

City of Grand Haven Human Relations Commission
Thursday, November 16, 2023, 5:30 p.m.
City Hall | 519 Washington Grand Haven

NOTES

The regular meeting of the Grand Haven Human Relations Commission was called to order by Keith Colson at 530pm in the council chamber of City Hall, 519 Washington Ave.

Present: Commission Members Annie Baker, Emmet Brown, Greta Fuller, Sydney Kroll, Wes McGee, Amber Mendiola-Suarez, Keith Colson joining at 6pm

Absent: Andrew Villanueva, Jessica Cole Robinson

Others Present: Assistant City Manager Tim Price + Kenneth James, DEI Officer for Muskegon Community College

Additions/Deletions to the Agenda & Motion to Approve

Colson presented the agenda. Brown motioned to approve, Kroll seconded, all approved.

Special Guest Roundtable: Kenneth James

Colson introduced the HRC to Ken James, from Muskegon Community College, to discuss moving forward with celebrating Black History month in a respectful, impactful, manageable way. Ken introduced himself and his passion for celebrating the histories and cultures that create our world. "If you don't remember your past, it might get erased." Ken encouraged us to engage in cross-cultural endeavors, educate ourselves about Black History, and promote events that are already happening before creating one of our own. Ken was asked for feedback on how to celebrate in a meaningful way, knowing that we are a predominantly white community. Ken's response: one step is part of the marathon. Focusing on honoring local history helps to connect people + engage the community for a deeper conversation in the future. Our goal is to meet our community where they are and offer resources. We discussed partnering with the High School, Tri-Cities Historical Museum, Library, etc, to highlight Black Role Models in "Did you know?" social media posts. We considered bringing in a presenter to speak to our community. We acknowledged that we seem to be "starting over" with this priority of highlighting and honoring Black History Month, and we will start small and let it grow.

Ken concluded his time with us and encourages us to cross-promote events, go to the events ourselves + debrief with our communities, and that he would be able to

come to GH and present to the community on “What does DEI really mean?” Ken shared an article with us “What if there were no Black people?” and shared about the Unity Day breakfast January 12, 2024 at the VanDyke Convention Center in Muskegon.

Approval of Minutes of meeting: October 2023

Colson presented the minutes from October, McGee motion to approve, Brown seconds. Discussion: Baker made one spelling correction. Colson moved to a vote, all approved with the minor edit.

Welcome Guests/Call to Audience

There were no guests.

Liaison Report

Baker did not have updates from our liaisons. We discussed adding Abby Teasley from Central School to our liaison list and that we will continue to expand our connections.

Old Business

a. Black History Month Brainstorming

We discussed creating palatable social media posts focused on Noteworthy/Famous Black Inventors and local history. Kroll suggested Bucs Blade, Fuller suggested instagram posts, Price suggested we tell one of the stories we create with City Council. Possibly the Tribune, local radio stations.

In summary: (1) Baker will email our student members and Mary Jane Evink at the high school to explore the possibility of partnering in this project + having students research 28 Noteworthy Black Figures that we will post on our social media page. If feasible, Kroll + Fuller will lead this part of our celebration. (2) Baker will inquire with the Tri-Cities Historical Museum to partner with them on local Black history. (3) Mendiola-Suarez and all will begin to compile a list of events already happening in our area to promote.

b. Visionary Award Transition Report

No report at this time.

c. Notes from July Meeting Request

Colson explained our missing July Meeting notes and requested any notes or memory from this first meeting we had as a new HRC. Colson will report the notes with the acknowledgement that they were not taken in real time.

d. Discrimination Letter Update

Colson presented a letter drafted to acknowledge the discrimination complaint made by St John's against Ottawa County. We discussed if we have an "ask" of City Council members, how involved we could/should be in bringing new + diverse speakers for an invocation. We concluded that we would begin recommending speakers to the City Clerks, but not correspond on behalf of the City. The group decided that the letter is primarily an acknowledgement of the discrimination complaint and that we support all those who are making an effort in inclusivity for invocations, including our own Grand Haven City Council members who we celebrate for this.

New Business

- a. **Planning for Next year** - Beginning of the year planned; will follow up in January.
- b. **Goal Setting** - Will follow up in January.

Second Call to Audience - No one here.

Meeting adjourned at 7:18pm, motioned by Annie, seconded by Kroll. The next meeting will take place on January 25, 2024.