

DUBUQUE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

NOVEMBER 8, 2021

DATE: Monday, November 8, 2021

TIME: 4:30 PM

LOCATION: Ruby Sutton Building, 1157 Central Avenue, Dubuque, IA 52001

Commissioners Present: Carla Anderson (vice-chair), Pamela Birch, Michael Durnin, Mallory Gardiner (chair), Miquel Jackson, Jake Kurczek, Kathy McCarthy, Taylor Merfeld

Commissioners Absent: Klanea Evans

Staff Present: Collins Eboh, Carol Spinoso

Commissioner Gardiner called the meeting of the Dubuque Human Rights Commission to order at 4:31 p.m.

Approval of September 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Anderson second by Durnin to approve the meeting minutes of September 13, 2021 as submitted. All in favor.

Reports

Caseload Reports

The September and October 2021 Caseload Reports were received and filed.

Chairperson's Report

Gardiner reported that the Loras College Civil Leaders Program presented their first equity and emotional intelligence training to outside groups, and hope to present to other groups that have also shown interest in this training.

Interim Director's Report

On behalf of Mayor Boul, Collins presented commissioners with a token of appreciation for their service on a city commission. Mayor Boul had also proclaimed October 18, 2021, as Boards and Commissions Recognition Day.

Collins provided updates on departmental work related to ongoing review of legislative priorities; SRO Work Group; Municipal Career Pipeline Project; Fines & Fee Reform Committee; and the review of the DCPRC.

Old Business:

New Business:

Standing Items – Goals 2021-2022:

Goal: To build a greater community awareness and connections to advance Human Rights in Dubuque.

1. **Outreach and Advocacy Efforts** – *Gardiner, Kurczek, Jackson
2. **Inequities in Housing, Homelessness, and Food Access** – *Anderson, McCarthy, Birch

Hollie Ohnesorge, Assisted Housing Coordinator, shared information on the housing support available through the City of Dubuque Housing and Community Development Department programs for those impacted by COVID. On a state level, the Iowa Finance Authority offers assistance with COVID-19 homeowner foreclosure prevention, as well as the Iowa Rent and Utility Assistance Program. Locally, the Coordinated Entry System is a group of providers from the region who are prepared to answer the calls related to homelessness, housing instability, domestic violence, and if there are funds still available, provide rental and utility assistance. She encouraged the subcommittee to reach out to this group for data related to homelessness as well as the local agencies that are addressing community needs. The Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) provides local financial assistance to prevent eviction for non-payment of rent as well as utility and water assistance.

Commissioners expressed concerns and frustration they received from community members about barriers to the application process and recommended that Housing staff review and improve the processes so that it is more equitable and accessible. There were also concerns about landlords who evicted tenants for non-payment with the moratorium in place. Hollie will convey these concerns to Housing staff.

Kurczek reported that the subcommittee met November 1, 2021, to discuss strategies to address increasing inequities in housing, homelessness, and food access. The following projects were identified: 1) educate tenants on housing responsibilities and rights; 2) obtain information on housing assistance approvals and denials and reasons for denials and assist the public in providing the correct information to address denial reasons; and 3) provide residents in shelters and those visiting meal sites information on resources. The subcommittee is proposing to partner with the Civil Leaders students at Loras College to assist with these projects during the spring semester.

Jackson moved and Durnin seconded for the Human Rights Commission to form a partnership with the Loras College Civil Leaders students to assist with the action items for these projects. Roll call:

Carla Anderson	Yes	Miquel Jackson	Yes
Pam Birch	Yes	Jake Kurczek	Yes
Michael Durnin	Yes	Kathy McCarthy	Yes
Mallory Gardiner	Yes	Taylor Merfeld	Yes

Motion carried.

Criminal Justice – *Merfeld, Durnin

Durnin reported that discussion with Caprice Jones are ongoing, and that he had attended a Real Talk session to listen to the needs of participants.

Durnin spoke to Jim Jelinske, Restorative Strategies Program Director, and he is willing to attend a meeting to provide information on that program.

Merfeld reported that he is working to gather resources for overcoming criminal backgrounds such as pardons or expungement.

Adjournment:

Jackson motioned and Anderson seconded to adjourn. All in favor. The meeting ended at 5:45 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting is Monday, December 13, 2021.

Minutes approved as submitted: _____

Minutes approved as corrected: _____