

Duluth Human Rights Commission (HRC)  
Regular Meeting - minutes  
Wednesday, February 14, 2024 @ 5:30pm  
City Hall Room 430

1) Call to Order and Introductions

- a) Meeting called to order at 5:32pm
- b) Commissioners present: Commissioners Lue, Jaramillo-Kraemer, Harris, Ostrander.
- c) Commissioners absent: Commissioner Huber, Wittenberg, Keppers
- d) Guests: Human community member Kathleen Spencer, Laura Laaksonen (Human Rights Office), Ephraim Nikoi (Chair for Communities of Color, Superior, WI)

2) Consent of Minutes - October 11, 2023

Motioned to approve by Commissioner Harris; seconded by Commissioner Ostrander; approved unanimously.

3) Public comments and written comments

No public or written comments.

4) Committee Reports

a) Executive Team

- i) Commissioner Lue updated the Commission on the Human Rights Award. The link on the website is still active. We will pause on the award due to the change of city administration. When we start it back up, we will work to promote through the media and get on the news to publicize the award and the process.
- ii) Commissioner Lue noted that the list of Commissioners has been updated, but Commissioner Huber is still not listed on the Commission's website.
- iii) Commissioner Huber drafted and sent a letter of invitation for the May meeting for the school board's annual report. He also attended the EEAC meeting and sat on the disparity committee.

b) Findings Committee

- i) Five cases were discussed:

- 1) A woman who HRO Crawford has been working with for a while is currently waiting to hear the judge's ruling in the case where she is fighting for visitation rights with her son. Her son is currently in the custody of her father.
- 2) A woman and her partner took in their niece, who had been taken away from her biological parents. The woman also took in three other children (who are not blood relatives of her) but wanted them to all be able to stay together. The social worker in the case told the woman to say that all the kids were biologically related to her so that they could stay together. After the kids moved in, one of the girls who is not related to her accused the woman's 14-year-old son of sexual abuse. The woman later found out that this girl has a history of making false sexual abuse allegations at other foster homes that she has lived at, but no one informed them of that history. DHS is now going after the woman's license as a home health care provider, and the woman and her partner are now living separately because the 14-year-old can't be around other children. The other three children are now back in the system. This happened two years ago and is still ongoing.
- 3) An indigenous woman was at Essentia giving birth to her son, and the indigenous father wanted to be in the room but was suffering from liver/kidney failure. He was waiting in the waiting room and wanted to go to the room when it happened. He was lying in the lobby area waiting, and no one checked on him for almost 24 hours. The next day, the family came to see the baby, and they found him on the couch where they left him the night before. He was taken to the ICU. 48 hours later, he passed away. The woman says that the hospital overlooked him as a drug user hanging out in the hospital. She is currently seeking legal representation. HRO Crawford is working with her to connect her with tribal government attorneys.
- 4) A woman who uses a wheelchair was looking for housing, and requested a two-bedroom apartment because her home health assistants sometimes spend the night. The company she is working with denied that accommodation, saying that if there is a second bedroom, someone needs to be staying there all the time. HRO Crawford connected her to an attorney who specializes in disability

law. When HRO Crawford asked her how often the home health assistants stay with her, the answer was vague. The company is also willing to provide her with a one-bedroom apartment.

- 5) A black man who owns a furniture store was delivering furniture in Central Hillside. His son went outside to get more furniture, and he was surprised and confronted by a DPD officer with his hand on his gun. The son was very afraid during and after that happened. HRO Crawford is working to sit down with the officer, the man, his son, and a Human Rights Commissioner to talk about this experience together.

#### 5) Review Work Plan

- a) We discussed the changes last meeting. We now need to vote to adopt the workplan and hear any additional changes. Commissioner Huber noted that the acronyms need to be spelled out. The executive committee will make those changes, along with a few minor typos. Work plan adopted unanimously (Commissioner Keppers motioned, Commissioner Huber seconded).
- b) Commissioner Keppers suggested we have one of the Commission's listening sessions about how we create respectful dialogue prior to the 2024 election. HRO Crawford noted that Speak Your Peace might be a good organization to host it.

#### 6) Visit from Ephraim Nikoi (Chair for Communities of Color, Superior, WI)

- a) The Communities of Color Commission started in 2018 with the main goal to look at policies and suggest revisions to make Superior more inclusive. They've worked on getting reports from the Superior PD to learn about ticketing patterns and ensure there are no disparities. The Commission was also able to advocate for a social worker position with the Superior PD. The Commission also developed DEI training for all the city workers. They plan to assess outcomes soon to see how their progress has been. The Commission also

helped the city to establish an Indigenous People's Day and they had their first MLK celebration. Their next goal is to push to have a Juneteenth Day with the Human Resource Committee in Superior. The Commission members also plan to ask the public schools Superintendent to give updates about disparities in schools around discipline and disparity.

- b) Commissioner Lue noted the potential for having a joint event looking at health care for BIPOC communities. Discussion about how the panel would be brought together to make sure the information was useful and not talking points for the major healthcare providers. Each Commission could develop suggestions for a panel at the event. A joint task force to pull the event together (perhaps two people from each commission) could be created. Mr. Nikoi will check with his commission before the task force is established to ensure their commitment.

#### Announcements and Upcoming Events

- a) Gender Affirming Care Night will be March 28th from 5:30pm-7:30pm at Peace Church.
- b) Transgender Day of Visibility will be March 30th from 4pm to 7pm at the St. Louis County Depot.
- c) University of Wisconsin Superior has the Black Student Union soul food dinner on February 25th at 5:30pm
- d) University of Minnesota Duluth has a soul food dinner in the Kirby Ballroom on February 17th at 4pm
- e) Fundraiser for the Damiano Center at Clyde Iron Work on April 4th.
- f) Cultural Night at University Wisconsin Superior at 5pm on March 2nd.
- g) Hmong Heritage Night at the University of Minnesota Duluth at 4:30pm on March 23rd.

#### 7) Human Rights Officer Report

- a) Attended the POST Advisory Board meeting
- b) Attended the first ever week long MLK Celebration in St. Paul.

- c) Presented to University of Wisconsin at Superior students.
- d) Attended a meeting of the Public Defenders Board
- e) Attended Public Defenders Board meeting in Alabama.
- f) Talked to University of Minnesota at Duluth about creating an Equity and Diversity Board
- g) Appointed to the Clemency Review Board.
- h) Participated in the "I Love to Read" event.

8) Additional public comments and commissioner comments

- a) Commissioner Ostrander asked about a resolution from the Commission calling for a Ceasefire in Gaza. At the 2/13 City Council meeting approximately 15-20 speakers on a ceasefire. The City Council members listened, but they have not had a response yet.
- b) Commissioner Harris spoke about incendiary language from people confronting her assuming her immigration status and aggression she has experienced in the workplace around the border crisis at the southern border with Mexico. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer also talked about the need to increase awareness around Mexican-Americans in the Twin Ports.
- c) Commissioner Harris noted that the League of Women Voters has had more focus on boarding schools through its DEI committee. There may be a partnership opportunity between the Commission and LWV.
- d) Ms. Laaksonen noted that In general there may be a pause in some Commission activities as Mayor Reinert settles in

9) Request for Agenda Items for next meeting, discuss upcoming meeting schedule

10) Adjourn

- a) Meeting adjourned at 6:35pm.
- b) Next Meeting: March 13, 2024.