

MINUTES
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18TH, 2018

- 1) Commissioner Julius called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm in the Olmsted County Government Center, Room 104.

Commissioner	Gale Julius, Chair	present
Commissioner	Regina Mustafa, Co-Chair	absent
Commissioner	Karen MacLaughlin, Treasurer	present
Commissioner	Jennifer Belisle	present
Commissioner	Barry Skolnick	present
Commissioner	Rey Caban	absent
Commissioner	Daniel Dogoeskie	absent
Commissioner	Carrie Osowski	present
Commissioner	Kindra Ramaker	present
Commissioner	Sandra Banuelos	present
Commissioner	Menal Abbadi	present
Youth Commissioner	Marcus Yao	present
County Commissioner	Mark Thein	absent
County Commissioner	Gregg Wright	absent
Mediation and Conflict Solutions	Wendy Moore, Director	present
Olmsted County Administration	Brittney Marschall, Administrative Coordinator	present
Olmsted County Administration	Heidi Welsch, Administrator	present

- 2) **Consensus on agenda:** Commissioner Julius asked for a motion to approve the [agenda](#). Commissioner Belisle moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Banuelos seconded.

7/0 motion passes.

3) No public comment

- 4) **Welcome** to Randy Peterson, Post Bulletin, Olmsted County Administration Heidi Welsch, Brittney Marschall, and social work students from RCTC.

- 5) **Minutes** could not be approved. They have not been received from Alyssa. Commissioner Julius will follow-up. Commissioner Belisle recommended an audit of the calendar year 2018 once raw materials have been received from Alyssa.

6) Action Item(s):

- a. Elections: Commissioner Julius noted Elections are next month and reviewed the seats for 2019 to include Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary.

Commissioner Julius and Mustafa will not be seeking a second term and the Secretary is in open seat.

- b. Report from Commissioner Julius and MacLaughlin of meeting with County Board of Commissioners and County staff: Commissioner MacLaughlin recapped a meeting (2nd meeting with County, the 1st meeting was more about the County presenting on the inventory¹) that occurred with Olmsted County Administration Pete Giesen and Heidi Welsch, Human Rights Commissioners Maclaughlin, Julius, and Olmsted County Commissioners Wright, Thein and Kiscaden. The meeting was in response to an inventory that was completed by County staff in regard to Volunteer Boards and Commissioners² and how the Human Rights Commission fit into the inventory and some next steps that should be considered for the future of the Human Rights Commission. There would be more structure and opportunities to create a model with connection and work plan.

The following discussion ensued:

Welsch: explained there are two options 1) a more autonomous commission (HR commission of OC) vrs 2) a model that reports or advises the board of commissioners (OC HR commission). She gave the example of the letter that was sent to the City of Rochester regarding hiring practices from the Commission.

Julius: I would add that at the time of the letter Becky Buzard was gone. She pulled together the emergency meeting but wasn't there to consult on the letter.

Skolnick: One of the issues that has come up in the past is funding- the commissioner receives money from the City and County.

Welsch: The county funds at 25K plus staffing and city is at \$6K.

Skolnick: Would we have to go through the county to get statistics from city?

Welsch: In that example, no I don't think that would need to go to the County board.

MacLaughlin: What if we wanted to be critical of the city?

Welsch: Yes, the County Board would need to vet.

Julius: In the past Becky Buzard has done that and give good explanation.

Belisle: Is there a position similar to Dave Mueller that assists with intergovernmental relations between other agencies?

¹ County Admin Inventory Analysis <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1MulPtyW74Co39dl2ecLxkTiWCiVGdLvl>

² County Admin Volunteer Boards/Commissions Inventory Presentation. Part II https://drive.google.com/open?id=1fBrLWk85qev2_JocePPZGLNyD_LYinzW

Welsch: We have done away with that position and restructured. Some of his work moved back to Human Resources. It depends what the breadth of intergovernmental relations is specific to topics. Where the work of the Human Rights Commission sits has been a struggle with the county in the past. Other boards have department "owners" whereas the Human Rights Commissioner hasn't been as clear.

Moore: I would emphasize that although you meet once a month, the phone line is available 24/7. Because this commission exists it is available to residents. It is something that the commission should be proud of.

Ramaker: Can other commissioners characterize the reaction in the meeting about the letter? Knowing how important the issue and needed a quick reaction....

Julius: Pete Giesen reported to this Commission shortly after with the Advisory Board Report findings and talked about keeping loop of communication between advisory boards.

Skolnick: Concern about politics burry important employment practice decisions.

