**KIRKWOOD HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**Minutes**

**May 14, 2019**

**6:30 p.m.**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Denis Hart.

**Present Absent**

Bob Boyd, Vice Chair Denis Hart, Chair

Verneda Carrier

Josh Lewis

Geoff Morrison

Judy Moticka

Amanda Sher, Secretary

Ronda Wallace

William Winter

**Staff** Russ Hawes

**Other**  Kathie Valentine, City of Kirkwood Admin. Department

**Visitors** Jeannie Webdell, Genevieve Hodges, Ron Hodges

**Roll Call**

Roll call was taken by Amanda Sher with attendance reflected above.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion was made by William Winter and seconded by Amanda Sher to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2019 meeting as amended. All in favor, motion carried.

**City Council Liaison Comments**

Council Member Duwe expressed her appreciation for the work of Denis Hart while serving on the KHRC the last six years.

She also spoke regarding the progress being made on the Performing Arts Center.

**Chief Administrative Officer Comments**

Russ Hawes spoke about Denis Hart stating that Denis is a very caring, special man.

**Visitor Introductions**

Visitors in attendance introduced themselves. Jeannie Webdell, Genevieve Hodges and Ron Hodges all spoke about Denis Hart, conveying their gratitude for his work on the Commission and also their personal interactions with him.

Officer Gary Baldridge entered the meeting. The Hot Dog Dayz of Summer schedule was distributed with Officer Baldridge inviting all Commissioners to attend the events. He spoke regarding the efforts being made by the Kirkwood Police Department to rejuvenate the chaplain’s program. On April 23, 2019, the department hosted an event at the Greentree Community Church, in conjunction with Crossroads (a multi-jurisdictional collaboration of police departments), entitled “Risky Behavior” which is a program about teenagers and what to look for regarding alcohol and other drugs. The event was quite successful with an estimated 157 citizens in attendance.

**Strategic Plan Reports**

B.1

Geoff Morrison advised that Metropolitan Congregations United would be holding a meeting entitled “Break the Pipeline” on May 21st at 6:30 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church, 5007 Waterman Blvd., St. Louis.

He also mentioned that he had sent an e-mail to the Commissioners regarding the Alliance for Interracial Dignity meeting that had been held. At the meeting, information was provided on how property tax relief could contribute towards building an inclusive and diverse community. The alliance will not meet again until the end of August or early September.

William Winter had attended a meeting of the Meacham Park Neighborhood Improvement Association where a representative of the prosecuting attorney’s office spoke regarding incarceration for minor crimes and changes they hope to make. William Winter described Denis Hart as being a conscientious leader for the Commission.

Verneda Carrier reported that the Kirkwood Social Justice Coalition would be making a presentation on housing at their May 19, 2019 meeting at the Kirkwood United Methodist Church. Judy Moticka offered to put information regarding the presentation on the KHRC Facebook page.

B.2

Geoff Morrison reported that he had reserved a booth for the Commission at the Greentree Festival.

B.4

Judy Moticka reminded Commissioners that the essay contest award presentations would be made at the May 16, 2019 City Council meeting. She also recommended that parental permission be sought next year allowing essay contest participation. It was noted that copies of the essays, with the names of the students removed, be given to Michele Condon, Superintendent of Schools and also to Mike Havener, Principal at Kirkwood High School.

Judy Moticka advised that she had attended a meeting of the Kirkwood High School Task Force for Equity on May 24, 2019. The Kirkwood School District will be holding a two day training session on cultural responsive instruction which staff are required to attend. It was recommended that members of the KHRC also attend the training. Judy Moticka intends to e-mail information to the Commissioners.

Geoff Morrison spoke regarding the Kirkwood Public Library’s One Author, One Kirkwood event that had been held and well attended with Judy Moticka adding that she felt the library liked having a connection to the KHRC.

Geoff Morrison noted that the Art Exhibit had not yet been placed on the calendar.

William Winter thanked Bob Boyd for his work in preparing the information regarding the KHRC that had been included in the recent utility bill insert. William Winter described Denis Hart as being a conscientious Chair for the Commission.

There was discussion regarding the Social Justice Club at Kirkwood High School with it being noted that it was not active last year. It is the intention of the KHRC to follow up with student groups at the high school.

**Diverse-Abilities Subcommittee**

Bob Boyd noted that the subcommittee is currently preparing a questionnaire for employers to complete to ascertain if they should be awarded a window sticker. The subcommittee is diligently working to get the program launched.

Josh Lewis advised that, regarding universal design, the subcommittee is currently focusing on research and that they hope to have an outline developed before July which will be presented to the subcommittee for approval. It is their hope to have the outline and information for the City Council and the City Attorney ready by September.

Bob Boyd informed the Commission that Verneda Carrier would be replacing Denis Hart on the subcommittee.

**Other**

Ronda Wallace spoke regarding a productive meeting that she had recently attended with Russ Hawes, Chief Administrative Officer and Mollie LeBlanc, Human Resources Manager for the City of Kirkwood regarding hiring concerns. She had received complaints from citizens submitting applications for employment.

* Applicants reported that they did not receive correspondence after completing employment applications.
* Applicant reported that they were not treated courteously at the Administration Department window.
* An applicant reported that they did not like the tone of a conversation when making a phone call to the city’s Human Resources Department.

In the meeting, Russ Hawes had advised that the city takes complaints seriously. At the meeting it was explained to Ronda Wallace that the city intends to update its application process to include automatic notifications to applicants.

Ronda Wallace also stated the following:

* People of color are distrustful of city administration and are afraid to have their voices heard.
* She has experienced a traumatic experience herself with a police officer.
* She had moved away from Kirkwood and upon moving back noticed that nothing had changed.
* There is distrust with the Kirkwood School District as well.
* Words used are afraid, scared, and untrustworthy.
* Citizens want to see action.

Bob Boyd asked Ronda Wallace if she could compile a list of individuals that have concerns so that they could meet and discuss problems, with Ronda Wallace stating she did not feel they would come to a meeting.

Ron Hodges who was a visitor spoke about the Mediation Agreement and stated that the city has tried many times to foster trust. There had been an effort to set up block captains in the Meacham Park community but there was a lack of participation. Ron Hodges noted that this was not a new topic and that throughout the years there have been many discussions on the topic.

Ronda Wallace advised that she would be hosting a speaker’s series entitled “Don’t Just Send Your Child to School”. A program geared to help parents create successful individuals.

Judy Moticka spoke regarding the new discipline policy in the Kirkwood School District, noting that it has been embraced by the elementary schools but not the middle schools and high school. The issue of the lack of staff diversity was discussed.

Ronda Wallace spoke regarding experiencing problems in her neighborhood, that when moving in she and her family were not welcomed. She also mentioned being interviewed four times with the Kirkwood School District with no response from them.

Bob Boyd stated that he felt Ronda Wallace had set a new charge for the Commission. Amanda Sher stated that she would like Ronda Wallace to also be in attendance at the upcoming meeting with Michele Condon where they could discuss lack of diversity with educators. There was discussion on Commissioners possibly meeting with the Chief Human Resources Officer for the district.

At this time it was suggested that the Commissioners hold an offsite meeting in order to consider revising the focus of their Strategic Plan.

**Elections**

Elections for Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary will be held at the June meeting.

**Upcoming Meetings**

The next regular meeting of the KHRC is scheduled to be held on June 11, 2019, at 6:30 p.m., Kirkwood City Hall, Main Level Conference Room.

**Adjourn**

Motion was made by Geoff Morrison and seconded by William Winter to adjourn. All in favor, motion carried.

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Amanda Sher, Secretary