

Brookings Human Rights Commission Minutes

Wednesday, September 11, 2024, 5:30pm

Brookings City/County Government Center and Zoom

Attendance:

	Commissioners	Liaisons	
Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dianne Nagy, Chair • Behnoosh Amandi, County, Vice Chair • Ari Limoges, SDSU student representative • Pastor Mark Johnsen • Denia Warne • Rhiannon Nedlund • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casey Bell, Staff • Lawrence Novotny, CLEAR Partners • Michael Drake, Police Chief • 	
Absent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastor Mark Johnsen • Carla Gatzke, Recorder • Lee Mallak, LGBTQ Liason • Nicema Thasing • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michele Vande Weerd, School District • Chloe Wisser, SA Diversity • Marjoanne Collins, SDSU • 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		

Lawrence volunteered to serve as recorder in Carla’s absence.

Quorum was eventually met. Chair Dianne Nagy opened the meeting at 5:32pm.

Motion by Behnoosh and seconded by Denia to approve the agenda with addition of discussion on working groups. Motion carried.

Motion by Behnoosh and seconded by Ari to approve the minutes of the August meeting. Motion carried.

Motion by Behnoosh and seconded by Ari to approve the minutes of the June meeting with the correction that Emma Qurashi needs to be listed as being present and not as absent. Motion carried.

Report by Police Chief Drake:

Drake informed the BHRC about an incident that occurred at the August 27 Citizens Academy. One of the program’s presenters made a comment that was insensitive to international students. The presiding sergeant informed the class that the police department does not tolerate or condone such comments. The incident is under review by the police chief and city HR.

Introduction of new members:

- Denia Warne is HR director for ???
- Rhiannon Nedlund moved to Brookings in 2015 and is a mental health therapist
- Ari Limoges is a grad student at SDSU

NEW BUSINESS

- **Recommendations to City Council;** Jay Malack with SDSU's Office of Multicultural Affairs submitted a request to have the BHRC support the idea of re-naming a prominent street in Brookings in honor of Martin Luther King. South Dakota is one of few states that does not have a street named in honor of MLK. Malack will be submitting this request to the City Council.
- **Human Rights Training:** There were conflicts with the proposed dates. A poll will be conducted of BHRC to find a suitable date.
- **Working Groups:**
 - Ari volunteered to join the trainings WG
 - Ari left at this point
 - Denia volunteered to join the complaint resolution WG

OLD BUSINESS

- **Awards:** A nomination was received to nominate Marilyn and Michael Hildreth for the Butler award for their work in creating the Brookings Multi-Cultural Center. The nomination was approved via e-mail vote. Novotny volunteered to draft the press release.
- **Meeting schedule:** A survey conducted by Behnoosh indicated that most of the BHRC members favored a Wednesday meeting date instead of the usual Thursday. Wednesday is difficult for Mark and he would like to suggest Tuesday (either the 1st or 3rd Tuesday to avoid city council meetings). Mark was asked to survey BHRC with his Tuesday proposal.
- **LSS MCC medical interpreter training program:** The Brookings Avera Medical Clinic and the Brookings Health System hospital report that 90% of their non-English speaking clients speak Spanish. Some of the other languages are German, Russian, French, Ukrainian, Hindi, and others. The systems also use interpretative services or a family member as a translator. It was determined that we would not be able to find someone to attend the 40-hour medical interpreter training in Sioux Falls by the application deadline of September 13 (this Thursday).
- **BMC ice cream social & community fair** for international students held at Good Roots Farm on August 21: Mallak & Novotny staffed the BHRC table. We did not get the number of visitors as some other tables got because we didn't have attractive give-away items. We handed out our renters rights brochure. Novotny noted that several years ago, we wanted the brochure translated into Spanish. Denia volunteered to do the translation.
- **Common Read:** The book is *Invention of Wings*. The campus CR committee invited the BHRC to host a discussion topic on intersectionality which we declined to do. The Brookings League of Women Voters is hosting a forum on women's suffrage on Sept. 24 which will serve as the community common read event.
- **Vacancy:** Casey reported that the mayor and city council approved our recommendation of Kelli ?? to the BHRC.

REPORTS FROM LIAISONS, TASK FORCES & WORKING GROUPS:

- **LGBTQ+** – The Human Rights Campaign released the draft MEI scorecards. Brookings was awarded 105 points.
- **Complaint Process** –
 - The WG had a Zoom meeting with HR staff of Cedar Falls IA on August 27. Cedar Falls had a similar situation as we do in Brookings. Cedar Falls switched the focus of its HRC to education, advocacy, and outreach.
 - Cedar Falls HRC has a 3-person advocacy sub-committee that responds to concerns brought forth by citizens. The online concerns form notifies all 3 members immediately. The form allows the submitter to designate if the Mayor should also be notified.
 - No investigations are done.
 - HRC members help the concerned party walk through appropriate resources or point out agencies whereby a complaint can be filed, and help the party fill out a complaint form.
 - Cedar Falls HRC engagement ends with referral or the party filing a complaint. The complainant can update HRC on progress if they chose to do so.
 - Iowa has a state HRC that covers the same protected classes as EEOC. Cedar Falls refers complaints to the state HRC.
 - Lawrence noted that Iowa HRC covers sexual orientation (SO) & gender identity (GI). However, SD state law does not. He expressed concern that forwarding a SO/GI complaint to SD's HRC will result in no action. How will this be handled when Brookings ordinance bans discrimination on SO/GI but the state does not. Will a complainant be left hanging?

Action Items:

- Bell to distribute WG signup list to members
- Nagy to contact Marlyin Hildreth to inform her of receiving the Butler award. Novotny will draft the PR.
- Someone to poll the members to find a date for human rights training.
- Denia Warne to translate the renters rights brochure into Spanish.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.