

In light of Alleged Discrimination Complaint 2020-01, submitted by a citizen of the City of Grand Haven, and upon investigation of said complaint, the Human Relations Commission asks the Grand Haven City Council to revisit its November 2, 2020 appointment to the Duncan Park Commission. We believe that all actions by City Council should be consistent with the tenets espoused in the City of Grand Haven Diversity and Inclusion Statement, adopted by Council in 2019.

We further believe that, when information about the appointee’s discriminatory statements was presented at said council meeting, the Council should have paused the appointment and asked the mayor to continue to seek other candidates. We ask the City to review its procedures for appointing citizens to its boards and commissions to ensure that Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are important criteria for selecting the people who serve the citizens of Grand Haven.

Swartout questioned if any HRC members had reached out to the appointee during the investigation. He believes City Council should have tabled the decision to appoint the Duncan Park Member when her past behavior was presented at the November 2, 2020 meeting. Werksma explained the commission members came to an agreement that the issue of the appointees behavior was not at issue for the HRC to investigate. The HRC
received a complaint against City Council therefore its responsibility was to focus on the action of the City Council. VanHorssen stated she is comfortable with the review request as presented. She also stated she particularly thinks the language asking the City Council to “revisit” their decision is good as it encompasses a broader range of activities. Mayor Monetza pointed stated he is not sure what the HRC is going to be expecting from the Council as they cannot rescind the appointment. VanHorssen pointed out that “revisiting” the appointment can be construed as revisiting the process of appointments rather than this specific appointment. Mayor Monetza read the ordinance of this commission and stated he is not sure this investigation is part of the charge of this commission as he is not sure who was discriminated against. Kleyn explained it is not the role of the HRC to determine discrimination before an investigation. Masko suggested the word “pillars” be added to the request for review. Masko also asked the Mayor is this person would be removed from the commission if these statements were made while she was a board member? And if yes, why wouldn’t it be considered as cause to keep a person from being appointed? Mayor Monetza initially stated yes, then stated it may or may not be cause for removal. Guest James O’Neal was given permission to speak. He stated he thinks the email written by the appointee demonstrates clear discrimination on a marginalized group. He is disappointed the City Council pushed the appointment through and does not like that the person is representing him in the City of Grand Haven. After conversation regarding the direction the HRC is taking Werksma pulled to topic back to the complaint. Werksma made a motion to submit the request for review to City Council. Moved by Masko, Seconded by Swartout, all in favor. Mayor Monetza reiterated he does not believe the words used by this appointee in an angry email reflect the person she is.

e. Anti-Racism Task Force – VanHorssen reported the November Town Hall meeting was profound. She provided information regarding the December Town Hall event. Werksma reminded the group that HRC members should be present at these events. Town Hall events are still being held virtually. Pre-registration is required. If you register but cannot attend you will receive the recorded event to view later.

New Business:

a. Communication/Correspondence – Lyons continues to manage social media for the HRC. She stated engagement is still up. She asked everyone to send her information they would like promoted so she can push it on Facebook.

b. City of Grand Haven Human Resource Report – Zac VanOs dol, Human Resource Manager City of Grand Haven, was present to give an update for the City of GH. VanOs dol reported that

   a. All city staff are required to complete diversity training and it is going well.

   b. He continues to work with the DEI staff from Ottawa County on how to integrate racial equity in all areas of city government, most importantly in hiring practices.

   c. Personnel Policies for city staff are being updated. One important change is that short term disability is now included in a person’s pension time. This is particularly important for women as they use more short term disability due to child birth.
d. The city has revised its EEO statement to include more groups to better align with the state of Michigan.

e. The city now gives staff members MLK day off. It is an opportunity for staff to serve their community while getting paid.

c. Agency Updates – Lautzenheiser shared some of the work the Community Foundation Youth Advisory Council is doing. They are investigating ways to share philanthropy with elementary students. Kleyn gave a brief update about foreclosure prevention work in the housing department.

Second Call to the Audience - no comments.

Motion to adjourn at 7:23 by Masko, seconded by Lyons, all in favor.

Next meeting January 28, 2021 via Zoom at 5:30 p.m.