

Human Relations Commission
Remote via Zoom
Live streamed via Facebook
Minutes of January 28, 2021 Regular Meeting

Meeting called to order by Werksma at 5:33 pm.

Present: Madigan Lautzenheiser, Alexa Redick, Barbara VanHorssen, Louann Werksma, Shyle Lyons, Reyna Masko, Wes McGee, Angela Tran, Rhonda Kleyn. Each member indicated verbally their city and state location.

Absent: N/A

Approval of Agenda: Motion by McGee, Seconded by Lyons, all in favor to approve agenda as amended adding 2020 Annual Report and Correspondence and Communication to New Business.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes of December 17, 2020 approved, motion by Masko Seconded by McGee, all in favor.

Welcome Guests: Mike Dora, GH City Council, Zac VanOsdol, Human Resources Manager for City of GH, Robert Monetza, Mayor City of GH, Ashley Latsch, Assistant to the City Manager and DeMario Johnson, Assistant to the City Manager Village of Spring Lake.

DeMario Johnson spoke about his new position as Assistant to the City Manager for the Village of Spring Lake. Johnson is working with Ottawa County to implement G.A.R.E, government alliance on race and equity. It is in the preliminary planning stages, the steering committee is just getting started.

General call to the audience-No comments at this time.

Liaison Reports: N/A

Old Business :

- a. **Town Hall Update** – VanHorssen presented that the most recent Town Hall went really well with 165 participants and 80 staying for the small group break-outs. The subject was racism in the education system. This was the second session for this topic, there was 6 student panelists. The task force is working on how to present the session information to area schools. Attention for the town hall is growing. MLive and Wood TV8 had staff in the audience. The next series is racism in the justice system. This will be a 3 month series. Facilitators are needed.
- b. **Visionary Award** – Masko reported there are now 3 adult and 3 youth nominations. The sub-committee is scheduled to meet next week to choose winners. Lyons asked to be added to the sub-committee.
- c. **Alleged Discrimination Complaint 2020-01** –Kleyn reported the HRC's request for review of city council action was presented to the city council during the January 19, 2021 regular work session of the city council. Kleyn reported the City Council members all had positive comments,

thanked the HRC members for a thorough review of the complaint and committed to more thoughtful appointments in the future. The complainant also thanked the HRC for listening to his complaint and completing a thorough review, he is satisfied with the outcome.

- d. **Strategic Plan** – Werksma explained the next steps for strategic planning. The sub-committee met with Zac VanOsdol. VanOsdol will be assisting the sub-committee; helping provide direction to group for goals and planning. The sub-committee will be meeting with VanOsdol again and the February HRC meeting is dedicated to strategic planning. The sub-committee group is Masko, Werksma, McGee and Lyons.

New Business:

- a. **Communication/Correspondence** – Kleyn reported the group received an email from a resident regarding the alleged discrimination complaint the HRC received in November. Werksma read the email. A brief discussion was had. The group agreed the resident should receive a reply explaining the HRC complaint procedure. Kleyn offered to author a response, send it to the group for review and send after group approval. Lyons suggested changing the process of appointing board and commission be changed slightly to include more than just one person to make it more of a team effort. Werksma reported she has met with Esther from the City of Holland HRC, she is collecting more information and will present to the group when she has everything ready.
- b. **Annual Report** – Werksma reported she has the 2020 annual report almost complete. She requested help from some members of the group to finalize the report.
- c. **HRC Member Updates** – Werksma reported the HRC had two resignations; Farmer and Swartout. Masko's appointment ends in June as does VanHorssen's. The group is in need of new applicants. Werksma asked if VanHorssen and Masko would be willing to be liaisons for the HRC for the Momentum Center and the Grand Haven Heritage Fiesta respectively.
- d. **Black History Month** – Werksma asked for ideas for HRC activities. McGee stated he will do some research. Werksma suggested doing a series of social media posts about Hezekiah Smith, a freed slave who settled in Ferrysburg. Lyons and Tran are going to work on the social media posts.
- e. **Agency Updates** – Liaison Ben Knight reported he is doing MLK Day work with GH staff Zac VanOsdol. Masko reported the Ottawa county Health Department is working on a project for non-english speaking residents. There is an intentional push to get accurate COVID 19 vaccine information to minority communities in the county. Lyons reported that social media activity for the HRC continues to grow with double the post reach and triple the number of likes in the past month. VanHorssen reported the Momentum Center is opening next week. She explained mental health issues as a result of the pandemic are still high. It's important to be aware, ask people how they are doing and really listen to their responses. Redick informed the group that the Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance reported good revenues for non-profits despite the pandemic. Redick also reported she is participating in monthly meetings at the Children's Advocacy Center with a group known as JEDI. Its focus is DEI topics and creating brave spaces for the children.
- f. **Request for support** – Kleyn presented an idea to the group for affordable housing advocacy from the HRC. She explained that developers often request an exception to an ordinance and

attempt to exclude any affordability components. Kleyn would like the HRC to advocate against allowing the removal of affordable units in new developments.

Second Call to the Audience - no comments.

Motion to adjourn by VanHorssen, seconded by McGee, all in favor.

Next meeting February 25, 2021 via Zoom at 5:30 p.m.