

City of Grand Haven
Human Relations Commission
Wednesday, October 12, 2022 5:30 p.m.
City Hall
519 Washington, Grand Haven



Special Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order.....Nail

Meeting called to order at 5:34pm

2. AttendanceLatsch

Present: Baker, Rant, Werksma, Nail, McGee, Billedreau

Absent: Colson

Also Present: Board of Light and Power Representatives David Walters, Renee Molyneux, Michael Westbrook, and Andrea Hendrick.

3. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda & Motion to Approve.....All

Approved as Presented

Motion: Baker

Second: Billedreau

4. Welcome GuestsNail

Chair Nail opened the meeting by welcoming guests and explaining the intent of the special meeting as well as the nature of the complaint that the commission had received. Nail proceeded to review the Charter provision in which identified the HRC's responsibility in fielding such a complaint. Nail concluded the introduction by laying the framework for the interview questions that were to follow.

5. Complaint InterviewsAll

Werksma initiated the series of interview questions. Werksma directed her question to Director Hendrick, inquiring of the nature of the complaint was an isolated incident in her belief. Ms. Hendrick did not feel it was an isolated experience.

Werksma followed up with a question regarding what accommodations had been made for Mr. Kieft provided his known hearing disability. General Manager Walters further explained the severity of Mr. Kieft's disability and that the staff had implemented ADA accommodations to the furthest extent possible. Mr. Walters noted that, however, the accommodations were still not sufficient given the extent of hearing impairment Mr. Kieft had, leading to his eventual resignation.

Werksma directed her next question to the elected representatives, asking what onboarding was provided to them, and more specifically in the context of the Open Meetings Act. Both Chairperson Westbrook and Director Hendrick reviewed the Board's onboarding process and training conducted by staff.

Chairperson Nail proceeded to ask the elected representatives if they had received a copy of the resolution that was presented at the August 3rd prior to that meeting; explaining the intent to build further context around the meeting and behavior in question. Both Mr. Westbrook and Ms. Hendrick stated they had not. When asked further if they were aware of the purpose of that meeting, Chairperson Westbrook explained that the chair and vice-chair assist in agenda setting, so yes. General Manager Walters added that the resolution in question was also discussed at the BLP's July 15th meeting. Ms. Hendrick followed up with concern regarding the meeting start time.

Chairperson Nail asked a follow-up question, inquiring whether special meetings were addressed in the BLP bylaws, and were the rules followed. General Manager Walters explained the regulations, and that they were followed. Chairperson Westbrook confirmed.

Werskma asked Ms. Hendrick directly if she felt discriminated against. Ms. Hendrick responded indirectly, deferring to her experiences, noting that the primary concern is that access to information has felt disproportionate to that of other board members.

Discussion about meeting rhetoric and tone took place. All parties acknowledged the tension over the previous handful of months.

After additional conversation about meeting structure and allowing proportionate discussion time, Chairperson Westbrook made the statement that, as the new Chair, he was committed to changing the tone of meetings and allowing healthy debate going forward.

Chairperson Nail concluded the interview portion of the meeting. She thanked all in attendance and noted that at the time there would be no deliberation, that the commission would discuss what they heard and begin to formulate their opinion/recommendation at their regularly scheduled October 27th meeting.

6. Call to Audience Nail

Ryan Cummins, 551 Gidley, thanked the Human Relations Commission for their work. Cummins noted he was at the BLP meeting. He further commented he was struck by the admission Ms. Hendrick was treated differently. Cummins stated that the HRC was now tasked with determining if the behavior was due to her protected class based on the pattern of behavior overtime.

Jeff Miller commented that he had been attending BLP meetings since 2015. Mr. Miller proceeded to read an excerpt from his August 28th reading at the BLP meeting.

Field Reichardt added that the BLP was a department of the City and encouraged the HRC to take a serious look at how to make the board function better as a unit.

7. Adjournment & Next meeting: October 27, 2022

Motion to Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 7:12pm

Motion: Baker

Second: Werksma

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