

October 2017 Report

Human Rights Commission:

Henry Banks addressed the Commission. A celebration is being planned for 2018 in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Pre-events will include a community mass choir, Oct. 16, and a concert on Oct. 22.

Indigenous Commission members addressed the Commission, encouraging them to join their efforts to help increase the graduation rates of non-white students. Nothing has changed in 40 years. Rates remain at 50% or less. A march to dismantle the legacy of racism will be held on Oct. 14 at 9:30 in front of the Duluth Civic Center.

Progress on the Homeless Bill of Rights: Necessary hygiene facilities are being addressed.

A report on complaints was presented by Carl Crawford. The ensuing discussion was related to the process and proper disclosure of these complaints. Submitted by Mary Jane Peterson

November 2017 Report

Human Rights Commission:

Councilor Joel Sipress addressed the Commission and clarified the Commission's role with respect to the Homeless Bill of Rights. The City Council has no staff and relies on the various Commissions to recommend policy on their respective areas of expertise. The HR Commission should be recommending what they have determined is the best policy for the Homeless Bill of Rights. It is then up to the City Council to utilize the political process to refine a bill that can be implemented. Councilor Sipress declined to commit to support their bill until he actually sees a draft. Jen McEwen from the Homeless Bill of Rights Coalition noted that they have been working together with the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and had draft language for a proposed bill of rights. The Commissioners received copies. Specific concerns; no language regarding access to shower facilities, or to public transportation. A motion was passed to convene a special meeting for Oct. 26 at 5:30 in order to provide time to study the language and consult with stakeholders.

A report from the Findings Committee (who have draft language for their Policy for Processing Complaints) was discussed. They decided to send the draft language to the Minnesota Human Rights Commission for feedback. This will be on the agenda for the Oct. 6 meeting, also.

Submitted by Gail Nouska

Human Rights Commission Meeting: November 14, 2017

A community meeting is planned after the regular January meeting. The Commission would like to effectively market this meeting to increase attendance.

Training for the commissioners was discussed. The Commission on Disabilities receives training, and this may be an opportunity for the Human Rights Commission, also. They are interested in ideas for training and working with other human rights commissions to share information.

Superior Street reconstruction may be an opportunity for under-represented workers to obtain employment. They are working to locate apprenticeship programs. This has been done in the past with participants working with SOAR.

Enbridge Line 3 opposition was discussed, and whether they, as a commission, should take a position. They would like to have a presentation by protest organizers first to gather a list of individuals to contact for more information.

Commissioner Carl Crawford noted that their Facebook page needs to have its posts vetted by a City official prior to posting. No objections to date, but a process needs to be established to ensure compliance. Guidelines from the City are requested.

The Findings Committee continues to work on the complaint process. Forms are still a work in progress. Work with a local mediator and consider a task force for training and communicating with other similar organizations.

The American Lung Association may want the Commission's support for a 21+ ordinance for tobacco. The Commission also expects requests for upcoming MLK events.

Port-a-potties for the homeless are, or will be, installed at the Skate Park west of the library below Michigan St., at 12th West and Superior St., at the bus area next to the M&H gas station, in the public library plaza, Central Hillside Park and at Lake Place. They continue to work with the City to have public heated restrooms at Bayfront and Endion open daily, at least from 6AM to 9PM.

Submitted by Gail Nouska

Duluth Human Rights Commission: February 14, 2018

Homeless Persons Bill of Rights: A request from the City Councilors for the Commission to address the Committee of the Whole. City Attorney, Gunnar Johnson, will need time for legal edits. Coalition met with the Parks and Recreation Commission to discuss extended hours, warming houses, port-a-potties, right to resist, and identify public owned spaces. Reached out to the fire department for the use of showers.

Education Report: A letter was sent to ISD 709 requesting a report on how compensatory funds are spent and the impact on students. Also, Commissioner Cruz will send a formal request to the school district to allow the Human Rights Commission to be a part of the Education Advisory Committee and NAACP's work with the school district.

Submitted by Mary Jane Peterson

Human Rights Commission: March 14, 2018

The Homeless Bill of Rights was presented to the City Council on Monday, March 12. It was clarified that it was not the first reading by the Council. It will take more time for their draft to go through the legislative process. It was noted that several Councilors are not in support of the bill.

Update on public restrooms: Only minor issues. Bayfront and Endion public restrooms are being kept open from 6AM to 9PM.

