

MINUTES  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
May 17, 2022, 6:00 p.m.  
YWCA, 304 N. 8<sup>th</sup> Street

CITY CLERK  
2022 JUL 19 PM 3:14

|                         | <u>Name</u>  | <u>Members' Term Attendance</u><br>(mtgs attended-mtgs absent) | <u>End of Current Term of Office</u> |
|-------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b> | Juniper Brown  | (09-00)  | 10/08/22                             |
|                         | Sean Connors   | (14-00)  | 10/08/23                             |
|                         | Derek Evans  | (05-01)  | 10/08/24                             |
|                         | Terri Lowdon   | (25-07)  | 10/08/23                             |
|                         | Joyce Starr  | (07-00)  | 10/08/24                             |
| <b>MEMBERS ABSENT:</b>  | Daniel McGaughy  | (06-07)  | 10/08/23                             |
|                         | David Mason  | (10-02)  | 10/08/24                             |
| <b>STAFF PRESENT:</b>   | Lisa Robertson, City Attorney<br>Ben Williams, Recording Secretary<br>Chris Connally, Police Chief |  |                                      |

**Item #1 Call to Order**

Connors called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

**Item #2 ROLL CALL:** McGaughy – Absent, Brown – Absent, Connors – Present, Evans – Present, Lowdon – Present, Mason – Absent, Starr – Present. No quorum.

**Item #3 Approval of Minutes**

Evans moved to approve the April minutes. Starr seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

**Item #4 Introduction of Human Rights Commission Members**

Members of the Commission and others present were invited to introduce themselves.

**Item #5 Old Business**

**Item #5a. Update on Human Rights Commission Facebook Page**

Connors stated if anyone present wanted something posted to the Facebook page then they need only contact him. Connors also said that he updates the page regularly.

**Item #5b. Nixle Discussion**

Starr introduced Chief Connally who began explaining what the Nixle alert is and how it functions. Connally explained that everything that goes out on Nixle also goes out on Twitter. Connally explained that once on Twitter, the user can choose a language translation of their choice. Connally explained that due to the availability of translation on Twitter, the Police Department had not looked at any additional expenses in purchasing a special package for Spanish on Nixle. Connors then stated that he went on Twitter and translated a Nixle alert and that only a portion of the entire message was translated into Spanish. Maria Ramirez explained that Twitter is for a different target group than what

exists in St. Joseph. Ramirez explained that Twitter is for professional people. Ramirez continued saying that Twitter was more for people who had resources and that the local immigrant community needed something more easily accessible. Connally stated that this was something the Commission could recommend to Council because the Police Department does not have funding available for this project. The department didn't even have enough money to purchase vehicles.

Lowdon asked Connally if the St. Joseph Police Department worked separately from the county in sending out alerts. Connally responded saying the Police Department ran the communications center for both the city and county. Lowdon asked if the city received any funding from the county to help run the communications center. Connally stated that they split the costs with the county and that they could possibly split the costs of Nixle in Spanish with the county. Lowdon asked what the expense of the additional language on Nixle would cost. Connors responded that it would be \$32,000 dollars to start and \$20,000 dollars a year to continue.

Al Purcell asked everyone if they knew Ms. Ramirez's background and provided this information to the group. He stated that the Hispanic population in the St. Joseph community is 10-11 percent. Connally responded that he hoped Purcell told the Census that information. Ramirez stated that everyone knows the Census does not reflect the reality and that the school's numbers reflect reality better.

Connally stated that the police use the language line on the street every day to communicate with those who do not speak English. Ramirez stated that her cousin was in the U.S. for three months and he did not speak English very well. He was having an issue with some homeless people in a structure adjacent to his home, so Ramirez told him to call 911. When he called and requested Spanish, the communications operator stated that they did not have anyone available to translate and that he should find someone around who spoke English. Ramirez stated that this is a regular occurrence. Connally explained that when someone requests Spanish, the communications operator must make another phone call to get on a three-way line. Connally stated that if someone is there who speaks English who the caller can get the information from, this is the best approach in emergency situations (911 calls). This allows the police to respond to the emergency more quickly and in most every situation before the three-way line can be set up. Connally stated it could also be a training issue and he would investigate further. Connally stated that out of 17 dispatchers, the communications center was down to 9. It takes about four months to train a new dispatcher, so there are currently more dispatchers who are in training as opposed to being fully trained. Connally said that if Ramirez could give him the date the incident occurred, then he could look it up.

Starr commented that Ray Blancharte was present because he wanted to become a member of the commission but also because he knows Kansas City has a Hispanic chamber of commerce that this type of group might be a good idea for St. Joseph. Starr said that Blancharte would get in touch with the people in Kansas City to see how they started their chamber of commerce.

