

# Duluth Human Rights Commission

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 4:30PM

City Hall - webEX

1. Call to order and roll call at 4:30PM by Chairperson Keppers
  - a. Commissioners present: Mark Hakes, Carl Huber, Bettina Keppers, Ashley Neenan, Ri Preap and Sandra van den Bosse
  - b. Others present: Carl Crawford, Human Rights Officer; Laura Laaksonen, Human Rights Office; Elena Foshay, guest speaker, Director of Duluth Workforce Development and Ozaawaa Anakwaadookwe, Alicia Kozlowski, guest speaker, Duluth Community Relations Officer
2. Consent of minutes from November 12, 2020 meeting
  - a. Motioned for approval by Chairperson Keppers and approved unanimously by the whole Commission
3. Consent of today's (January 13, 2021) agenda with the following addition approved unanimously by the whole Commission:
  - a. Elena Foshay, guest speaker
4. Announcements:
  - a. Recognition of the events in the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, January 6, 2021.
    - i. Chairperson Keppers spoke to the experiences of hate symbols being on display in the crowds and the traumatic nature of the events to BIPOC and Jewish citizens specifically but to the larger nation as a whole. The need to care for each other during these times and look in on each other.
    - ii. Commissioner Huber spoke to the trauma caused by one of the rioter's pictured in the news carrying the confederate flag through the main floor of the U.S. Capitol.
  - b. Welcome back Laura Laaksonen to the Human Rights Office
    - i. Vice Chairperson Hakes expressed their concern for increasing Laura's hours and fully funding the HRO for the work that needs to be done to address the issues in an equitable way.
5. Public Comments
  - a. Written comments - none
  - b. Virtual meeting comments - none
6. Two Guest speakers - Ozaawaa AnaKwaadookwe, Alicia Kozlowski and Elena Foshay
  - a. Ozaawaa Anakwaadookwe, Alicia Kozlowski, City of Duluth Community Relations Officer

- i. Opening greeting to the Commission in their native Ojibwe language. Translated to English: "Hello, my name means yellow cloud or woman's vision beyond the cloud".
  - ii. Ms. Anakwaadookwe, Ms. Kozlowski, thanked the commission for inviting her to speak and expressed her showing up with humor and determination.
  - iii. Updated the Commission on the HRC three vacancies and that one has been filled by Ms. Corothinian Rutherford, so two spots remaining with possibility of being fully staffed by January/February time frame.
  - iv. Announced Boards & Commissions virtual appreciation event for Thursday, March 3 at 1:00PM - more details to come.
  - v. Her work in community relations for the City of Duluth is in this capacity looking at access to City services, collaborating with other agencies and fostering a strengths based movement. Example of a duck - calm and steady on the surface but paddling like heck under the water.
  - vi. Working towards an inclusive and equitable city
    1. There are not policies for queer Ojibwe woman
    2. Create space for people to exist freely
    3. How do we prioritize those who historically have been left out - LGBTQ, BIPOC
  - vii. Commissions are staffed and safe to have the space for these discussions
  - viii. Also, Oazaawaa, Alicia, manages the mayor's City email.
  - ix. Americorp program person is creating an inclusive engagement community guide speaking to the disenfranchised and people who are not feeling part of the system.
- b. Elena Foshay, Director, Duluth Workforce Center (WFC) and Duane Hill, member of the WFC Board and serves on the Equity Committee. Duane represents MNDOT on the Board.
- i. Ms. Foshay presented an update on the WFC work and possessed some questions to the Commission.
    1. Equity will include reaching out to Indigenous, African American and individuals with disabilities.
    2. WFC is one of 16 area sites in the state encompassing a seven region area.
    3. WFC partners work at the Center for job seekers and serves employers with job postings and strategies to meet job

needs in the area. Programs include hiring, on-boarding and retention.

