

**MINUTES**  
**OLMSTED COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**  
**THURSDAY, AUGUST 17th**

1) Commissioner Dooley called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm in Olmsted County Government Center, Room 104.

Commissioner	Nora	Dooley	present
Commissioner	Allan	Witz	present
Commissioner	Jennifer	Belisle	present
Commissioner	Gale	Julius	present
Commissioner	Cassie	Linkenmeyer	present
Commissioner	Karen	MacLaughlin	present
Commissioner	Musse	Mohamed	present
Commissioner	Regina	Mustafa	absent
Commissioner	Barry	Skolnick	present
Commissioner	Rey	Caban	present
Commissioner	Carrie	Osowski	present
Commissioner	Kindra	Ramaker	absent
Youth Commissioner	Alyssa	DeGrand	present
Youth Commissioner	Bella	Lichen	present
County Commissioner	Mark	Thein	present
County Commissioner	Gregg	Wright	absent
Mediation and Conflict Solutions Director	Wendy	Moore	present
Organizational Development Coordinator	Becky	Buzard	present
Director, Intergovernmental Relations	Dave	Mueller	present

- 2) Welcome given to speaker.
- 3) No public comment.
- 4) Approval of Agenda: There were general questions about follow-up on a vote for proposed by-law changes and other additions to the agenda. Support for IMAA gala was added under Action Items, B and discussion of upcoming elections was added under Information Items, E. Commissioner Witz made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Musse seconded. All in favor; none opposed. The agenda as amended was approved.
- 5) Approve/Amend July 20th minutes: Commissioner Dooley noted that the Commission did not need to approve June minutes as presented, as they were corrected minutes. With regards to the July minutes, Commissioner Dooley requested a correction on page 2, Informational item b, Addressing Identity Evropa: that the sentence “The discussion became disruptive and order was lost” be removed, as “disruptive is subjective and the discussion was passionate and engaged” and “for order to be lost there has to be a call to order” under Roberts Rules of Order. Per Commissioner Witz the word “order” is not appropriate, and per Commissioner Dooley “we should encourage passionate discussion.” There was no motion or second to approve the minutes, but Commissioner Dooley asked who was in favor of approving the minutes as amended. No further discussion. All in favor; none opposed. The approval carried.
- 6) Informational Items:
  - a) Presentation by Ed Duda, Career Counselor at Workforce Development Incorporated. After Mr. Duda was introduced, Commissioner Dooley brought to the attention of the Commission a recent Post Bulletin article about Commissioner Mustafa and threats made to her. Commissioner Skolnick asked if there was information about who made the threats, and Commissioner Julius stated that the threats are being investigated by the FBI.

Mr. Duda stated that his work “is to help people go to work,” and while “can lead a horse to water but you can’t make them drink, you can salt the oats.” WDI has been located at the Heintz Center for the last three years, but the “Workforce Center is just a building” and they share the space with state job services, State Services for the Blind, a Veteran’s representative who works for DEED and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. They serve 10 counties of southeastern Minnesota and “answer to a Workforce Development joint powers board” with one County Commissioner from each of the 10 counties. [Per WDI’s website, Commissioner Ken Brown represents Olmsted County.] The Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) governs the work they do. Mr. Duda discussed a list of services they offer the community, including job search classes and access to computers, the internet and phones for job seekers. There was discussion of the role of “job clubs” in the area. He noted three annual job fairs they organize as well as connections to RCTC classes and apprenticeship programs. There was general discussion about Minnesota’s “Ban the Box” law barring employers from asking about and screening out applicants based on criminal convictions. There was discussion about work requirements for MFIP and other assistance programs and how WDI helps those job seekers. There was also discussion about “dislocated worker” resources when there are layoffs and the credentials needed for international health care workers. There was discussion about resources for employment for youth, and Commissioner Skolnick discussed the path for skilled trades for potential dropouts and other at-risk youth. Commissioner Julius stated there are resources and discussions with students “on the verge of dropping out” and the YouthBuild program. Commissioner Skolnick asked about “fair share” of hires for protected classes in skilled trades in the county. There was some discussion about hiring goals for local construction projects. Commissioner Dooley noted there are equity goals for projects “like the Vikings stadium.” Commissioner Julius asked about how to donate clothing for the clothes closet. Commissioner Belisle noted, per Commissioner Skolnick’s question about equity goals in employment, that the Department of Employment and Economic Development has hired an equity specialist, Julie Brock, and there are specific employment goals for people of color, women and persons with disabilities in our region’s workforce, and recommended that she come and speak or look at the issue in a broader way.

- b) MN Department of Human Rights 50th Anniversary Celebration Film: “Our Rights: Justice for All” and panel discussion will be Thursday, August 24th at 7 pm at the Rochester Public Library. Commissioner Lindsey from the Minnesota Department of Human Rights will be hosting the panel discussion. Commissioner Dooley encouraged everyone to attend. Commissioner Dooley went on to note that Commissioner Linkenmeyer has a new job.

