

# Duluth Human Rights Commission

Regular Meeting

July 29, 2020 4:30PM

City Hall - Virtual (meeting using WebEx)

- I. Call to order at 4:39PM by Commissioner Huber (chaired meeting)
  - A. Commissioners present: Mark Hakkes, Carl Huber, Bettina Keppers, Ashley Neenan, Ri Preap, and Sandra Van Den Bosse
  - B. Commissioners absent: Princess Kisob, Chair (excused)
  - C. Present: Human Rights Officer Carl Crawford
- II. Consent agenda minutes - June 17, 2020
  - A. Commissioner Hakes motioned for approval, Commissioner Van Den Bosse second.
  - B. June 17, 2020 regular meeting notes approved unanimously
- III. Public Comments - no comments
- IV. Chair Report - none
  - A. Officer nominations/elections
    1. Commissioners approved to move nominations/elections to the August meeting agenda so Commissioner Kisob, Chair, could be present
- V. Committee Reports
  - A. Gender & Sexuality - did not meet
  - B. Education
    1. Commission Ashley report that the committee which includes Commissioner Huber met and discussed the following issues:
      - a) Ron Lake gave a presentation on "Implicit Bias" at the 7/7/2020 ISD709 School Board meeting
      - b) SRO(s) role in the school and recent opposition to their continued presence
      - c) Looking to build relationships with MN Human Rights Commission and partner on achievement gap report for ISD709
      - d) Setting up a meeting with the new Superintendent Magas as he hits the ground to establish a collaborative relationship
  - C. Findings
    1. Commissioner Keppers reported the committee met on 07/13/2020 and discussed the following issues:

- a) An incident that occurred at a local fast food restaurant involving under age students and the police. Pending further information from the community
- b) An incident that involved a gun discharge at a local gas station and the misidentification of those held by police
- c) An employee of MN DOT with concerns about discrimination based on COVID-19 testing and protocols
- d) An incident involving Child Protective Services (CPS) and child removal
- e) Discussion regarding the expiration of the eviction timeframe related to COVID-19 and the number of people now facing eviction
- f) Mask ordinance has been approved in Duluth and now state-side
- g) The Lakeside resident who has chosen to fly the confederate flag at his residence despite neighbors effort and a local peaceful protest to have him take it down.

#### D. Housing Justice

- 1. Commissioner Grimm chaired this committee. Since her term has expired, Commissioner Hakes, Reap, and Huber expressed interests in organizing the committee.

#### VI. On-boarding/Retreat update

- A. Commissioner Huber asked Human rights Officer Crawford had any information from Mayor Larsen regarding funding. At this time there appears to be budget discussions and most likely there would not be funding.
- B. Commissioner Huber suggested that the Commission think of creating a half day retreat without a facilitator. And have the executive committee meet and plan an agenda. The focus remains on Commissioners' roles and setting 3 to 4 goals for the coming year. Keep it cost free. Commissioner Huber shared the importance of the time together with several new Commissioners to benefit the group as a whole.

#### VII. Community Correspondence

- A. Commissioner Keppers brought up the email regarding the confederate flag. Commissioner Van Den Bosse said there is no legal recourse. Human Rights Office Crawford said there is no stance that can be taken as a Commission or by the City of Duluth. Emphasis on creating safe communities and watch for when it crosses the line causing harm or bullying of other community members. Commissioner Huber will reply to

Ms. Liz Carlson's email on behalf of the Commission (review by Commissioner Van Den Bosse)

- B. A side topic developed that the Commissioners want added as an agenda item at our next meeting, regarding topics that the Commission could present in a Zoom format as part of our mission to provide community education. Suggested topics for Zoom meetings included:
    - 1. Symbols of hate (i.e. confederate flag) by Commissioner Keppers
    - 2. Redlining in Duluth by Commissioner Van Den Bosse to follow-up with Commissioner Kisob
    - 3. Looking at local symbols, local statues (i.e Lief Erickson) by Commissioner Hakes
    - 4. Treaty rights specific to Chief Buffalo and the Lincoln Park area by Commissioner Hakes
    - 5. Re-naming of City parks by Commissioner Neenan
    - 6. Local history of white supremacy by Commissioner Hakes
- VIII. Human Rights Officer Crawford's Report
- A. Concerns will rise as we move into fall and winter with COVID-19 and the struggles people and families are facing
  - B. 07/25/2020 the eviction moratorium expired and is being extended but does not cover everything the original guidelines allowed for. There is a big group in the middle that will be affected by this change. Waiting to see what will be in the new guidelines as to compare to the original eviction moratorium to determine local community impact.
  - C. Homelessness in the City is on the rise. There are a number of homeless camps that have popped up throughout the City. Concerns regarding COVID-19 testing, safety, cleanliness, and the effect when the person moves on leaving behind waste.
  - D. Work on blight helping people with hoarding and other mental health issues. Working to connect health/mental health services with those in need.
  - E. A group met on conversion therapy ban. Both a discussion on language and how to handle complaints took place. A strong push for educating the community and the negative impact this therapy has on LBGTQ youth and communities.
  - F. The no mask ordinance has presented few incidents. Confronting the healthcare issues for those who do not wear a mask and the protection of their rights to not have to disclose their health condition. Use of plastic shield as an alternative to the mask ordinance

- G. Cook and Virginia counties are looking at starting Human Rights Commissions and an opportunity for Duluth HRC to offer advice, counsel, and collaboration.
- H. Emphasized the importance of contacting ISD709 new Superintendent Magas to address the achievement gap issues brought forward in a report by the MN Human Rights Commission. ISD709 was supposed to be fined for their low performance. The impact on COVID-19 in the plans for fall return to school as also a concern for teacher safety, student safety and ability to deliver classroom education.
- I. Questions:
  - 1. Commissioner Van Den Bosse asked if there were numbers for evictions in the City. HRO Crawford said not yet seen any but he is working with Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and volunteer attorney group for resources if it occurs
  - 2. Commissioner Van Den Bosse asked about the achievement gap in ISD709. Commission Huber noted it is on our agenda for topics to discuss with Superintendent Magas. HRO Crawford said 1 and 6 students in the Twin Cities did not show back up after school went online this spring and we are potentially facing an education gap as a result of COVID-19 on a local and statewide level.
  - 3. Commissioner Hakes asked about health disparities and reference Councilperson Janet Kennedy's work in this area.
  - 4. Continue conversation on discipline in the schools, policing and SRO(s) will be part of the Commissions work ahead
- J. HRO Crawford spoke to the concerns in prisons/jails regarding inmate safety with COVID-19. If the person is not a danger to themselves or the community, do they need to be in prison/jail? The ACLU is looking at these issues. Also, a concern with group homes from the exposure to COVID-19.

IX. Adjournment at 5:28PM

Minutes for July 29, 2020 meeting  
Respectfully submitted by  
Commissioner Huber, Secretary  
August 3, 2020