

MINUTES
OLMSTED COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2017

1. Commissioner Dooley called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm in the Olmsted County Government Center, Room 104. **Present:** Commissioners Belisle, Dooley, Julius, Linkenmeyer, Mohamed, Mustafa, Skolnick, Thach, Umpierre and Witz. Youth Commissioners DeGrand and Uhm. County Commissioner Wright. MCS Executive Director Moore, Olmsted County Director of Data Practices, Staff Development and Intergovernmental Relations Mueller, Olmsted County Organizational Development Coordinator Buzard. **Absent:** Commissioners Lawson, MacLaughlin, County Commissioner Thein.
2. Welcome given to guest and speaker Dr. Ellen Kennedy and her husband. Welcome to new Human Rights Commissioners Cassandra Linkenmeyer and Musse Muhamed, and County Commissioner Gregg Wright. There were general introductions and welcomes.
3. There was no public comment.
4. Commissioner Witz made a motion to approve the agenda and Commissioner Umpierre seconded. Commissioner Dooley requested adding to Informational Items E. Discussion of a logo and adding to Action Items C. Change in meeting venue (requested by Commissioner Skolnick). All in favor of agenda with additions, none opposed. The motion carried.
5. Commissioner Dooley made a motion to approve the December meeting minutes. Commissioner Skolnick seconded. There were no amendments or discussion. All in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.
6. Informational items:
 - a. Presentation by Dr. Ellen Kennedy, Hamline University, on the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. Commissioner Dooley introduced Dr. Kennedy, and told the Commission that she heard her speak at the Minnesota Human Rights Symposium in December, and asked her to speak following the presentation. Dr. Kennedy stated that she felt she “was speaking to the choir” [presenting to the Human Rights Commission] and gave us the history of the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, commonly known as CEDAW. The United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. In 1979 the United Nations passed CEDAW as there was no definition of discrimination against women, and no way to address it. Dr. Kennedy highlighted laws in US history that discriminated against women before and after CEDAW. She asked the Commission what we thought were issues facing women today, and some of the items discussed included equal pay, the “Hilary effect” [women not breaking the “glass ceiling”], sexual harassment in the workplace and more. Dr. Kennedy then walked the Commission through current statistics on sexual assault and inequality in Minnesota and in the US. The discussion included information on the backlog of rape kits and the delays and difficulties in prosecuting sexual assault. Commissioner Umpierre added additional information from law enforcement perspective, including the information that rapists “are the guy at the bar or

the kid at the party” and “not coming out of the bushes” to assault strangers. Perpetrators “crossing jurisdictions” make it more difficult to prosecute as well. Dr. Kennedy suggested that we should address as a human right as well as a public health and safety issue. CEDAW requires nations to provide “substantive equity,” “non-discrimination” and “state obligation.” Very few nations have not ratified CEDAW, including the US, Sudan, Somalia and Iran. For the US to pass, it needs to be reviewed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and be passed by the Senate. It has been heard and passed in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee multiple times, but never gone to the Senate for a hearing. Dr. Kennedy outlined several obstacles to CEDAW’s ratification including “US exceptionalism” and that there has been no Proxmire for CEDAW. Dr. Kennedy went on to outline several myths about CEDAW, and examples from the nations that did ratify CEDAW to refute. (One example: “CEDAW would encourage abortion by providing access to family planning,” noting that Ireland and other nations that ban abortion ratified CEDAW.) Dr. Kennedy stated that the CEDAW Impact Report gives women and men a greater stake in eliminating discrimination. Dr. Kennedy went on to discuss strategies for promoting CEDAW in the US to pave the way for ratification, including the 100 Cities for CEDAW project. Commissioner Umpierre noted that President Trump has made statements about reducing funding and support for the Violence Against Women Act, and that groups could “piggyback with activism” rising as a result. Commissioner Dooley stated her goal is to take action and vote to move forward [with promoting CEDAW in Olmsted County.] Commissioner Julius asked if it would be more powerful for the request to come through the Commission to the City. Commissioner Skolnick asked what pushback could be expected from the County Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Wright stated he didn’t know “but it is not easy to argue against equal rights.” He also stated he does not know the process of asking for resolutions from the County Board of Commission. Mr. Mueller stated that the “message [of CEDAW] is loud and clear” but anticipated pushback from the County Board of Commissioners around “what does this do that we don’t have in place already.” Ms. Buzard stated that the Commissioners would be interested in hearing [the presentation]. Dr. Kennedy suggested highlighting the “inspiration, motivation and organization” in other countries, and highlight the success stories she outlined earlier. Commissioner Dooley suggested that the burden of women in poverty is carried through County-funded services, and that discrimination is a public health issue. Commissioner Belisle noted that Mayo Clinic sees patients from around the world, and the community it operates in does not offer the same protections to women that their counties of origin do. There was general discussion of hosting a public forum on promoting CEDAW. Dr. Kennedy also provided information on Minneapolis’ resolution against a Muslim registry and that schools there would not report on the immigration status of students. There was general discussion of the sanctuary movement. Handouts were provided to Commissioners in attendance. Materials and presentation can be found in the links below.