Commissioner Linkenmeyer gave an update on her position, as the Minnesota Area Director of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, which is a new position in Minnesota. Commissioner MacLaughlin asked follow-up questions about the film including who else was going to be on the panel. Per Commissioner Dooley, Chief of Police Peterson and she were both going to be on the panel.

c) Update from Latino Community Conversations: Per Commissioner Dooley, there has been interest in bringing Sheriff Torgerson to speak to the Commission, in regards to concerns about ICE holds and other issues facing immigrants in the community. Per Commissioner Dooley, she had asked him to come and speak to the Commission. County Commissioner Sheila Kiscaden organized a community conversation with Chief Peterson, Sheriff Torgerson, members of the community including Jeffrey Jurewicz, Rebecca Sedarski, and several others from Latino community. Per Commissioner Dooley, the Sheriff stated he would be willing to come and speak with the Commission “after the community conversation group came up with some goals and objectives.” Commissioner Julius asked when the next community conversation would be, and Commissioner Dooley stated it was by invitation only. She serves on the conversation, and the Human Rights Commission “has one spot on it.” Commissioner Dooley recommended that Commissioner Caban take her place as a Latino police officer in the community. Commissioner Dooley noted the upcoming elections and that she and Commissioner Witz are at the end of their terms, and there would be the need to find Commissioners to represent the Commission at various meetings. There was further discussion about the Latino Community Conversation, and minutes from the meeting should be distributed to those who attended. Commissioner Dooley stated she would forward them to the Commission. The meetings are not open to the public at this time. Commissioner Skolnick recommended open meetings when possible, and that Commissioner Julius should be able to attend. Commissioner Dooley stated she would “bring that idea forward” to the next conversation. Commissioner Julius made a motion to ask Commissioner Caban to represent the HRC and Commissioner Witz seconded, noting we don’t have the right to appoint anyone to the conversation. Commissioner Caban agreed to attend. All in favor; none opposed. The motion carried. Commissioner Dooley noted one matter of concern from the conversation. The question of ICE detainers came up and members of the conversation learned that the jail does not hold anyone for ICE. They do conduct ICE alerts and will call ICE to let them know when an individual is released. Commissioner Dooley noted that people “were upset by that revelation.”

d) Q&A for Mediation Services: Commissioner Dooley gave an overview of the report that Director Moore sends the Commission and the work of Mediation Services. There were no questions.

e) Upcoming Elections: Commissioner Witz stated he would not be running for any office. Commissioner Dooley also noted that it is the end of her term on the Commission and she would not be running for any office, as she will not be a resident of Olmsted County “and it is time for great new people.” She reviewed the four positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary and noted anyone is eligible to run for office. All four positions come up annually, and Commissioners may nominate themselves. Youth Commissioners cannot run for those positions. Commissioner Skolnick asked if nominations and elections are held at the same meeting and it was confirmed that they would be, at the October meeting. There was general discussion of the nomination process and what individuals would do with the office. Commissioner Dooley stated she would ask Ms. Buzard to send out an email asking Commissioners to submit their self-nomination and a short bio. Commissioner Witz suggested that individuals still have the opportunity to self-nominate at the October meeting and have a chance to speak. It was noted that there is no requirement for tenure on the commission before taking office. Commissioner Dooley noted some of the “skill set” that would help an officer. There was more discussion of Youth Commissioner roles as they relate to the by-laws of the Commission as well as the roll the County Board has in appointing members to the Commission. Commissioner Belisle noted that there had been prior discussion of a Youth Commissioner shadowing a position, or serving as the designee for taking minutes for the Secretary, per the recent by-law change. Commissioner Belisle also asked what other positions or seats that Commissioners Dooley and Witz hold on behalf of the Commission. Commissioner Witz is the nominee to the Rochester Police Oversight Commission, and would keep his seat until his term on the Commission ends, and will continue to provide information of their work to the Commission. The Commission no longer has a membership in the Chamber of Commerce. Commissioner Julius was on the Bias and Hate Crime group, but the work has been transferred to the Diversity Council. Ms. Moore noted that she gets calls on the Human Rights Line from reporters and others that she forwards to the Chair and Vice Chair. Commissioner Julius serves on the Community Focus Team for Rochester Public Schools. Commissioner Dooley also recommended that all Commissioners get on the state office website’s email

distribution list for updates and information. There was also discussion of the contractual relationship between Mediation and Conflict Solutions and Olmsted County, via the Human Rights Commission, and the work MCS does. There was more discussion about the role of Chair and the training and resources available. There was also discussion of the state Human Rights Symposium, held annually in December. Commissioner Belisle stated it would be a good time to also discuss priorities for the upcoming year, to educate ourselves on the by-laws, protected classes and areas of jurisdiction and service for the Commission. Commissioner Dooley noted the role of a committee on the Commission. Commissioner Skolnick spoke about his ongoing interest in looking at affirmative action in hiring practices at the City as well as County. There was discussion of using some of September's meeting for more conversation. There was also discussion of the timing of Commissioner Dooley and Commissioner Witz' last meetings, who will lead the October meeting, as well as when new officers take on their roles.

