

Spokane Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes – January 6, 2022, 5:30 p.m.

Call to order

Land Acknowledgment

Public Comment: No requests to provide public comment received.

Commission Briefing Session:

A. *Roll call*

Commission Members Present: Lance Kissler, Hayley Harrison, Anwar Peace, Brennan Schreibman, Jac Archer, Abigail Baker, Alexander Knox

Quorum present.

City Staff Present: Alex Gibilisco, Jerrall Haynes,

B. *Motion to approve December 2021 minutes as revised:*

****Motion****

Vice Chair Harrison moved to approve December 2021 minutes

Commissioner Schreibman seconded

Discussion: Typo in date; will revise date.

Chair Kissler put the question to the Commission

In favor: Commissioners Peace, Schreibman, Harrison, Kissler

Opposed: None

Abstentions: Commissioners Knox, Baker

Motion carries, December 2021 meeting minutes are approved as amended

Standing Updates:

A. *Commissioner Knox introduction*

B. *Chair report and budget update*

2021 budget has yet to close. Business cards and postcards were ordered early enough to be allocated into 2021 budget cycle.

Chair Kissler advised that annual budgets do not roll over to next year. Anticipates that 2022 operational budget will likely be the same as 2021's.

Chair's regular report included an annual report as required by the SHRC bylaws. Report will be forwarded to city council and mayor's office liaison. No questions from commissioners concerning chair's report.

C. Staff report

Jerrall Haynes presented.

Advised that he previously presented re. the Office of Civil Rights, Equity, and Inclusion (OCREI) to City Council workgroup on December 6, 2021.

Advised that he is connecting with different civil rights offices across the state and country. Connected with Seattle's Office of Civil Rights and its Director Lockhart. They welcome questions and concerns from our OCREI. Also engaged with New York's Human Rights Commission for a week over holidays, which provided valuable advice. They look forward to connecting further with OCREI.

Working with civil service and human resources at the city to gain understanding of what the city requires to staff OCREI and move the process forward sooner.

Received several civil rights complaints, two of which came in today. One involves housing. The other involves the medical sector. Word seems to be getting out about OCREI.

Commissioner Archer inquired re. what advice New York Human Rights Commission had for OCREI. Mr. Haynes expounded.

Chair Kissler inquired re. whether a system is in place to track complaints coming in. Mr. Haynes responded in the affirmative and described the system.

Commissioner Schreibman inquired re. what specifically happens with complaints and raised the possibility of OCREI referring founded complaints to the city attorney's office. Mr. Haynes responded that OCREI conducts an investigation and issues an official report. He also advised that the city attorney's office already reached out to OCREI to inquire re. the referral of cases.

Commissioner Peace inquired re. staffing needs and what duties incoming OCREI staff might have. Mr. Haynes expounded. Discussed internal- and external-facing arms. Discussed issues re. funding being reallocated and duties being reassigned from other city departments. Noted OCREI has received positive reception and support within city administration. Working to bridge gaps that may exist to create best possible model.

D. 2021 Human Rights Awards Proclamation

Chair Kissler thanked Vice Chair Harrison for moving this forward.

****Motion****

Vice Chair Harrison moved to approve proclamation recognizing the 2021 Human Rights Awards winners

Commissioner Archer seconded

Discussion: none

Chair Kissler called the question

In favor: Commissioners Peace, Baker, Knox, Schreibman, Archer, Harrison

Opposed: none

Motion carries, the proclamation recognizing 2021 Human Rights Awards winners is approved

Chair Kissler inquired about next steps re. proclamation. Vice Chair Harrison advised that she will forward it to Councilmember Wilkerson, who will present it to city council for signature. Copies will then be sent to the winners.

E. Statement re. Antisemitism in Boise

Chair Kissler advised that Latah County Human Rights Taskforce reached out and asked if the SHRC would sign a letter/statement condemning antisemitism. The statement would be sent to Idaho's Governor, legislators, and newspapers.

****Motion****

Vice Chair Harrison moved to add the SHRC as a signatory to the letter statement re. antisemitism.

Commissioner Schreibman seconded

Discussion: Commissioners discussed the letter's form and substantive content.

