

Duluth Human Rights Commission (HRC)

Regular Meeting - minutes

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 @ 5:30pm

City Hall Room 330

1. Call to Order and Introductions
 - a. Meeting called to order at 5:35pm
 - b. Commissioners present: Commissioners Lue, Jaramillo-Kraemer, Ostrander, Wittenberg, Keppers
 - c. Commissioners absent: Commissioner Huber
 - d. Guests: Human Rights Officer (HRO) Carl Crawford, community members Emma Chehock & Kathleen Spencer
2. Consent of Minutes - August 9, 2023
 - a. Motioned to approve by Commissioner Keppers; seconded by Commissioner Wittenberg; approved with one abstention from Commissioner Ostrander
3. Public Comments and Written Comments
 - a. Public comments:
 - i. Public comment from Kathleen Spencer:
 1. Was at the Racial Bias Audit presentation at the Family Freedom Center on September 7th
 2. Talked about the experiences that community members talked about at the Family Freedom Center, and the emotions that were felt
 - b. Written comments:
 - i. None
4. Executive Team Report
 - a. Human Rights Award
 - i. The human rights award document that was previously shared with the commission was previously approved
 - ii. Thinking the award should be presented in January
 1. But how do we start this process?
 2. Do we post it on our website?
 3. How do we inform the community that they can nominate people?
 4. How will we review nominations?
 - iii. Suggestion: re-present the document at the October meeting so that it is fresh in our minds
 1. Logistics can be worked on between September and October meetings
 2. We should also utilize our Communications Committee
 3. This award could also be presented via a press conference
 - iv. Comment from Commissioner Wittenberg: has a resource that the commission can put out an advertisement/notification in a Look at Lakeside newsletter for free
5. Communications Committee Report

- a. Working on more social media write-ups
 - b. Will send out an email to commission members to help create write-ups for these social media posts
- 6. Findings Committee Report
 - a. The Findings Committee met in August and reviewed seven cases:
 - i. A woman with disabilities and mental health diagnoses has been told by her landlord that she has two weeks to move out due to some complaints of hoarding behaviors. She is working with her social worker and her landlord to keep her where she is. This is an ongoing conversation with the social worker, the landlord, and Carl.
 - ii. A woman who rents an apartment in Central Hillside is claiming that the maintenance worker who is employed by the business below her is using racial language to and about her African Heritage partner.
 - iii. A continuation of a previous case: a man with disabilities was told he could no longer use the Northern Access transportation services. He is now allowed to ride the bus again, if he has someone present who can assist him to get up the bus ramp. Because it is a liability for the company if he does not have that assistance, he cannot ride the bus unless he has someone there to assist him.
 - iv. A man claimed that he was being pulled over by the Duluth Police Department due to racial profiling. It was later determined that he was pulled over because his partner called the police on him after they got into a dispute. However, Carl did review the video, and there was an officer from a jurisdiction that was not DPD who had a gun pointed at the man's head. Although this is not in our jurisdiction, Carl will still follow up with the man who made the complaint.
 - v. A woman has filed a complaint that during Covid, she was paying her monthly housing bill, but her landlord was also using federal programs to request money from the government, essentially so that the rent was being paid twice. The woman brought this issue up to the landlord, saying that the landlord either needs to pay back the woman, or the government. The landlord is now attempting to evict her.
 - vi. A woman was in an accident while riding the DTA bus. She was standing up to pay her fare, and the bus driver started driving before she could get to her seat, so she fell. She reported an injury, but the full incident was not caught on video. The woman is still working with Carl to obtain video documentation. She was working with a lawyer, who had apparently settled this case without telling her.
 - vii. A woman who Carl has worked with previously is again talking to Carl about how to support her son. Her son is an adult with disabilities who has suffered abuse in his past and is nonverbal. Carl is meeting with the woman to talk about how to support her and her son, and how to ensure that her son is in safe housing when he is starting in a group home or facility.