7.) Treasurer's Report: there were no changes to the Treasurer's Report. Commissioner Julius asked about the funds for Ellen Kennedy, and it was noted that there was both mileage reimbursement and an honorarium. There was discussion of charges for other honorariums. Commissioner Witz made a motion to approve. Commissioner Julius seconded. Commissioner Julius asked about the funds left in the budget and remaining expenses, including support for MCS, Symposium costs and other expenses. All in favor; none opposed. The motion carried.

8.) Action Items

a) Support for a speaker from ISIAH: Commissioner Dooley stated that she heard Catalina Morales de Sanchez from ISIAH speak to churches and other faith organizations about the sanctuary movement and what happens in the immigration process for undocumented immigrants. The example about immigrants paying taxes, including Social Security taxes, but not being able to collect benefits was discussed. Commissioner Dooley requested that the Commission support Ms. Morales de Sanchez as a speaker at our September meeting. Commissioner Julius requested that we table the item, as ISIAH is hiring a local organizer soon and the Commission could have a local speaker at a later date. Commissioner Skolnick stated he thought we were having a speaker from Mayo Clinic speak in September, and Commissioner Dooley stated that Mayo is "revamping that role" and the speaker is not available. There was discussion of how speakers are brought to the Commission. Commissioner Belisle recommended that if we brought a speaker from ISIAH that we do so as a forum and invite a wider community audience. Commissioner Skolnick noted we had agreed to a discussion about nominations and direction for the Commission at the September meeting. Commissioner Witz made a motion to support having Ms. Morales de Sanchez speak in September. Commissioner Caban seconded. Commissioner MacLaughlin addressed the point of having a larger forum. Commissioner Dooley noted at this point we do not have confirmation of the speaker, but are agreeing to the financial support to invite her. There was discussion about the logistics of hosting a forum and promoting on social media and other channels, and how previous forums were held. Commissioner Julius stated she would support the speaker as a forum. There was more discussion about inviting speakers, hosting a forum and the discussion about nominations and future plans for the Commission, and the logistics of such a meeting. Commissioner MacLaughlin noted if we invited faith communities we would likely have high attendance. Commissioner Belisle noted she would be willing to stay until 9:30 to accommodate both. The proposal evolved into inviting her as a speaker, hosting it as a forum, inviting the wider community and staying later to accommodate a discussion. Eight in favor, two opposed. The motion carried. Commissioner Dooley stated she would let the Commission know if Ms. Morales de Sanchez was coming to assist with promoting the forum and that all Commissioners "supporting a forum need to be here 30 minutes early to help set up the room." There was further discussion of crowd and room size, and other venues that hosted ISIAH.

b) Support for IMAA Gala: Commissioner Belisle noted that the Commission has sponsored Intercultural Mutual Assistance Associations' fundraiser gala for several years, and noted Jaylani Abdalla, a former Commissioner, works for IMAA. Ron Buzard, Executive Director for IMAA spoke to the Commission earlier this year after the current administration's original travel ban was announced. Youth Commissioner DeGrand noted she attended last year and it was an inspiring event. There was general discussion about the cost of sponsoring a table, the date and location, and who might be able and interested in attending. Commissioner Witz disclosed that he is on the board of IMAA and noted "there is no other organization like IMAA doing the work they do" for immigrants in the community. Commissioner Julius made a motion to contribute the amount to sponsor a table, which is \$350. Commissioner Witz seconded. All in favor; none opposed. The motion carried.

9.) Updates from Commissioners:

a) Commissioner Witz noted he was at an IMAA board meeting earlier in the day, and related discussion about posters found in Rochester with “Blood and Soil” and statements about “all Americans need to report illegal immigrants” along with other rhetoric about white supremacy. Commissioner Belisle noted that the Daily Stormer’s website has been removed from their internet host. There was general discussion about the language in the posters and ties to recent events in Charlottesville, Virginia and other communities. Commissioner Witz shared a picture of the poster. Commissioner Belisle suggested a response to the posters be a topic of consideration at a future meeting. There was further discussion of free speech and hate speech and potential responses. Commissioner Skolnick noted that people who are working class of all races are economically squeezed and are responding “out of fear and turning to bigotry.” Commissioner Dooley noted an alternative poster project would be a good response, and there was discussion of Commissioner Mustafa’s “Not in My Town” poster campaign. Commissioner Dooley discussed a way to promote “real people” to feature on a future poster campaign, and requested each Commissioner think of three “real people” to ask to participate.

10.) Adjourn: Commissioner Julius made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Witz seconded. All in favor; none opposed. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm.