

**CITY OF DUBUQUE
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF
March 8, 2010**

Commissioner Rubinstein called the meeting of the Dubuque Human Rights Commission to order at 4:15 p.m. on Monday, March 8, 2010, in Conference Room 2 at the City Hall Annex.

Roll Call:

Present:	Jim Allan	Pam Sharrad
	Anthony Allen, Vice Chair	R.R.S. Stewart
	Lori Apel	Lynn Sutton
	Marcos Rubinstein, Chair	Katrina Wilberding
	Colin Scott	

Absent:

Staff:	Kelly Larson	Molly Menster
	Carol Spinoso	André Lessears

Race Relations

Jonathan Cheatham was present as a spokesperson for others in the black community who have come to him with concerns of violent acts, and racial intimidation by law enforcement against people of color in Dubuque. He spoke of his experiences with law enforcement in Dubuque. He stated that if he had known that the Human Rights Commission existed he would have approached them for help in addressing various issues. He stated that many in the black community are expressing discontent and that people believe the behavior is getting worse. He cited the recent pawn shop incident and a fatal stabbing where charges were not filed against the white individuals committing the crime. He stated that many feel this trend against people of color needs to be addressed. He suggested that the Commission look into the arrest patterns, perhaps conducting a racial profiling study, by comparing arrests made by certain officers against people of color and Caucasians. He suggested a forum where people can talk about their experiences of disparity in how they are treated in the community.

Commissioners informed Mr. Cheatham that the Human Rights Commission will be hosting a public forum at their April 12th meeting, at the Multicultural Family Center from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. The Commission expressed the importance of encouraging people to attend the forum to convey their experiences in order for the Commission to have factual information to begin addressing the issues.

Commissioner Allen asked for suggestions from Mr. Cheatham pertaining to educating the community on the existence of the Commission, and asked how the Commission can get people to approach them with concerns. Mr. Cheatham suggested advertising by passing out flyers, having billboards, and posting information on the City's Website telling people about the Commission. He conveyed that people probably won't come forward because they don't feel safe.

Commissioner Rubinstein stated that he would call a special meeting of the Dubuque Community Advisory Panel (DCAP) to start dialogue on the possibility of performing a racial profiling study and to get the data needed to show what is going on in the community. Commissioner Rubinstein also voiced a concern and wanted clarification about a comment made by a City Councilmember regarding the Commission's lack of involvement during the pawn shop incident. Commissioner Sutton will contact Councilperson Voetberg to get a better sense of his concerns and report back.

Shirle Bolds was also present and expressed concerns about the current unease in the black community. She explained that it is difficult for people to come to a meeting like this and try to explain their situation because they fear backlash. She recommended that the commission get out

into the neighborhoods to educate people about the commission and their options. She stated that the lower class community members – black, white, or any nationality - feel discriminated against here in Dubuque. She expressed that if you have these services available but the community doesn't know about them, then the services are not useful.

She felt that there is a real need for planned activities for youth between the ages of 12 and 18 in the community. These kids want to distance themselves from their younger siblings, and their interests are music, dancing, computers and video games. Commissioner Wilberding stated that they will convey her concerns and suggestions to Leisure Services; see what kind of input they would have and then get back to Ms. Bolds with that input.

Commissioner Stewart moved to extend the meeting ending time to 5:45 p.m. so that they can continue the discussion. Commissioner Allen seconded. All in favor.

Ms. Bolds questioned capacity limits of the Multicultural Family Resource Center (MFC). Abi Cahak, the AmeriCorps VISTA working at the MFC, replied that the Center can hold a lot of children, but that it's only at capacity when special events are held. The after school programs depends on the number of volunteers they have to help with the kids. Ms. Bolds indicated that some of these parents are willing to volunteer their time to help oversee activities. The Commission will contact Tara at the Multicultural Family Center (MFC) to convey the concerns and begin the discussion on the needs for youth.

Commissioner Allan distributed a proposal to rearrange agenda items. Commissioner Stewart moved to adopt Jim's version of the agenda. Commissioner Allan seconded. All in favor.

Election of Officers

Carol was appointed commission secretary by acclamation.

Commissioner Rubinstein opened the floor for nominations of Chairperson. Commissioner Allan nominated Commissioner Allen. Commissioner Allen nominated Commissioner Rubinstein, and Commissioner Sutton nominated herself. Nominations closed. Ballot vote. Commissioner Allen elected Chair.

The floor was opened for nominations of Vice-Chairperson. Commissioner Allen nominated Commissioner Rubinstein, Commissioner Wilberding nominated Commissioner Sutton, and Commissioner Allan nominated Commissioner Wilberding. Commissioner Wilberding declined the nomination. Nominations closed. Ballot vote: Commissioner Sutton elected Vice-Chairperson.

Appoint Commission Representative to DDRRC

Commissioner Allan has resigned as commission representative to the Advisory Board of the Dubuque Dispute Resolution Center. Commissioner Allen provided background information for new commissioners. Commissioners' Scott and Stewart both volunteered to serve as representatives. Both approved by acclamation.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Wilberding moved and Commissioner Allan seconded to approve the minutes of February 8, 2010. The meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

April Fair Housing Forum Update

Kelly distributed a copy of a draft media release for the April 12th Fair Housing Forum. She suggested that the Chair serve as moderator for the evening open forum and that they focus on the three points outlined. Staff will be present to take notes. Commissioner Allen will make an announcement to those in attendance that the commission will not take any action that night, that it's a special meeting to create dialog with the community, and that they will publish updates and distribute information to other groups that may be impacted by the concerns. Commissioner Allen

suggested the following preparations: that Commissioner introductions be done at the beginning of the meeting; that language and sign interpreters be present; that we have a microphone available; that copies of the questions be available on note cards so people can submit comments in writing; that we arrange the MFC room in a semi-circle set-up; and there be a sign-in/contact sheet so that reports can be distributed to those in attendance.

Caseload Report

The February Caseload Report was submitted.

Director's Report

Written report for February was submitted.

Proudly Accessible Dubuque Update

Commissioner Wilberding distributed a written report.

Adjournment

Commissioner Wilberding moved to adjourn and Commissioner Sutton seconded. Five in favor, two opposed. Motion carried. Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

The next meeting is April 12, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. at the Multicultural Family Center where the Commission will be hosting a public forum on fair housing.

Minutes approved as submitted: _____

Minutes approved as corrected: _____