

**MINUTES**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**  
**May 18, 2023**

CITY CLERK  
2023 JUN 12 PM 2:17

**Item #1      Call to Order**

Called to order at 5:09 p.m.

**Item #2      Attendance:**

Members present and absent were as listed below. A quorum was present.

*Members Present:* Sean Connors, Juniper Brown, Terri Lowdon, Danielle McGaughy, Joyce Starr, Leslie Stone

*Members Absent:* Ray Blancarte, Petronilla Sylvester

*Staff Present:* Lisa Robertson, City Attorney

**Item #3      Approval of Minutes (May meeting)**

Brown moved to approve the minutes and Starr seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

**Item #4      Old Business**

**Discussion**

**Item #4a      Overview of Police Chief Interviews (Candidates and Process)**

Connors attended the first “open forum,” which was the pre-discussion related what the community needs from its next police chief. Only four individuals attended (him, someone who serves on the police board, a police officer, and another individual). Connors and Stone attended the meet and greet, which was held at MWSU in the evening after the interviews had been conducted. All four candidates were present, and he and Stone were able to speak with each candidate and ask questions. Maria Ramierz was also present at the meet and greet and asked some very good questions.

Lowdon served as the Human Rights Commission (HRC) representative on the community interview panel, which consisted of Drew Brown, Mike Veale, Gary Wilkinson, and her. Lowdon explained that the “headhunter firm” retained by the City prepared a list of interview questions and each panel was allowed to select eight questions from this list. The panel members were instructed not to ask follow-up questions unless the follow-up question was related to one of the eight questions asked. Lowdown explained that these guidelines are put in place because some questions cannot legally be asked. Lowdon relayed that she thought the questions the community panel selected to ask were appropriate and that the group was able to get their follow up questions in.

Lowdon relayed that it was a long day of work, and her panel would have liked to have had more time in advance of the interview process to submit proposed questions that should have been asked for the “headhunter firm” to consider including on its list. Lowdon stated that each panel member received a full packet of information, but if they wanted to review the information beforehand, they had to come in the previous day. The community panel was looking for someone with new ideas and a fresh perspective. Only one candidate provided a strategic plan demonstrating what action steps they would take.

Starr stated that she hopes each candidate was asked whether they would agree to live in the City – and live there with their family becoming part of the community. She relayed that bringing their family with them is important. She also would like to see more community policing. This would help members of the community feel comfortable coming forward to discuss issues and relay what they see and hear within their neighborhoods. Brown wonders how the “tough on crime” approach will be implemented and what level of oversight will be attached.

**Item #4b      Dates of “offsite” meetings (listening sessions)**

Members stated that the July and August meetings might be a good time for listening sessions. Brown indicated that we had individuals who had asked in the past about issues they were having with accessing buildings. Connors stated that the City had sent Property Maintenance Inspectors to the site, who determined that the door was too heavy after which the issue was addressed by the particular business involved. Brown stated that there was also an issue with a sign indicating that individuals who required access should push a button to obtain assistance, but there was no button available to push – employees had to go out and open the door for them. Connors stated that he will look back through the minutes to determine exactly what this issue involved. The members discussed whether one of the listening sessions should be for those with disabilities. Lowdon stated that these individuals already have advocacy groups to assist them: City’s Disability Board, Merrill, UCP. She believes other groups should be considered who do not have these types of advocate groups in place.

**Item #4c      Overview of events/activities held since April 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.**

See #4a above.

**\*Old Business not on agenda**

Starr asked whether anyone had talked with Natalie Redmond at the Chamber of Commerce about creating a program for minority business owners. McGaughy relayed that we just need to email her potential meeting dates about forming a “minority coalition” that could be associated with the Chamber. Connors will put an email together and copy Blancarte, Brown, McGaughy, and Starr (or even the entire HRC group). Lowdon would also like to talk with Redmond about how to connect educated immigrants with employers who might need their particular expertise. Brown relayed that the HRC should focus more on a resource center – rather than a welcome center. Members present agreed. Starr relayed that immigrants run for the hills when it is time to fill out census paperwork so there is no accurate data to use for grant applications.

McGaughy related that she is still waiting on the US Bank grant application (which would be \$4,000). Someone mentioned that Michelle, who works in HR at Triumph, has data available.

## **Item #5      New Business**

### **Discussion**

#### **Item #5a.      Member input on information to include on HRC Facebook Page**

Connors reported that he is posting information related to whatever he sees coming down the pike. He recently posted information related to the poet Maya Angelou. Brown thinks perhaps noting current events that affect residents of Missouri and St. Joseph would be a good idea, referencing adoption by the legislature of a transgender bill that will become law and the Attorney General withdrawing his edict. Brown would like to see more currently events without a “spin” – news from credible sources. What is being presented to the legislature and what has been adopted by the legislature that affects human relations.

Connors stated that he prefers to post issues that are less political and as neutral as possible. He would welcome any help in locating this type of content and relayed that Brown and Sylvester talked about this during the April meeting.

#### **Item #5b.      Upcoming events and activities; general announcements**

Starr distributed information related to Juneteenth. The gala with band and food is June 16<sup>th</sup> and the parade is June 17<sup>th</sup>. Connors stated that he has signed the HRC up as a vendor and they will be located on the playground at the Bartlett Center. (There are various vendor locations: Bartlett Center, Downtown, SJMI grounds). Brown asked if there was a signup sheet for those who wanted to help at this event. Connors will distribute.

Connors stated that the PRIDE event will be held in September. It usually occurs on the second or third weekend. Connors will sign the HRC up to participate in this event. Starr asked about the Latino’s Connect event and Connors relayed that this event is scheduled for the beginning of October.

#### **Item #5c.      Other**

McGaughy stated that she received a call from a current employee at the YWCA who expressed concern that some of the female residents have not been able to eat due to a food shortage. This person indicated that they are trying to raise money to feed these women on a daily basis, as right now, it is every other day. They usually obtain grants and donations to pay for food. Connors stated that this is likely a misunderstanding. Children are served food every day and female residents are served food every other day. However, female residents are asked to sign up to do chores. If they do not do chores, then they do not eat with everybody else when food is served. However, after the kitchen closes, they can feed themselves (they are just not served the food). Connors will find out more, but he believes this concern stems from those women who are not helping with the chores.

Connors relayed that he recently visited the DMV to renew his license and there were brand new chairs in place; however, he was sitting there with a huge line. He watched a Hispanic couple walk in. They were reading the sign and used their phone to translate what the sign said. Connors does not think it should be that hard for the DMV to display a separate sign in Spanish.

**Item #6      Public Comment**

None.

**Item #7.      Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Lisa Robertson  
City Attorney