



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
December 12, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.
CITY HALL | Main Level Conference Room

Members Present

Geoff Morrison, Chair
David Hartung, Vice Chair
Carolyn Becker
Michelle Cole
Nicole Goldkamp
Kelley Harris
Jeanne Webdell

Youth Advisory Commission:
Scarlet Adams

Council Liaison, Maggie Duwe
Staff Liaison, Russ Hawes

Other:
Jessica Winter, Administration

Members Absent

Margie Palazzolo, Secretary

Paul Ward

I. Roll Call

Roll was taken by David with attendance reflected above. Geoff introduced new Commissioner, Kelley Harris, and asked her to tell the Commission a little about herself. Kelley, a Kirkwood native, comes from a long-standing family, instilled with values of hard work and community. Growing up, she actively assisted in her father's business. Following high school, she pursued sociology, obtaining two degrees from local universities. For 15 years, she served as a professor at St. Louis and Louisville area universities and community college. However, nostalgia drew her back to Kirkwood, where she rejoined her family and now raises her two children. Apart from her teaching commitments, Kelley commits her time to volunteer work, such as tending to school gardens and spearheading programs benefiting children in Louisville and St Louis. With her deft communication skills, she facilitates conversations, including those on sensitive subjects, at the renowned Muhammad Ali Center exhibits.

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Michelle and seconded by David to approve the minutes of the November 7, 2023 meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

III. City Council Comments

Council Member Duwe had nothing to report.

IV. Chief Administrative Officer Comments

Chief Administrative Officer Russ Hawes provided an update on the action taken by the Commission during the late summer. He has prepared a document suggesting changes to the City's housing discrimination ordinances. Working closely with the City Attorney, he is in the process of drafting an amendment to the existing ordinance to better align with the City's procedures. The aim is to present this amendment to the City Council early next year.

V. Old Business**A. Approval of 3rd Quarter Report**

Motion was made by Carolyn and seconded by Michelle to approve the 3rd Quarter Report as written. All in favor, motion carried.

B. Update Re: Letter to Governor Re: MCHR vacancies

Geoff sent a letter to the Governor requesting that he fill the remaining five MCHR vacancies. The Commission now has the minimum number of Commissioners (6) to constitute a meeting quorum. Al Li, the Second District Commissioner (this District includes Kirkwood) who was appointed in June, and, Tim Farmer, the current MCHR Chairperson, were contacted by Geoff to ascertain if they knew why the Governor had not filled the vacancies. They did not know and Farmer complained that having only six Commissioners made it difficult to ensure a quorum could always be reached in order to conduct business. Geoff contacted 12 Municipal or County Human Rights Commissions/Human Relations Commissions with the aforesaid letter, which he had sent to the Governor and requested that they consider petitioning him to fill the vacancies.

C. MLK Event update

During the Meacham Park Neighborhood Improvement Association annual gathering on Monday night, the flyer was distributed. Geoff has handled additional publicity, including sending a press release to City Hall for inclusion on the Kirkwood Happenings news events and calendar page. The Webster Kirkwood Times will also feature it in their calendar page for January 15. Alvin Reed will be the Emcee, and one of the 2023 essay contest winners, Arul Osburn, will read his essay concerning freedom of speech which references Dr. King.

D. Approval of 2024 Essay Contest Guidelines and Prompt

The essay submission deadline has been rescheduled to Sunday, February 18, 2024 at 11:59 PM, following a discussion about accommodating high school students. While late submissions were previously accepted, those received after the aforesaid February 18th deadline will now be ineligible for

consideration. Additionally, 11th grade homeschool students residing within the Kirkwood School district boundaries are now eligible to participate. To maximize student involvement, notifications will be sent to teachers at Kirkwood High School, Ursuline Academy, and Vianney. Promotional materials, such as posters, may be used to further promote the event. In the past, the review process has received an average of 70-80 essays.

Motion was made by Kelley and seconded by Nicole to approve the Essay Contest Guidelines with the deadline of Sunday, February 19, 2024 at 11:59 p.m.; with the addition of the statement: "Essays received after that time will be ineligible for consideration.;" and, the essay prompt "What is the most important human rights issue currently? Why?". All in favor, motion carried.

E. Denis Hart Award Nominations

The Commission discussed nominating Tom Ptacek for the 2023 Dennis Hart Award. Jeanne provided background reporting on his activities. Tom has worked with non-profits like LifeBridge and Kirkwood Academy. LifeBridge currently funds the Heart Tutoring Project. Geoff will notify Tom, as well as the person who nominated him and also order the Award. The presentation will likely take place at a February City Council meeting. A press release will publicize the award.

Motion was made by Carolyn and seconded by David to accept Tom Ptacek as the 2023 Denis Hart Award winner. All in favor, motion carried.

VI. New Business

A. Select Subcommittee for Quarterly Meeting with Police Chief Murphy on Friday, January 5th

Geoff informed the Commissioners about Chief Murphy's availability for a meeting on Friday, January 5th at 8:00 AM. The purpose of the meeting is to review the fourth quarter statistics from October, November, and December. Geoff, David, Nicole and either Jeanne or Paul will attend.

B. Select Subcommittee to meet with Kirkwood School District Administrator

Geoff shared that according the HRC calendar, they are supposed to meet with the school administrator in the spring and fall and last spoke with Dr. Jeremy Mapp back in May. David, Kelley, Carolyn, and Michelle will attend the meeting. David will facilitate the meeting via Zoom. Nicole is backup for anyone that may not be able to attend.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for January 9, 2024 from 6:30 – 7:30 pm, at the City Hall, Main Level Conference Room. Items for the next meeting will include: Subcommittee Report of Meeting with Chief Murphy; Review 4th Quarter Report; Select Subcommittee to prepare April Utility Flyer.

VIII. Adjourn

Motion was made by Michelle and seconded by Nicole to adjourn. All in favor, motion carried.

Margie Palazzolo, Secretary