

Duluth Human Rights Commission  
Minutes  
August 11, 2010

Commissioners Present:

Scott Yeazle, Brian Thorbjornsen, Robert Kaner, Andrew Knox, Sheryl Boman.

Absent: Amy Myska, Cynthia Strange, Cruz Mendoza.

Others Present: Bob Grytdahl, Robin Roeser, Sarah Chambers

Meeting called to order at 5:05pm.

Approval of Minutes:

*Brian Thorbjornsen made to motion to approve the 07/14/10 minutes as presented. Robert Kaner seconded. Passed 5-0.*

Meeting Protocol & Guidelines:

1. Brian Thorbjornsen requested that the meeting agenda be made more specific so that Commissioners, the public, and others are more aware of what exactly is being discussed at the meetings. Andrew Knox agreed, noting that he will be sure to address this so that we have a more detailed agenda for our next meeting.

Action Items:

1. Citizen Concern – Community member expressed frustration with the Duluth Police Department, alleging that they unnecessarily came to her home, loudly knocking on the door. Apparently a neighbor had called in with concerns over whether or not she was ok, and the police were responding. Nancy expressed being fearful of walking anywhere in the community, and feels that she is being punished for speaking up about things. Nancy requested that someone follow-up to find out why the police were banging on her door, and asked that the Human Rights Commission fix this, and then left the meeting. Community member Sarah Chambers acknowledged Ms. Owens' fear factor, noting that many elderly people are afraid to walk in downtown Duluth. Duluth Police Department representative Robin Roeser indicated that he will follow-up to see if there have been repeated calls from Ms. Owens's concerned neighbor, which could possibly implicate harassment, and noted that Ms. Owens had expressed these frustrations directly to the Department earlier in the day.
2. Police Department policies – Robert Kaner expressed concern about the personnel policies of the Duluth Police Department, referring to the Duluth Police Department Officer who has had more than one sexual assault accusations made against him, and has a new allegation pending against him. Robin Roeser responded that this officer is currently on paid leave since late June until the internal investigation is complete.

3. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People – *Motion made by Brian Thorbjornsen to endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People by providing the Obama Administration with a letter encouraging him to sign the international agreement.* Brian Thorbjornsen noted that after more than 25 years of debate, and with the input of indigenous people, governments, and organizations from around the world, the UN’s General Assembly adopted the declaration in 2007. Only the United States, Canada, and two other countries were not in favor of the declaration. This Declaration is not legally binding, but provides a baseline for Indigenous rights, including rights to self-determination, land, language, and other issues so that everyone is aware of what their rights are and can form laws to honor those rights. It is currently under review by the Obama Administration, and a national initiative is encouraging those who agree with and support this to encourage President Obama to sign the Declaration. Sheryl Boman stated that she would like to know more about the specific details of the Declaration before the Commission were to do this. Andrew Knox inquired about a deadline for taking action, and Brian Thorbjornsen indicated that the Declaration was passed by the UN in 2007, and that the Obama Administration has since developed an interest into further consideration, which is occurring at this time, so the earlier that action can be taken on this, the better. Scott Yeazle expressed that it would be good to bring this in front of the Duluth American Indian Commission, and suggested tabling the motion until our next meeting, which would give him time to present this to the American Indian Commission. Scott Yeazle noted that this could possibly be brought to the Duluth City Council as well. *Motion made by Andrew Knox to table the motion until our next meeting, seconded by Sheryl Boman. Motion to table passes 5-0.*
4. Human Rights Commission makeup – Andrew Knox raised the issue of the low Human Rights Commission membership, given the recent resignation of three former members. Bob Grytdahl reported that we currently have seven (7) vacancies maximum, and all that needs to be done to apply is go to the City of Duluth’s website, and that under “Boards & Commissions” interested individuals may print off an application and submit it to the Mayor’s office. Andrew Knox made a motion to form a committee to develop a strategy for recruiting new members, but withdrew the motion after further discussion. Suggestions were made that representation from labor, minorities, and someone from the immigration community be invited to apply. Commissioners agreed that this would be discussed further at our next meeting, but that we would all inform and encourage people to apply.
5. Name tags – Bob Grytdahl requested that Duluth Human Rights Commission name tags be prepared for Andrew Knox and Brian Thorbjornsen.

Non Action Items:

1. Immigration discussion meeting – Bob Grytdahl reminded Commissioners of the Immigration meeting scheduled for tomorrow August 12, 2010 at 4:45pm in Duluth City Hall, Room 303, which is jointly sponsored by the Duluth Human Rights and American Indian Commissions, and the NAACP. Bob distributed the NAACP’s national resolution,

which calls for genuine immigration reform, and the organization's opposition to immigration reform that relies solely on increasing enforcement or results in racial profiling.

2. Duluth American Indian Commission community fest – Bob Grytdahl reminded Commissioners of and passed out a flyer for the Duluth American Indian Commission's community feast, scheduled for Thursday, August 19, 2010 from 5:00pm-9:00pm at the Washington Center.
3. Pridefest – Scott Yeazle reminded Commissioners of the Duluth-Superior Pridefest, scheduled for September 4-5, 2010. Scott will email Commissioners a list of events. Sheryl Boman indicated that she is willing to sit at a Human Rights Commission booth.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Brian Thorbjornsen

BT:jm