Connors asked Connally if he could get an updated price on a Spanish addition to Nixle. Connally stated that he would get an updated price on Nixle. Brown joined the meeting.

Lowdon stated that she could not believe that 10 percent of the population could not get help through the 911 communications center. Lowdon stated she could not imagine that city and county leaders think this is okay.

Ramirez explained if the city had the data, then the city could figure out what languages are in the town to be able to better serve the need.

## **Item #6      New Business**

### **Item #6a.      Immigrant Arrest Story (Jean-Paul Mundungu)**

Connally reported that he reviewed the video of Jean-Paul's friend, who was arrested, and that the officers were exceptionally courteous to him. Connally stated that Jean-Paul's friend was responsive to more than just simple commands in English. Connally stated that the officers offered the

language line and that they allowed Mr. Mundungu to call a friend when they got back to the station. Connally further explained that the police do not ask a person's immigration status and if they arrest a non-citizen then they will contact their consulate to comply with federal law.

**Item #6b. Discussion Regarding Mosaic Translation Services**

Mrs. Santana explained that she went to the hospital with her husband and Mosaic would not let her translate because she was not certified. Mrs. Santana explained that the person translating on the phone was not correctly interpreting what was being said and that there are several different dialects of Spanish.

Ramirez stated that people struggle to pay their hospital bills because the people hang up on them and then they end up in collections. Ramirez stated there are two options for these people: The community can help them feel welcomed or they will move away. Ramirez said there is no language line for the hospital to call and make a doctor appointment. Starr stated that she was concerned about the emergency room whenever a patient came in and there was a language barrier and there was no interpreter. Starr stated that she invited Pat Dillon from the hospital so he would be able to discuss how the translations are done at the hospital. Starr stated that if the community had the data, then they could apply for grants. Connors asked if the school's data could be used for these things.

Starr invited Pat Dillon to explain Mosaic's translation services. Dillon explained that the hospital tries to use a certified translator for health needs. Dillon explained that the rules are very strict. Dillon stated that his son is bilingual and that when he runs into a different dialect, he has difficulties translating. Dillon stated that they have a real struggle finding translators and the issue about hanging up when you call patient financial services should not be happening and that he was going to investigate that. Ramirez explained that Children's Mercy has people available to translate. Dillon stated that he would love to observe what they are doing in Kansas City with having people on the ground readily available to translate. Ramirez stated that she knows of immigrants who have degrees in health services but that they do not know English. Ramirez stated it would be nice to figure out how to employ these people. There was general discussion about welcome centers in other cities.

Evans asked Dillon if the people who translated through the translation line are local. Dillon responded that they were not, and they were likely a national line. Dillon stated it would be nice to have a translator physically in the building and to have the translation line as a back-up. There was general discussion on bilingual business models.

**Item #6c. Other**

Brown stated that putting officers in the communities outside squad cars is a better approach than having a higher officer presence inside squad cars because of the disconnect that comes with that. Brown stated it would be nice if there was some type of central ground; some place where the community could reach out to the police department but that the police department return the favor with more community patrols. Connally responded that the police had been doing that over the years. Connally stated that because the police are down 35 officers operationally, there is less opportunity for officers to engage more directly with people. Connally continued saying that the police department still has its community programs in place. Connally explained that the 'Cops Who Care Kids Camp' always has a good mix of at-risk children who attend.

Ramirez stated that her father came here several years ago and that he wanted to see a criminal case at the courthouse because he was an attorney. Ramirez stated that she showed up to a trial so her dad could see how court functioned. Ramirez explained that court officials needed someone to translate and so they asked Ramirez if she could do it for them. Ramirez stated these situations can be avoided with proper funding and staffing. Lowdon explained how the courts typically provide interpreters.

Connors asked Connally which welcome center St. Joseph had previously researched. Connally stated that it was the Sioux City welcome center. Connally stated that it was not organized by the city or county – it was organized by business leaders because certain industries were bringing in many immigrants to work there. This was the catalyst for creating the welcome center. Connally

stated there were some local efforts to do this in St. Joseph but that those efforts faded out. There was general discussion on ideas of how to make a welcome center in St. Joseph.

**Item #7      Public Comment**

None.

**Item #8      City Staff Update**

None.

**Item #9      Future Agenda Overview**

Connors stated that he would discuss the agenda later with Williams and that the group wouldn't meet next month but would be at their booth for Juneteenth.

**Item #10     Adjourn**

Connors moved to adjourn the meeting. No member opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Ben Williams, Recording Secretary (Legal Assistant)