<http://worldwithoutgenocide.org/advocacy/cedaw/resources>

- b. Before proceeding with the agenda item B, “Right to Discriminate” Bill introduced in the House, Commissioner Dooley requested any additions to the agenda. Commissioner Umpierre suggested adding discussion item to provide a scholarship from the Human Rights Commission for the World Without Genocide Summer Institute for High School and College Students. Commissioner Witz seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The motion carried. Commissioner Dooley also requested motion to add supporting CEDAW to the agenda as well. Commissioner Julius made the motion and Commissioner Umpierre seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The motion carried. Commissioner Dooley informed the Commission that State Representative Duane Quam had introduced a “Right to Discriminate” bill in the Minnesota Legislature. If passed, it would allow business to discriminate against LGBTQ persons based on their religious beliefs. Commissioner Julius noted it would also include hiring practices. Commissioner Dooley noted that it contradicts the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Commissioner Witz noted that such laws are “a very slippery slope” and Commissioner Belisle noted that such laws have been struck down in other states, while some are still being challenged in court. Commissioner Umpierre noted that a similar law is in effect in North Carolina while being litigated in the courts. Commissioner Belisle noted that Representative Quam was interviewed in the Post Bulletin for some of the bills, and he stated he introduces them “for the conversation” that ensues.

Commissioner Witz suggested the Commission understand the intent of the bill before deciding on how to address. Commissioner Dooley raised Informational Item C, Question on lobbying from the City of Rochester before proceeding with the discussion of the bill. Commissioner Dooley informed the Commission that Assistant City Administrator Aaron Reeves sent a letter addressed to Organizations that Receive City Funding, stating that “the Common Council has requested the lobbying positions for organizations that receive City funding.” Commissioner Dooley stated that she replied by email that “it is the mission of the Commission to advocate and educate the community, which includes elected officials, on practices and policies that are anti-discriminatory and promote equity and equality. The Commission is made up of volunteers and we do not hire any lobbyists.” Commissioner Umpierre also informed the Commission that City Council had passed a Social Media Use Policy for employees. Ms. Buzard informed the Commission that it is an Olmsted County Commission which also receives some city funding, and “major decisions” defer to the County. Mr. Mueller also noted that our work is separate from the City, and Mr. Reeves' request is similar to information the County requests to adjust agendas and set legislative policies. Commissioner Dooley stated that she requested a meeting with Mr Reeves and Commissioner Witz. Ms. Buzard suggested Commissioner Belisle also attend to take notes. Commissioner Dooley also requested that Commissioner Witz read over the language of the bills to inform the Commission's position. Commissioner Julius stated Representative Quam also introduced a “bathroom bill” aimed at requiring transgender individuals to use the bathroom that corresponds with the gender on their birth certificate. Commissioner Dooley stated it is the duty of Commissioners to educate ourselves on issues and requested Commissioners “google” the topic. Information on the bills and the article on Representative Quam can be accessed in the following links:

http://www.postbulletin.com/news/politics/quam-fills-hopper-with-new-bills/article_c78bd058-e2be-5974-9a42-5a873c388b38.html

https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?number=HF0043&version=latest&session=90&session_number=0&session_year=2017

https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?number=HF0041&version=latest&session=90&session_number=0&session_year=2017