Final preparations for their March 26 event. "Meet Your Human Rights Commissioners", which will be held at the Dr. Robert Prowless Center at 5:30. An opportunity for the community to become aware of their purpose.

Carl Crawford reported on HUD training. Due to cuts at HUD, he has only been able to attend 1 to 5 training sessions. He will work on options to complete the training.

The Commissioners have been asked to support CEDAW - Convention to End Discrimination Against Women. They discussed the 3-15-18 presentation by Ellen Kennedy at UMD (co-sponsored by LWV). A late notice may prevent some commissioners from attending.

Discussion of ways to promote local businesses hiring diverse candidates. The time to try for a diversity requirement is prior to bids, but going forward they would like to consider internship/training programs for current projects, including the Superior Street project. The goal is to have qualified, trained candidates ready for future projects.

Submitted by Gail Nouska

Human Rights Commission, November 14, 2018

The Chair, Sandra van den Bosse, teleported that there are two applications for one opening on the Commission. They will be considered soon by the City Council. Ashley will make a presentation at the State Human Rights Conference about Duluth's process of passing the Homeless Bill of Rights.

The feasibility study on establishing a hygiene center should be done soon. The Commission decided to convey their concern about the urgency of establishing warming centers for people experiencing homelessness to the Mayor at their next meeting with her. They will urge the DTA to keep the Transit Center open for 4 hours.

There was discussion about the importance of coordinating efforts with other City boards and commissions who share interests and they established a committee to plan an orientation training for the HRC.

Submitted by Polly Thomson Edmunds

Human Rights Commission, December 12, 2018

Since their success with the Homeless Bill of Rights, it appears that the HRC is struggling with defining their role and establishing procedures. Of the thirty commissions in Duluth city government, the HRC is the only one that is set up to take direction from the Mayor or the City Council or to initiate action themselves. The potential all scope of their work is very broad, but they are frustrated by a lack of communication with City bodies and by the need to prioritize. They are taking steps to alleviate these problems.

At this meeting, they discussed two upcoming forums they will sponsors on immigration and opioids. The Chair of the HRC, Sandra van den Bosse, is participating on the committee to create a policy for the use of protective gear by the Police Department.

Submitted by Polly Thomson Edmunds

Human Rights Commission, May 8, 2019

The Commission drafted a statement in response to signs posted recently in Leif Erickson Park intended to arouse hate and division in the Community. The posters were taken down by city workers, but the Commission felt they should take a public stand. The draft statement passed and was sent to the City Communications Office. A member of the HRC will begin serving on the Education Equity Advisory Committee. There are two open seats on the HRC.

Submitted by Polly Thomson Edmunds

Human Rights Commission, June 12, 2019

The topic of interest was that the committee draft a policy for the use of protective gear by the DPD is just about finished. The members still have issues left to resolve. Members of the committee are from the Duluth Police Dept., Human Rights and Civil Rights Commissions, the NAACP and three City Councilors. When there is consensus on a draft policy, the Civil Rights Commission will plan meetings to present the policy for community comment. Submitted by Polly Thomson Edmunds

Human Rights Commission Meeting: October 9, 2019

For the second month in the row, the Commission did not meet for lack of a quorum. Ashley Grimm was the only member present on 10/9/19. I did learn from Carl Crawford, the staff person responsible for the HRC that the ad hoc committee working on the policy for use of protective gear by the Duluth Police has finished their work. The City Legal Dept. has seen it and commented. There will most likely be a public hearing scheduled in November.

Submitted by Polly Thomson Edmunds

Human Rights Commission, November 13, 2019

Three new members were present. They are Mark Hakes, Ri Preap, and Sherry Williams. The HRC discussed having a future regular meeting in the community, probably at Gloria Dei. No date has been set. Carl Crawford, the Human Rights Officer, reported that the largest number of complaints received come from people with disabilities. Most cases end with a need for mediation. It is difficult to find trained mediators in Duluth. There is only one group that provides that service. The Commission passed a resolution to send a letter to Essentia asking them to make public their plan for replacing the affordable housing units that were demolished in preparation for new construction. They asked the Human Rights Officer to find out what has happened to plans for providing a hygiene center for homeless persons in the City. The feasibility study was finished months ago. Sandra Van Den Bosse reported that the committee that drafted the use of protective gear by the police has completed their work. She expects that dates for a public meeting will be announced soon. The committee discussed the need to plan more meetings in the community to make sure it is well understood, especially by youth.

Submitted by Polly Thomson Edmunds