Commissioners also discussed how to approach these kinds of requests going forward. Chair Kissler will include suggestions in the SHRC's response on what has been useful and effective for the SHRC and include an invitation to utilize the SHRC as a resource.

Chair Kissler called the question

In favor: Commissioners Baker, Knox, Schreibman, Archer, Harrison

Opposed: none

Abstained: Commissioner Peace

Motion carries, the SRHC will sign the Latah County Human Rights Taskforce's letter statement condemning antisemitism.

F. Guest Speaker at St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Chair Kissler advised that Pastor Lori Cornell at St. Mark's Lutheran Church reached out and is interested in having a commissioner speak at a forum at their church in February. The topic will be "Pressing Human Rights Issues in Spokane." It will also address the progress of human rights in Spokane over the last 75 years.

Commissioners Schreiber and Knox volunteered. Chair Kissler will connect Pastor Cornell with Commissioners Schreiber and Knox. Vice Chair Harrison has SHRC pamphlets and brochures to provide for the event.

G. 2022 Workplan and Focus Areas

Chair Kissler advised that the SHRC needs to start on its 2022 workplan, looking to year ahead, and planning what the SHRC can accomplish this year. May want to distinguish between “bites-out-of-the-elephant” issues vs. pressing, immediate-impact issues. Potential ideas: police reform, housing, mental health, & language access barriers.

Commissioner Baker is interested in working on mental health issues.

Vice Chair Harrison recommended adding hate reporting.

Commissioners discussed that housing should be prioritized. Commissioner Archer raised possibility of the SHRC issuing statements supporting specific policy demands by stakeholders, *e.g.*, that the facilities for basic hygiene and sanitization must be provided.

Commissioner Peace is interested in continuing to work on police reform. Beginning talks with Gonzaga on collaborating. Legislature reconvenes on January 10 and will be considering three police reform bills. Commissioner Peace will be testifying before the legislature’s Public Safety Committee on January 11 regarding previously-passed police reform bills (in his separate capacity as a member of Washington Coalition for Police Accountability). Commissioner Archer is also interested in working on this issue.

H. Executive Committee Responsibilities

Background: Bylaws create 3 committees: executive, civic impact, and outreach/education. Chair Kissler asked commissioners to think about which committee(s) they would like to join. Noted that each committee could have subcommittees focusing on specific policy issues. Also noted that each committee must stay under a quorum. Hopefully by the February 2022 meeting the SHRC will have 1-2 more commissioners and can make assignments and elect committee leads.

The SHRC created the executive committee last year. It was agreed that it: (1) would be composed of the SHRC’s three elected officers, (2) meet with Mr. Haynes monthly to discuss the agenda for the next meeting, and (3) have a monthly check-in with the Mayor’s Office and community liaisons re. the OCREI.

However, the SHRC did not define the executive committee’s responsibilities. Chair Kissler would like to discuss what the executive committee could do to keep the SHRC’s work moving between meetings, *i.e.*, what could the SHRC empower the committee to do.

Commissioner Schreiber noted that delegating any actual authority to the executive committee to act or make decisions on behalf of the SHRC would subject the executive committee to the

OPMA. It could, however, brainstorm and bring forth recommendations to the full SHRC on proposed bylaw changes, onboarding processes for new commissioners, etc.

Commissioner Archer would like the SHRC to take a more “bull-by-the-horns” approach to city government and raised the possibility that the executive committee could be part of that.

Vice Chair Harrison suggested that the executive committee could approve small expenditures and issue statements on behalf of the SHRC. Commissioner Schreiber noted that under the OPMA, issuing statements on behalf of the full SHRC can be delegated to one individual, but not a subcommittee.

Commissioner Peace suggested that the executive committee could address concerns re. individual commissioners not meeting expectations (e.g., commissioners not attending meetings, disengaging, etc.) and discuss potential actions to present to the full SHRC. Chair Kissler agreed that it would be good to have a formal process in place for addressing these types of concerns.

Chair Kissler noted that once the SHRC determines the executive committee’s responsibilities, it should amend its bylaws to reflect those responsibilities.

I. Feedback to Washington State Department of Transportation

WSDOT reached out seeking feedback re. work it’s doing. Commissioners will provide said feedback.

Adjournment:

Chair Kissler adjourned the meeting at 7:13 p.m.