- c. Questions on lobbying from City of Rochester: addressed above.
 - d. Questions for Mediation Services. Commissioner Dooley requested that any questions be sent to Director Moore via email, and reminded the Commission that information on calls is confidential.
7. Treasurer's Report: Commissioner Julius noted that it is a new fiscal year and "we are in the black." Commissioner Witz made a motion to accept the report. Commissioner Umpierre seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.
8. Action Items:
- a. Support for speaker Phil Durand from OutFront Minnesota: Per Commissioner Dooley, February is "Valentine's Month" and Mr. Durand will present on issues related to same sex marriage and transgender issues. Commissioner Julius requested that we move to a larger venue. Commissioner Skolnick stated he wanted to discuss a venue change for regular meetings as well. Commissioner Dooley noted that the room seats 45 persons and the Commission has used the space for other forums, especially if tables are rearranged. Commissioner Dooley requested a motion to provide Mr. Durand a stipend of \$300. Commissioner Witz made the motion and Commissioner Julius seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.
 - b. Support for speaker Lisa Tabor for Intercultural Cities Initiative: Commissioner Dooley stated the Commission would need more information before proceeding and requested a motion to table. Commissioner Witz made the motion and Commissioner Julius seconded. Commissioner Dooley stated she would send information to the Commission to review.
 - c. Commissioner Skolnick made a motion to move the Human Rights Commission's regular monthly meeting to Rochester Public Library. Commissioner Umpierre seconded. Commissioner Dooley stated she was opposed, as the Library's schedule is full and no reasonable times are available. She noted that the Police Oversight Commission cannot get a regular opening for their recurring meetings. Commissioner Mustafa noted that she schedules the Faith Talk Show a year in advance, and moving the HRC meeting is "a good intention but difficult." Commissioner Skolnick stated that his main goal is to get more audience for speakers and for community forums. Commissioner Mustafa noted that she generally gets "maybe one or two stray visitors" to the Faith Talk Show, and most attendees hear about it through social media or other channels. Ms. Buzard stated that the Olmsted County website had been changed, and HRC information and agenda is "on the top of the page" and can be promoted by County channels. Commissioner Umpierre stated she didn't think moving the venue is "reasonable and possible." Commissioner Julius stated that the room can be rearranged for forums. Commissioner Skolnick in favor of the motion, the rest opposed. The motion was not carried.

Commissioner Dooley noted that she had inadvertently missed informational item E, discussion of a logo, and requested a motion to table the item. Commissioner Witz made the motion and Commissioner Mustafa seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.

- d. Commissioner Dooley requested a motion to table action item on scholarship for the World Without Genocide Summer Institute for High School and College Students. Commissioner Julius made the motion. Commissioner Umpierre seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.
 - e. Commissioner Dooley requested a motion to support and promote CEDAW. Commissioner Julius made a motion that the Commission “get behind, educate and promote” CEDAW in the community. Commissioner Mustafa seconded. Commissioner Skolnick questioned what the motion was asking the Commission to promote to the City of Rochester and Olmsted County to “sign on” as supporters. Commissioner Skolnick stated he would like time to read the materials provided, and would “probably support” the measure, but wanted to review CEDAW and related documents. All in favor, Commissioner Skolnick opposed, and requested that Commissioners do due diligence and read materials. The motion carried.
9. Adjourn: Commissioner Witz made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mustafa seconded. All in favor, none opposed. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.