Belisle: I have three thoughts. 1) If we were to make a change in structure we would have to make a change in bylaws. Currently they state that Human Rights commission lies within Human resources. In order to change the bylaws, we would need a supermajority. If choice to change structure we cannot do tonight. 2) One of the aims is to encourage collaboration, mediation, negotiation within the community. Interesting to be doing this exercise with ourselves, county board, and administration. I would like to see mediation versus contention. 3) Much of what the county is asking us today is very truthfully what we should be doing ourselves. Our role as commissioners is to govern the work that we do in the community. We have to be stewards of the mission. Some of the things that we know amongst ourselves that we have to own is taking good minutes, facilitating good communication amongst self, board of commissions and community. 4) This time last year, we were going through a transition in leadership and personalities. It is ironic that we are at that moment again, at a crossroads. I had the opportunity to sit with Commissioner Lindsey and asked him: "how do we manage this? His answer was something like: a lot of commissions take an ambiguous role because it is a good place to be. I would ask do we belong to the county, city, ourselves? What voice are we using when we speak? I feel personally that there is a lot of value in staying connected to Olmsted County. The One Olmsted- I want to see that in fruition with our community and commission part of that. We don't do enough to lend ourselves to the entire county. I would like to continue to work with the county.

Abadi: what resources are offered to us (Human Rights Commission)? What would we lose if we went off on our own? What are the benefits to sit under the county board?

Welsch: 25K from county + staffing and City = 6K + in kind donation of room space. You would also lose a strong Liaison connection to all the other work that happens at

the county. For example, we are trying a pretrial program. There are lots of things that touch the work of this committee that we haven't been able to make connections.

Osowski: If a situation like the letter were to happen again, is there a work around? Is there a disclaimer that the commission could have on those materials?

Welsch: It doesn't come up often, think it is very situational.

Banuelos: Sometimes we would need to be very timely.

Ramaker: Part of our charge is to make sure that we are speaking on behalf of the community. During the process of the hiring of the police chief I attended the police oversight meeting as a citizen. When the topic of the process came up it was brought up by people of color on the commission. It was tabled because it wasn't part of the scope of what they were supposed to talk about. I asked them to consider whether they can discuss it or not. The topic was very time sensitive. Many commissioners were working in different ways to think about what channels and how to navigate to be able to do the mission. Communication is going to be critical. We have to think about what will allow us to be the voice of the community.

Belisle: News reports are the first draft of the history. A few commissioners attended a symposium after the police chief situation. We listened to the State Human Rights Commission talk about how commissions function. There are there opportunities for those outside the state who experience discrimination in MN to still make a claim. The situation with the police chief spoke to populations on a different level. The State Human Rights Commission said that it didn't really look good and something was happening there behind the scenes.

Moore: I don't hear that anyone disagreed with the meat of the letter. It sounds like it was more about the process. It sounds like everyone agrees there needs to be better communication.

Ramaker: the timing of the decision that we are being presented with isn't sitting well.

Skolnick: I feel good that Ms. Marschall would be Liaoning.

MacLaughlin: One of the things that came to light for me about being autonomous was that the Commission could get to a place that would be proactive. Continuing as we are would seem more reactive.

Julius: Are there any further questions?

MacLaughlin: I don't think the commission has had the time to process what is happening here.

Julius: We should hold vote off until next month.

Beslie: The State Department of Human Rights has an annual symposium in December. That would be a great opportunity for county staff to join the Human Rights

commissioners. I would also recommend asking someone from the state dept to come and facilitate a discussion with us.

7) **Informational Item (s):**

- a. Police Oversight Commission: Mayor Brede is asking for a member of the Human Rights Commission to replace Alan Witts on the Police Oversight Commission. Commissioner Julius asked for consideration from members. Commissioner Abbadi and Ramaker would be willing to serve.
- b. Q & A for Mediation and Conflict Services: Executive Director Moore noted she sent the report ahead of the meeting for review by commissioners. Moore reported the month has been a little slow. There are still 2 active cases. One is at MN Department of Human Rights and being investigated. The other case -the individual requested that Moore continue contacting them but not sure if they want to go further due to fear.
- a. Treasurer's Report: Commissions Julies noted the IMAA Gala has invoiced the commission and a check needs to be sent to gala. Commissioner MacLaughlin, Secretary will send expenditures and the Gala invoice to Ms. Marschall.
- b. Updates from Commissioners:
 - i. Legal Assistance of Olmsted County is doing a fall tasting November 3rdd at 5 PM. Details are on website.
 - ii. Commissioner Banuelos who is a certified MN sure navigator encourages anyone with a case to follow-up because of delays. Make sure people are keeping proof of when they submitted their applications, so they have a time stamp.
- c. Ms. Marschall will include Part I and Part II of board/commission presentation in the Minutes
- d. The Next meeting is on Nov 15th, 2018 and Commissions Julius has asked the treasurer to run meeting in absence. Commissioner Julius will also get to the commission thoughts ahead of time on her vote for the Commission Structure.

- 8) **Adjourn:** Commissioner Osowski made a motion to Adjourn, Commissioner Banuelos seconded.

7/0 Motion passes.