

Owatonna Human Rights Commission – Minutes

The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Tuesday, May 14, 2019 in the Second Floor Conference of the City Administration Building. Commission Chairman Cords called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Commissioner Ventura took roll call with Commissioners Ethan Cords, Fred Ventura, Jim Gunderson, and David Emanuelson; Finance Director Rhonda Moen and Administrative Specialist Jeanette Clawson present. Commissioners Ryan Gillespie, Jamie Vanoosbree and John Worden were not present.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Commissioner Cords welcomed everyone to the meeting. Minutes of the April 9th ORC Meeting were reviewed. Commissioners Cords and Ventura requested changes; Commissioner Ventura made motion to approve the minutes as amended; Commissioner Gunderson seconded the motion; all members present voted aye in approval.

Commissioners Gillespie and Vanoosbree joined the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

During Commissioner Comments, Commissioner Ventura said he joined five OHS students on Saturday at the Bagel Shop for discussion on the current racial conditions at the high school. Their comments were they believe racial tension has settled down as conditions seem stable; they aren't seeing any issues or hearing vulgar language as they walk down the OHS hallways. Commissioner Vanoosbree questioned the ethnicity of the five students; Ventura responded he met with five white female students.

Commissioner Gunderson said the group meeting for community awareness has been named the "We are Better Together Community Engagement Group". This group is assisting ISD #761 with the community engagement presentations they are planning. The first of three meetings will be Wednesday, June 12th at the Middle School at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Vanoosbree commented she attended the Green Card Voices at OHS on Monday, April 22nd. The presentation featured 18 first generation immigrant and refugee stories from 12 different countries of origin. The stories that make up this exhibit are Central Minnesota stories, told by community members who live here, work here, and serve here. The exhibit features individual 8ft. tall full-color banners displaying highlights of each incredible and unique story. Each banner includes a portrait, their 200-word bio, a quote and a QR code for viewers to scan with a smart phone/iPad and watch the first-person video story. Several Owatonna students' stories were also on display, Jamie's son and his friends were shown in one of the pictures.

During Old Business, Commissioner Ventura confirmed plans for the Community Engagement event planned for next Thursday, May 23rd at the Steele County History Center. Sergio Aguilar, Director of Latino Affairs, MSU-Mankato will present "Building a Community for Dignity & Respect". Event posters have been distributed, information posted on Facebook and included on the City's Weekly Meeting Schedules and website. Reminders will be sent to the Owatonna Ministerial Association and the ISD School Administration.

Commissioner Ventura will contact Fairway Outdoors to change the public service spot on the LED Board. The current MLK information will be replaced with, "How a society treats its disabled is the true measure of a civilization."

During New Business, the annual Election of Officers was held. Commissioner Gunderson made a motion to nominate the current officers continue for another year: Chairman Cords; Vice-Chair Ventura and Secretary Gillespie. Commissioner Emanuelson seconded the motion; each nominee accepted the proposed nomination and all members present voted aye in approval.

With no additional business, Commissioner Emanuelson made a motion to adjourn at 5:24 p.m.; Commissioner Gillespie seconded the motion and the meeting ended.

The next OHRC Meeting will be Tuesday, June 11th at 5:30 p.m.