City of Aurora  
Human Relations Commission  
April 11, 2019  

Meeting Minutes

Present
Susan Sosa Bachmeier, Bertha Baillie, Michelle Evans, Sheila Gray, Robert Lundquist, Ryan Maley, William Small,

Absent
Zachary Draves, Vincent Gaddis, Symone Lewis, Mae Smith (Chairperson), Kristen Ziman (ex-officio)

Call to Order and Roll Call
Vice Chair Small called the meeting to order at 5:36 PM.
Ryan Maley took roll call and noted that a quorum was present. Ms. Voigt from the City of Aurora was also present.

Minutes Approval
Ms. Gray moved the minutes from the March 14, 2019 be approved. Ms. Baillie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Indigenous People’s Day
Mr. Draves was not present. Chairperson Smith had received a communication that a retraction was posted to the Indivisible Aurora web site and was satisfied with the response.

By-Laws
Chairperson Smith reported that the City has requested the Commission’s by-laws. There is no current version of by-laws in a single file with the amendments discussed over time.

Ms. Voigt reported that the city is working on collecting all the City’s Boards and Commission by-laws. The City’s is planning to review the by-laws for consistency with ordinances and to give more freedom to the Boards and Commissions to set appropriate working rules.

Mr. Maley reported that the language of the amendments is available in minutes and he will reconstruct the current set of by-laws. Mr. Maley will distribute the updated document for review and future use by Commissioners.
Discussion of Commission Communications
Ms. Sosa-Bachmeier asked about the official status of any communications coming from the Commission.

Mr. Maley proposed to explicitly state that only the Chairperson speak on behalf of the Commission unless otherwise approved. Commissioners agreed to this unanimously.

Ms. Evans suggested the Commission create a policy regarding social media communications. Commissioners agreed and to address this issue in the future.

Committee Reports:

Community Outreach (Maley and Small)
Mr. Small reviewed the status of the Know Your Rights campaign. After the approval of the printing of Know Your Rights cards last meeting, a City assistant corporation counsel has reviewed the proposed card. The City will not permit the use of the police department logo or the City logo on the card. Counsel has stated that the Commission could go through with the printing using only the text name of the Commission., However, corporation counsel recommended that the project be cancelled because undocumented immigrants are not a protected class and do not fall under the Human Relations Commission ordinance. Counsel acknowledged that it was the decision of the Commissioners to make.

Commissioners discussed the topic.

Ms. Voigt suggested the Commission partner with another organization to print the cards. The Commission has the budget to support this. Ms. Sosa-Bachmeier commented that national origin is a protected status and this issue affects all members of the community.

Mr. Maley reviewed the original goals of the project. First, there is general anxiety and uncertainty in the community because of immigration enforcement actions. Second, there is a lack of understanding of the relevant City policies including the Illinois TRUST Act and the Aurora Police not asking about immigration status. He cited statistical evidence from other areas of the country demonstrating that US citizens are being detained in immigration sweeps and the chilling effect on crime reporting as people fear any interaction with law enforcement. He argued that while the cards may assist undocumented immigrants, they will also benefit any resident of our community, including those in protected classes, affected.

Ms. Evans discussed the overall issues and asked if it was really the Commission’s role to spend money on this type of project. She noted that our budget is public money funded by tax-payers and she is concerned about that responsibility. Ms. Gray noted the cost was over $3,000 and the majority of the Commission’s budget.

Ms. Sosa-Bachmeier stated that we have a large immigrant population including documented immigrants and citizens who are negatively affected by the current situation and they are in
affect being denied access to services and public accommodation, an issue to be addressed by the Commission.

Commissioners discussed other options including publishing the Illinois Attorney General Know Your Rights card or sponsoring another organization to publish. Various details that would affect the value of the card were discussed including the need to provide something specific for users of the card, such as a staffed telephone assistance line. Commissioners also discussed if the goal of the project could be accomplished without including a visible logo from an official government agency.

Mr. Small stated that while many Commissioners are sympathetic to the issue, it may not be the best issue for us to address. We could look at addressing issues such as racial profiling which are directly in the Commissions scope of work and does impact the Hispanic community.

Chairperson Smith asked if this was really an issue for which “we wanted to go to bat”. She has been very concerned that the Commission is perceived as “a do-nothing organization” but she is not certain this is the issue to address.

Commissioners were asked about their overall support of the project and discussions concluded.

Ms. Gray moved to rescind the March 2018 motion to spend $3,300 on Know Your Rights publishing in the Aurora Public Library Community Newsletter. Mr. Small seconded the motion. The motion carried with Ms. Baillie, Mr. Maley and Ms. Sosa-Bachmeier abstaining.

**Event Participation (Gray and Baille)**
Chairperson Smith discussed the Wilkinson Family Tribute Event to be held at the Aurora Public Library on July 13. Commissioners are still interested in participating.

Commissioners also discussed the Commission banner. It is in poor condition for various reasons. After discussion, Ms. Baillie moved the Commission purchase a new HRC pop-up banner. Ms. Gray seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Marketing (Evans and Ziman)**
No report.

Ms. Evans discussed the need for the committee. Other committees often perform their own marketing-related activities. Commissioners discussed various options including the need for the committee and the need for participation.

After discussion, Commissioners decided to dissolve the committee and ask Ms. Evans to continue her activities on Facebook and social media.
Training and Community Education (Sosa-Bachmeier, Smith, Lundquist)
Chairperson Smith reported that “The Long Shadow” community group continues to meet every other month at the Aurora Police Station. She also reported that 1,061 teachers will see the film tomorrow at the Illinois Education Assoc Representative Assembly. This activity is part of a larger activity by the organization regarding social justice and might lead to Long Shadow activities by the National Education Association.

Proposed Dates for Meeting with the City Departments
Chairperson Smith proposed dates for meeting City departments:
- Aurora Fire Department – 05/09/19
- Aurora Housing Authority – 06/13/19
- Aurora Human Resource Department – 08/08/19

Commissioners discussed and agreed they would like to hear from those departments. Ms. Voigt will work with Chairperson Smith on scheduling details.

Aurora Pride Weekend
Due to time constraints, this item was tabled to the next meeting.

Other Business
Chairperson Smith and Ms. Voigt discussed the number of Commissioners. There are too many Commissioners appointed to the Human Relations Commission. There are three options to resolve the issue:

1. Ask the City Council to increase the number of Commissioner’s
2. Ask all of the current Commissioner’s if they wish to continue to serve, or if there is anyone who was thinking of resigning.
3. Look at the attendance/participation of the current members, and as a Commission, vote to ask the City Council to remove a member (this is the process outlined in the ordinance).

The Commission should consider the matter and place on next month’s agenda for further discussion and resolution.

Next Meeting
Chairperson Smith reminded commissioners that the next meeting of the Commission will be May 9, 2019.

Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:42 pm.
Respectfully submitted,

Ryan Maley