- b. The Findings Committee met in September and reviewed six cases:
 - i. A man who Carl has been working with now has his case closed. He had originally filed a complaint against Arrowhead Transit. After working with those involved, they had come to a solution, but the man continued to not follow the rules. It was determined that this is not discrimination. Carl informed the man that there are other transportation companies he can use, but this company will no longer work with him.
 - ii. A woman presented at St. Lukes last year with mental health concerns after her daughter completed suicide. The medical professionals gave her mood-altering drugs, and while in the drug-induced state, the woman hit a nurse. The woman does not remember this incident. She has been convicted on criminal charges, and lost her job as a social worker. She also continues to have seizures following being given the mood-altering drugs. Carl continues to work with her, but this case may possibly go to the state level.
 - iii. An international nursing student has been charged with his 3rd DUI. Carl is working with the Public Defender's Office, and the man has court next week. His immigration status is in jeopardy.
 - iv. A man who works at AT&T was given incorrect information about holiday pay from his supervisor. After finding out he was lied to, he and Carl are working with his union to help. However, the union seems to be leaning towards the side of AT&T. The man is also the only person of color who works at the store.
 - v. A woman who is a vulnerable adult was involved in a situation with the DTA last year. She got stuck in the doors, and the bus did not stop right away when people yelled. She had to call the ambulance, and did have injuries from this incident. She is working with a private attorney, who made a deal behind her back saying that she would settle for a certain amount of money, which she did not agree to. She has asked Carl to come to a meeting with her attorney to listen to what is going on and make sure she is not being taken advantage of.
 - vi. A man who Carl has worked with before was arrested again after a dispute with his partner. While he was laying on the ground to be handcuffed, a St. Louis County Sheriff's Deputy pointed a gun at his head. Carl has not been able to find a way to file a complaint directly with the St. Louis County Sheriff's Office.
- 7. Follow Up from CJI Presentation
 - a. Had around 15 community members present for the presentation
 - b. There were also presentations after this, with the Citizen Review Board and at the Family Freedom Center
 - c. Community members asked questions, which were recorded by the CJI staff, and the answers can be found on the CJI page of the Duluth Police Department website
- 8. Announcements and Upcoming Events

- a. There will be the 3rd annual Equity Summit in Virginia MN at Iron Trail Motors Event Center on October 4th
 - i. Theme: Belonging in North East Minnesota
 - b. On October 3rd at 4pm, there will be a Japanese Drum Group performing on the UWS Campus, and it is open to the public
 - c. First Witness Child Advocacy Center is hosting the “Restoring Hope Art Exhibit” at the Depot September 21-26
 - i. Opening Reception is Thursday, September 21, from 5-8pm
 - ii. The artwork expresses the themes of hope, healing, and justice
- 9. Human Rights Officer Report
 - a. Hosted session of the Racial Bias Audit
 - b. Continuing to work to end homelessness, and make people safe and comfortable
 - i. Some encampments have needed to be moved, but still working on staffing the warming center
 - ii. If you know people who are interested in working at the warming center, please reach out
 - c. Led conversations at schools for incoming high school juniors and seniors
 - i. There was a racially motivated incident at Prior Lake High School a few years ago, and no one intervened
 - ii. Working on creating teachable moments for students and staff
 - d. Had the opportunity to be amazed by the Humphrey Fellows, and had a conversation about what human rights look like in other countries
 - e. Presented in Mountain Iron school district, and challenged them to write something nice and special about every one of their students in these first few weeks of school, and see how that changes the culture
 - f. The Mayor’s Reception for Pride Week at the Depot, and then the Pride Parade on Sunday
 - g. Suggestion: the commission should get back in touch with the School Board to continue having conversation about suspension rates
 - h. The Loss of the Festival of Nations
 - i. Had cultural food, dance, music, etc.
 - ii. Because of covid and not being able to reconnect with communities, it is no longer an event. This is a great loss for the Minnesota community
 - iii. Hoping to hear what is going to replace that loss that is no longer in our community
- 10. Nominations and Elections
 - a. We can do the nominations and elections in the same meeting
 - b. Commissioner Huber is not present, but did previously confirm that he would accept a nomination for vice-chair
 - c. Nominations:
 - i. Carl Huber for Vice-Chair (accepted)
 - ii. Marsha Lue for Chair (accepted)
 - iii. Tyra Jaramillo-Kraemer for Secretary (did not accept)
 - iv. Frances Wittenberg for Secretary (did not accept)

- v. Nomi Ostrander for Secretary (accepted)
- d. Final elections:
 - i. Marsha Lue for Chair
 - ii. Carl Huber for Vice-Chair
 - iii. Nomi Ostrander for Secretary
- 11. Additional Public Comments and Commissioner Comments
 - a. None
- 12. Request for Agenda Items for Next Meeting
 - a. Can be sent to Laura via email
- 13. Adjourn
 - a. Meeting adjourned at 6:26pm
 - b. Next meeting is October 11, 2023

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Tyra Jaramillo-Kraemer, Secretary