

Duluth Human Rights Commission (HRC)

Regular Meeting - Notes

Wednesday, February 10, 2021 at 4:30PM

City Hall - WebEx

1. Call to Order and Roll Call at 4:40PM by Chairperson Keppers
 - a. Commissioners present: Carl Huber, Bettina Keppers, Ashley Neenan, Ri Preap and Sandra van den Bosse
 - b. Commissioner excused absence: Vice Chairperson Mark Hakes
 - c. Others present: Human Rights Officer (HRO) Carl Crawford
2. Consent of Minutes from January 13, 2021 meeting
 - a. Motioned for approval by Commissioner van den Bosse; 2nd by Commissioner Neenan; Unanimously approved by Commissioners
3. Consent of today's agenda - approved unanimously by Commissioners
 - a. Commissioner Preap noted that staff from SOAR were present.
4. Announcements - none
5. Public Comments
 - a. Written Public Comments - none
 - b. Virtual Meeting Comments - none
6. Guest Speaker
 - a. Commissioner Preap introduced the speaker - Ms. Ashley Lovold, assistant program director, for the Duluth SOAR program for individuals released from prison and reentry to society.
 - i. The re-entry program began 2006.
 - ii. Intensive case management for incarcerated individuals being released to society.
 - iii. The incarcerated apply two months prior to being released and are provided a case management team from mental health, treatment with St. Louis County, probation officer and parole officer.
 - iv. When they are released the case management teams work with the individuals.
 - v. The program has a 27% recidivism rate/national recidivism rate is 76%.
 - b. Ms. Lovold introduced Ms. Cynthia Finley, re-entry case manager, at SOAR.
 - i. Chairperson Keppers asked the following: Generally how long are you working with someone on re-entry?
 1. Ms. Finley said it is client driven.

- ii. Chairperson Keppers made the comment of reuniting children with their families when a large percentage of the incarcerated population is male.
 - iii. HRO Crawford asked how we can work together?
 - 1. Ms. Finley responded: "Housing - it is expensive!"
 - iv. HRO Crawford asked if working with the state to limit probation is a route? How can HRO and HRC help when with the practice of one probation violation can lead to the individual losing all rights?
 - 1. Ms. Finley responded that she feels the winds are starting to change. Before one relapse or broken curfew, the person could be sent back to jail. Looking more to a sliding scale to give someone benefit of the doubt. Al, can we figure out ways to build in safety nets?
 - v. Chairperson Keppers asked who writes these contracts?
 - 1. Ms. Finley said it is done through legislation and there was a successful reform in 2021 called "Less is More" as a step down approach to re-entry casework.
 - vi. Commissioner Preap said she would forward the legislation to the Commissioners.
- 7. Gap in services for people experiencing homelessness - Commissioner Preap shared the following:
 - a. It is difficult for homeless people to do their laundry at laundromats.
 - b. They can take public transportation to the laundromats but due to COVID-19 protocols are required to wait in their cars while washing and drying their clothes. Where are they supposed to wait?
 - c. Effort is needed to help homeless maintain their dignity and obtain clean clothes.
 - d. Some homeless clients have jeopardized their privileges at CHUM. So, they have nowhere to do their laundry.
 - e. Also, laundromats can be cost prohibitive as a single load runs \$6.25 and it is \$0.25/7 minutes for a dryer.
 - f. Chairperson Keppers suggested the Housing and Justice Committee could look further into the issues around personal hygiene and the need for places for the homeless to shower, do laundry and meet their hygienic needs.
- 8. Executive Team Report - (Chairperson Keppers, Vice Chairperson Hakes and Secretary Huber)
 - a. On-boarding of new commissioner
 - i. Chairperson Keppers reached out to our new Commissioner, Corinthian Rutherford, and welcomed her. There has been a delay

with COVID-19 and the swearing in process but hopefully our new Commissioner will be able to join us at the March meeting.

- b. Updates on statement declaring racism a public health emergency
 - i. Chairperson Keppers reported that Vice Chairperson Hakes has gotten positive approval for support from the Indigenous Commission and is waiting to hear from the African Heritage Commission.
 - c. UMD Summit: Being AntiRacist, Doing AntiRacism
 - i. Secretary Huber reported the virtual summit will take place March 2 - 4. Tim Wise will be the opening conference speaker on March 2 and Professor Ibram Kendi will be the keynote on March 3. There will be a racial fair on March 4 and Chairperson Keppers will send out a doodle invite to see Commissioners availability to host a HRC session for the racial fair.
9. Committee Reports (bolded Commissioner is chair of committee)
- a. Education Committee - Commissioners Huber and **Neenan**
 - i. Did not meet
 - b. Finding Committee - Commissioners Huber, **Keppers** and van den Bosse
 - i. Met Monday, 2/15/2021, and discussed the following two cases;
 - 1. Discrimination complaint and follow-up with Sherriff Litman
 - 2. Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) make up more than 50% of the prison population - what is the vaccine schedule? What is the protocol for family access and visitation?
 - c. Gender and Sexuality Committee (Commissioners Hakes, Keppers and **Preap**)
 - i. Chairperson Keppers reported the Executive Team discussed at their monthly meeting a recommendation to the Commission to disband this committee as the Duluth City Council has recently approved a new Duluth Nonbinary, Queer, Trans, Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Intersex & Asexual Commission (NQT2SLGBIA).
 - d. Housing Justice Committee (Commissioners Hakes, Huber and **Preap**)
 - i. Did not meet
 - e. Committee Changes
 - i. Chairperson Keppers proposed a new Family Preservation Committee.
 - ii. Secretary Huber supported the new committee idea.
10. Monthly Statement, Inquiry or Letter
- a. January Review: St. Louis County Jail

- i. Chairperson Keppers is drafting a letter for Commission review to Sheriff Litman
 - b. February Plan: Statement on Family Preservation
 - i. Chairperson Keppers is drafting a statement for Commission review
 - c. March Plan: Focus on housing and end homelessness in Duluth.
Revitalize the Homelessness Act with focus on the homeless person's need for hygiene access
 - i. Commissioner Preap volunteered to take lead on this effort
- 11. Human Rights Officer Report - HRO Carl Crawford
 - a. Suggested to reach out to St. Louis County regarding the hygiene (e.g. laundry) issues.
 - i. Commissioner van den Bosse will reach out to Loaves and Fishes regarding use of laundry
 - b. Black History Month
 - i. HRO Crawford has had several speaking engagements at high schools and other agencies. Speaking to the conscious and unconscious bias regarding race. The George Floyd pending trial is to begin in March
 - ii. EMTs, Firefighters and police have been impacted by COVID-19 in their work. Who is being vaccinated and who might not be yet.
 - iii. The Snow removal program for those marginalized and in neighborhoods that were adversely affected by recent snow falls.
- 12. Adjournment
 - a. Chairperson Keppers motioned; Secretary Huber seconded; Adjourned at 5:40PM

Minutes for February 10, 2021 Duluth HRC meeting
Respectfully submitted by

Carl Huber
Secretary