



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Minutes

March 5, 2012

6:30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Darnel Frost.

Present:

Margaret Duwe
Darnel Frost
Genevieve Hodges
John Hoffmann
Ed Johnston
Romona Miller

Absent:

Tere Owens
Stacy Reliford

City Council Liaison: Council Member Iggy Yuan - absent

Staff Liaison: Chief Administrative Officer Mike Brown - absent

Also Attending: Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Georgia Ragland, Kathie Valentine, Administration Department, City Attorney John Hessel, Mayor Art McDonnell

Visitors: A. J. Bockelman, PROMO, Nancy Luetzow, David Bennett

Roll Call

Roll call was taken by Maggie Duwe. Attendance is reflected above.

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Darnel Frost and seconded by Maggie Duwe to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2012 meeting as amended. All in favor, motion carried.

Visitor Comments

City Attorney John Hessel and A. J. Bockelman, PROMO, were invited to the table to discuss consideration of a non-discrimination ordinance regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

John Hessel advised that:

- His function is to provide legal advice to the city.
- This issue was raised ten years ago at which time he gave the same legal advice.
- His advice to the City Council is that the city should not have an ordinance where they cannot provide relief. If the city modified the equal opportunity policy to include sexual orientation and gender identity, there would be no legal recourse for citizens.
- Citizens expect action in regard to ordinances passed.
- Additionally, such an ordinance change could create an opportunity for someone to sue the city.
- State and federal laws do not allow the city to proceed in the same fashion as other protected classes.
- It would be cost prohibitive due to legal fees.
- He recommended that the HRC encourage and endorse change at the state and federal level.
- Encouraged the HRC to contact their state and federal officials to change the law.
- It was noted that HUD had passed new rules to ensure equal access to HUD-funded housing for sexual orientation and gender identity.

A. J. Bockelman:

- Advised that in the state of Missouri you can be fired if gay.
- Regarding recommended recourse he suggested they look at the city of Columbia, MO who has an advanced HRC, where a complaint can be referred to the city prosecutor.
- Recommended Steve Hollis, Columbia, be contacted to determine the financial implications they have experienced.

Romona Miller stated that she thought the proposed ordinance change would be a deterrent for people who wanted to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. She also felt the HRC should be progressive. Ed Johnston agreed stating that the HRC is trying to be a leader pushing the state and federal government to change the laws and referred to no smoking ordinances that had been passed at various cities. Maggie Duwe stated that the recommended ordinance was not enough, but that it was better than nothing.

A. J. Bockelman and Maggie Duwe advised that they would like to meet with John Hessel to discuss an enforcement mechanism regarding HUD's new rules. John Hessel advised that he is at city hall every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 8:00 a.m. to noon.

Council Liaison Comments

None.

Other

Mayor Art McDonnell expressed his appreciation for the openness of the discussion and the HRC inviting John Hessel to attend. He agreed with John Hessel's recommendation that the city not pass an ordinance that they cannot enforce. He suggested that the HRC invite their legislators to attend an upcoming HRC meeting. Although prosecution would be difficult it is important to discuss the subject and do research. He thanked the HRC members for the work they are doing.

Georgia Ragland provided an updated report on the status of the mediation agreement. She also reported that the Robert G. Reim Theater, which will hold up to 370, has dates available for the symposium on October 15, 16, 17 and 18. She advised that October 18 is a City Council meeting night.

Genevieve Hodges asked what "done, ongoing, and pending" meant on the mediation agreement status report. Georgia Ragland responded that it is a basic summary and that the HRC responsibilities include monitoring the status and progress of the mediation agreement and they can put detailed information in their annual report. Romona Miller volunteered to speak with Chief Jack Plummer regarding the department's progress. Ed Johnston will prepare a synopsis of the minutes. Romona Miller recommended that conversations take place throughout the year.

Maggie Duwe advised that she had heard that the Citizen Action Center is difficult to use and asked if historical data was available regarding complaints received by the city. Georgia Ragland stated that she would contact the city's IT department to see what kind of report could be generated.

Maggie Duwe asked when a new HRC member would be added with Mayor Art McDonnell responding after the election.

Mayor Art McDonnell reported that the mediation advisory team would possibly meet in May. Maggie Duwe asked if a representative from the HRC could attend that meeting with Mayor Art McDonnell stating yes.

David Bennett thanked the HRC for their work and stated that he felt the mediation status report was lacking and that it needed narrative, that measurable outcomes should be included. It was suggested that the status be continually updated on the website. Chief Plummer will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss youth court/peer court.

Darnel Frost read a letter from Nancy Price regarding the recent shooting in Meacham Park and the importance of counseling for children being provided.

Essay Contest

Romona Miller did not vote because she knew some of the students who submitted essays. In the future the names of the students will be hidden.

Congratulatory letters will be sent to the essay contest winners by Mike Brown with prizes given to the students at the April 19 City Council meeting.

Romona Miller stated that she would like to share some of the essays with the school district and Chief Plummer without names of those who wrote them. David Bennett requested he also be provided the information.

Symposium

Darnel Frost will be recruiting members from the CFUH to assist with the symposium.

Missouri Commission on Human Rights

Darnel Frost reported that he had been contacted by MO HRC regarding their wanting to donate money. He will be speaking with Mike Brown or Georgia Ragland.

Election of Secretary

Motion was made by Maggie Duwe and seconded by Ed Johnston to elect Romona Miller as Secretary. With a show of hands the motion passed unanimously.

Brochure Design

A photo of the HRC for the brochure will be taken at the April meeting.

Citizen Action Center

Romona Miller expressed her surprise that they are not receiving complaints via the Citizen Action Center with possible reasons cited as difficulty to use and citizen distrust of the city. Plans were made to demonstrate its use at the Meacham Park Homecoming along with at Meacham Park Neighborhood Association meetings.

Crime

Genevieve Hodges expressed concerns regarding violence in Meacham Park. The Commission expressed their desire to have Chief Plummer's attendance at the March 20 meeting.

Upcoming Meetings

A special meeting of the Human Rights Commission to make Strategic Plan assignments was scheduled for March 20 at 6:30 p.m. at Kirkwood City Hall. The symposium will also be discussed at this meeting.

Adjourn

Motion was made by Darnel Frost and seconded by Maggie Duwe to adjourn. All in favor, motion carried.

Romona Miller, Secretary