4. Created a toolkit for employers as 30% of the career force served by the WFC is African American.
  5. Working towards digital inclusion since the COVID-19 pandemic began with computers but also with expanding the broadband footprint.
- ii. Mr. Hill spoke of rolling out the toolkit for inclusion and diversity and the state agency has produced an excellent resource.
  - iii. Ms. Foshay asked the Commissioners, where can we improve and do a better job at the WFC?
  - iv. Commissioner van den Bosse made the comment regarding moving away from the term “cultural competency”.
  - v. Ms. Foshay expressed that she is very much aware of the new terminology such as “cultural humility” or “cultural fluency” or even “cultural responsiveness” as replacements to the older terminology.
  - vi. Chair Keppers asked about retention of employees having their perspectives honored or heard so they stay.
  - vii. Ms. Foshay encouraged the Commissioners to send questions to Human Rights Officer (HRO) Crawford.
  - viii. HRO Crawford expressed his concern for front line workers in light of COVID-19 feeling threatened to return to work.
  - ix. Chair Keppers expressed bus drivers have to reach out - and asked who is considered a front line worker? Do they know how to file for unemployment? Questioned St. Louis County’s push for access and roll out of vaccines for COVID-19.
  - x. HRO Crawford commented that he is working with Ms. Alicia Kozlowski and St. Louis County on a rollout of vaccines and educational components.
  - xi. Ms. Foshay commented on how WFC has made service more accessible
    1. WFC front desk phone lines are being answered
    2. Push for library to reopen computer labs - currently closed to the public
  - xii. Ms. Foshay concluded that the WFC is working on a strategic plan for the next five years and the draft will be available March 1.
7. Executive team report - give by Chair Keppers
- a. On-boarding process updates - Ms. Laura Laaksonen is working on this process.

- i. Executive team is working to put together a two hour orientation for new commissioners before they come on board. Looking to hold this in March when all three new Commissioners will be on board.
- b. Banner and name tags - Commissioner Huber volunteered to take up the mantle and proceed to get name tags and a banner for the Commission.
- c. HR indicators and tracking system
  - i. Chair Keppers is working to develop a public version with general information of who, what for and what complaints to track the work of the HRC and HRO.
- d. Update on the statement declaring racism a public health emergency
  - i. Vice Chair Hakes reached out to the Indigenous Commission and four members are willing to collaborate on a statement. Commissioners van den Bosse and Keppers volunteered as representatives from HRC.
  - ii. Chair Keppers reported that the African American Heritage Commission is working on by-laws and are in the very beginning stages of forming.
  - iii. Commissioner Huber shared that UMD's Commission on Equity, Race and Ethnicity is holding their annual summit virtually March 2 to 4. The theme of this year's virtual summit is "Being Antiracist, Doing Antiracism". The Commission will have an opportunity to participate in the racial fair day scheduled for March 4. More details to come soon.
- e. Commission statements and letters
  - i. Chair Keppers reported that the Executive Team is proposing statements or letters once per month rotating from a different committee each month. And asked the Commissioners if they would like to move forward with this suggestion?
    1. Commissioner Neenan expressed concern about the low numbers on each committee.
    2. Vice Chair Hakes asked if individual committees can issue statements.
    3. HRO Crawford said the statement would still need to be brought to the entire Commission but could be approved by email vote,
    4. Vice Chair Hakes suggested moving this to next month's Commission agenda for February through March planning.
- f. Facebook page
  - i. Chair Keppers would like to publish any public statements on the site

