

MOORHEAD HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
- Approved
Tuesday, February 24 - 7:00 PM
Moorhead City Hall First Floor

Members Present: Octavio Gomez, Chair, Cassandra Hedman, Vice Chair, Diane Wray-Williams, City Council Liaison, Dorene Neeland, Miguel Balderas, Lyndi Williams, Evan Thomas, Sel Nygard, Nate Aalgaard, Michael Carbone

Members absent: None.

Others Present: Andrew Bushaw, MHRC Staff Liaison, Diane Rae Williams, Former Chair

1. Call to order (7:00 pm).
2. Roll Call/Introductions.
3. Agenda Approved. January Minutes Approved.
4. Citizen to be Heard – Citizens from the Second Chance citizens' group (Kenneth Steichen – PEPP, Criselda Maria Deleon, Jan Sorem, and Robin Vizenor. The basic premise is that they would like to interject new curriculum into the Crime Free Multi Housing Program that reflects an emphasis on keeping people housed rather than eviction.
5. Elections of Officers
 - a. Hedman read aloud the roles and responsibilities of the Chair and Vice Chair (Rules of Practice and Procedure of the MHRC, Section 3.1).
 - b. Aalgaard nominated Balderas, Balderas respectfully declined the nomination. Neeland nominated Hedman for Chair, Gomez for Vice Chair. Balderas nominated Gomez for Chair, Hedman for Vice Chair. Octavio nominated Aalgaard for Chair, Hedman for Vice Chair.
 - c. Discussion about how to vote, secret ballot is decided most fair method in this situation.
 - d. Commissioner Gomez is elected Chair; Commissioner Hedman is elected Vice Chair.
6. Reports of the Chair, Officers, Commissioners and Committee
 - a. Reports – Activities since last meeting.
 - i. Project Homeless Connect – A success! 330 people served.
 - ii. Universal Declaration of Human Rights Day Survey – The results from the online survey were presented to the Commission with a

turnout of 65 respondents. The media has made contact with the commission wishing to hear the results.

- iii. Staff Liaison Bushaw reported that he has been working on collecting and organizing all MHRC documents into a logical file system. He has also digitized all of the meeting minutes, agendas and annual reports since 1990 and has uploaded them for Commissioners to access. He has also created an online message distribution group to facilitate email communications. He has automatically forwarded all HRC email to this group so all commissioners will receive these messages. For the two commissioners who do not use email, staff will mail hard copies of all message traffic and agendas for review before each meeting.
- b. Reports – Upcoming Activities/Updates
 - i. Landlord Training, Tuesday March 3rd from 5-9. Staff Liaison Andrew will attend.

7. Equitable Community Team

- a. Wray-Williams presented the Equitable Community Team – A group of Moorhead community leaders drawing from both public and non-profit organizations. They attended a national conference on Equitable Communities. Part of the work was to determine their community's assets and how they can be utilized. Other communities discussed their access to funding, resources, etc. When it was their turn to present, they agreed that Moorhead's greatest assets were the great citizens. It was commented on by other communities in attendance how the Moorhead group organically changed leadership from person to person during their presentation, without planning or prompting. That was seen as indicative of their potential. Greg Lemke is the leader and the group has decided it's next step is to visit with the Human Rights Commission to find a way to move forward. They feel that working with the MHRC on the Crime Free Multi Housing would fit in with their mission of creating equitable communities.

8. Discussion – Time and/or date change for regular meetings

- a. A motion was made by Aalgaard to change the meeting time from the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:00pm to the second Tuesday of the month at 5:30. The motion was seconded by Neeland.
- b. There was discussion as to the benefits and drawbacks of the time change. Ultimately it was decided that scheduling conflicts for commissioners and the fact that it may be less accessible for citizen attendance would be major drawbacks.
- c. The motion was denied.
- d. Wray-Williams made a motion that the meeting time remains at the last Tuesday of the month at 7:00pm. Motion was seconded by Hedman.
- e. Motion was approved.

9. November Training Work-Plan

- a. Discussion around the work plan that was created during the November training with Minnesota Human Rights Coordinator and trying to determine the next step for the HRC.
- b. Andrew will send out the 2007 strategic work plan for review and Commissioners have an assignment to bring back specific topics for further action.

10. Citizens to Be Heard Protocol – Needs formalizing.
 - a. Wray-Williams said that the protocol for Citizens to Be Heard for City Council was 3 minutes of allotted time and at specific times in regard to specific agenda items. Also, name and address is recorded on a forum.
 - b. Carbone said that there should be an accessible document with a formal policy.
 - c. Staff Liaison Bushaw will research the City Council policy and related forum and present it at next meeting. If applicable, the commission will then make changes as necessary.

11. Other Business
 - a. Crime Free Multi Housing
 - i. Wray-Williams would like to see more information gathered on the program and potentially host an open forum including residents, advocates, landlords, and law enforcement representatives to discuss the issue.
 - ii. Gomez agreed that we should collect all relevant information including sources of funding and information on other Crime Free Multi Housing programs around the state and country.
 - iii. Staff liaison Bushaw will collect this information, as well as personally attend the training, and will report back.
 - iv. Carbone stated that the terminology of “Housing First” is a recognized best-practice in homelessness advocacy but has a different meaning from how it is being used in this context. It may be desirable to use different yet equally descriptive terminology so as to not be confusing to policy makers. Carbone also mentioned that Lakes and Prairies has information and resources regarding this issue. Carbone feels that this would be an issue that would be of interest to many major agencies in the community and we should work on a coordinated effort. Carbone also mentioned that the FM Apartment Association indicated through a survey that they are interested in an indemnity fund as well as having access to renter’s case managers. This would be a risk management tool to get private landlords involved in renting to a wider range of people.
 - v. Neeland Motioned to invite a representative from the Crime Free Multi Housing program to come speak at our next meeting. Gomez seconded the motion. Motion approved.
 - b. Police Liaison – Chief Ebinger asked Wray-Williams where the MHRC stood on the having a Police Liaison.
 - i. Gomez said that there might be some practical issues with having a police presence considering the populations we serve and the work we do.
 - ii. Wray-Williams agreed but thought it was important that we build bridges and have conversations with the Police.
 - iii. Carbone said that the presence of an Officer could be intimidating to some citizens coming to the MHRC, but agrees that it is important to have that link between the Commission and the Police.
 - iv. Aalgaard said that, in his experience with the Fargo HRC, the presence of a police officer was inert because they tended to blend in to the well attended meetings.
 - v. The commission agreed that there should first be a meeting between the Chair, Vice Chair, Staff and the potential Police

Liaison before any further discussion on the issue. Staff Liaison Bushaw will arrange a meeting.

- c. Minnesota League of Human Rights Commissions - Neeland questioned whether we were attending the next meeting. It was brought up that we need to reapply for admission.
- d. Native American Center
 - i. Carbone recently attended a meeting to discuss the possibility of a Native American Center in the area. They explored the vision, obstacles, barriers, resources potentially involved. He was very impressed and stressed that this is an exciting opportunity and welcomes other Commissioners to support the project.

12. Adjourned – By Chair Gomez (9:05 pm)