- ii. Biographies of Commissioners - Chair Keppers volunteered for January and Commissioner Huber volunteered for February. HRO Crawford would like to have a conversation (offline) due to safety issues for the Commissioners at this time.
    - iii. HRO Crawford's recent speeches and interviews with KBJR and the *Duluth New Tribune* were suggested to be included on the site.
  - g. Request for speakers
    - i. Commissioner Preap suggested 1) SOAR for a discussion on re-entry/case managers perspective on impact of COVID-19 on re-entry to work. 2) Jess Nicola to speak from the Opioid Task Force, attending court, 25S, treatment centers, people with resources, Narcan, etc.
    - ii. Commissioner Huber suggested Men As Peacemakers.
- 8. Committee reports (chairs in bolded)
  - a. Education (Commissioner Huber and **Neenan**)
    - i. Commissioner Neenan updated the Commissioners on the meeting with ISD 709 Superintendent John Magus. Mr. Anthony Bonds, assistant superintendent, is charged with an equity committee formation and looking at the school suspension rates. The Superintendent was open to having HRC representation on this committee. There has also been a recent student survey.
    - ii. Commissioner Huber added that there is effort to look at internet access in marginalized area (e.g. Steve O'Neil apartments).
    - iii. Vice Chair Hakes commented on the state's amendment on equitable education.
  - b. Findings (Commissioners Huber, **Keppers** and van den Bosse)
    - i. Chair Keppers provided the following update on two cases the committee reviewed at their last meeting:
      - 1. COVID-19 in the prison - person in St. Louis County jail loss some of his possessions and phone when they were relocated to a different site. The person has been referred to the ACLU for help.
        - a. HRO Crawford commented these people have been moved without consideration of their rights or possible increased exposure to COVID-19. In the case noted by Chair Keppers, this person has lost his livelihood and peace of mind with the loss of his personal items.
      - 2. An Indigenouness mother had her child removed due to the complaints to Child Protective Services (CPS) by an upset grandmother. The father is not involved and is a drug user.

The mother has two options 1) voluntarily relinquish rights to the mother's father or 2) relinquish rights to grandfather and not be involved any longer with her child. The mother had not been attending CPS meetings.

- a. HRO Crawford is going to reach out to Duluth City Attorney Rebecca St. James.
  - b. Chair Keppers suggested reaching out to the Indigenouness Commission.
  - c. HRO Crawford commented that the CPS and court system is against the marginalized children and wants to create a space in Duluth where this does not happen.
  - d. Commissioner van den Bosse suggested to invite Mr. Scott Miller who works with domestic violence to speak to the Commission and also someone to give an update on the warming shelters.
  - e. Chair Keppers suggested and offered to work on two letters:
    - i. A letter regarding family preservation compiling statistics related to keeping families together
      1. Reach out to Michelle Robertson at CSS
      2. Reach out to Indigineous Commission (Babette Sandman, Chair)
    - ii. A letter of inquiry to the St. Louis County jail on policies regarding the COVID-19 protocols and vaccine roll out plan.
- c. Gender and sexuality committee (Commissioners Hakes, **Keppers** and Preap)
- i. Vice Chair Hakes reported the conversion therapy reporting process is "live" now going through the City Clerks office. Individuals can make a report and it would be forwarded to HRO Crawford; City Attorney, Rebecca St. James and City Clerk's office Mr. Ian Johnson
  - ii. HRO Crawford expressed gratitude to all the hard work that went into making this happen. More education is needed for city staff on better understanding queer identity.
  - iii. On Monday, December 21, 2020 the City Council passed unanimously to establish a new commission - Nonbinary, Queer, Trans, Two-spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Intersex and Asexual Commission

1. Council member Ms. Janet Kennedy pushed to fully fund the Human Rights Office.
- d. Housing and justice committee (Commissioners Hakes, Huber and Preap)
  - i. Commissioner Preap reported that the committee has met once and is working on their role and plan moving forward. Plan to attend monthly meetings of the Housing Alliance committee and make contacts with other key organizations.
  - ii. Vice Chair Hakes suggested Mr. Joell Kilgour as a speaker to the Commission on warming centers and affordable housing for the February meeting.
9. Human Rights Officer report - Carl Crawford
  - a. HRO Crawford thanked the Commission for their work in these very trying times and as we celebrate the remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 18. He echoed the earlier sentiments of Commissioner Huber in painfully seeing the confederate flag marched through the U.S. Capitol in the recent January 6 riots in Washington, DC. He was reminded of this hate and pain when he encountered three trucks in Canal Park with Trump and confederate flags flying from the backs.
  - b. HRO Crawford gave an interview for Almanac North and wrote an "opposite the editorial page" (op-ed) for the *Duluth News Tribune*.
10. Adjournment
  - a. 6:22 PM by Chair Keppers

Minutes for January 13, 2021 meeting

Respectfully submitted by

Carl Huber  
Secretary