

Spokane Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes – April 7, 2022, 5:30 p.m.

Call to order at 5:33 p.m.

Land Acknowledgment

Public Comment: No public comment was requested.

Commission Briefing Session:

A. *Roll call*

Commission Members Present: Lance Kissler, Hayley Harrison, Olivia Arballo-Saenz, Anwar Peace, Alex Knox, Brennan Schreibman, Jac Archer

Quorum present.

City Staff Present: Jerrall Haynes

B. *Motion to approve March 2022 minutes:*

****Motion****

Commissioner Archer moved to approve the March 2022 minutes.

Commissioner Peace seconded

Discussion: None

In favor: Commissioners Harrison, Arballo-Saenz, Peace, Schreibman, Archer

Opposed: None

Abstentions: Commissioner Knox

Motion carries; the March 2022 meeting minutes are approved.

Standing Updates:

A. *Chair's Report*

Chair Kissler had two updates in addition to those included in his written Chair's Report. First, he advised that he was contacted by a reporter from KXLY to provide comment on the Monaghan statue issue. They chatted for a few minutes and he put her in touch with a few community representatives. Second, Chair Kissler noted that the Executive Committee is meeting tomorrow afternoon with a small stakeholder group to discuss the job description for the director of the Office of Civil Rights, Equity, and Inclusion (OCREI).

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B. National Public Health Week Proclamation

Chair Kissler directed the Commission's attention to the proposed National Public Health Week Proclamation in the meeting packet.

****Motion****

Commissioner Archer moved to approve the National Public Health Week Proclamation.

Vice Chair Harrison seconded

Discussion: None

In favor: Commissioners Harrison, Arballo-Saenz, Peace, Knox, Schreibman, Archer

Opposed: None

Abstentions: None

Motion carries; the National Public Health Week Proclamation is approved.

C. Volunteers of America Presentation

Rae-Lynn Barden presented on Volunteers of America's work in the Spokane community. Ms. Barden described VoA's 126-year history and their current work operating the Crosswalk Youth Shelter, Hope House Women's Shelter, and the Young Adult Shelter. In addition, VoA leases 240 apartments to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and also has various programs serving veterans, pregnant and parenting teens, and foster youth. Ms. Barden described VoA's funding sources and ongoing fundraising efforts. She noted, however, that VoA is currently seeking City funding for both Hope House and the Young Adult Shelter, and asked if the Commission might be willing to write a letter supporting VoA's efforts to obtain that finding.

Commissioner Archer inquired about the decision-making process regarding the location for the new Crosswalk Youth Shelter. Ms. Barden responded that VoA consulted with the youth population VoA serves and sought their input about where they wanted the shelter to be located. The youth led the conversation. The new location was also ideal because it is close to Spokane Transit Authority service stops and Spokane Community College.

Commissioner Peace inquired about what funding VoA is seeking from the City. Ms. Barden responded that VoA is seeking ~ \$1,000,000 from the City specifically, but also needs ~ \$500,000 to complete renovations to the Young Adult Shelter.

Ms. Barden invited commissioners to participate in a walking tour of VoA's facilities.

Commissioner Archer inquired about the timing of VoA's funding request. Ms. Barden responded that these funds had been part of a prior grant award but have not yet been dispersed.

Commissioner Archer inquired regarding VoA's role in addressing the housing crisis. Ms. Barden responded that part of this was building the new Hope House, which doubled the beds available, and another part was VoA accepting the grant to run the Young Adult Shelter. She further noted that the housing crisis is an additional reason why VoA is seeking this funding from the City.

Chair Kissler inquired what VoA's plans are for the current Crosswalk space once the move happens. Ms. Barden responded that VoA owns the building and plans to sell it, with the money going to the new build.

Commissioner Knox inquired if VoA partners with outside organizations to assist the youth in applying for various services, such as healthcare and transportation. Ms. Barden responded that VoA caseworkers handle all of that. In addition to healthcare and transportation, she emphasized VoA's GED program.

D. Committee Reports

1. Executive Committee Report

Chair Kissler advised that the Executive Committee met several weeks ago and will be meeting again tomorrow to strategize and outline a process for the Commission to address issues surrounding historical landmarks.

Chair Kissler also suggested that the Commission consider a first-read/second-read approach for resolutions and other action items. This approach would give commissioners the opportunity to conduct due diligence, do community outreach, and fully inform themselves before voting on a given issue. The Commission bylaws would need to be amended to reflect such a process.

Commissioner Arballo-Saenz asked if the aforementioned first-read/second-read process would apply retroactively; e.g., to the Commission's November 2021 resolution regarding the Monaghan statue. Chair Kissler advised the new process would likely not apply to past resolutions but outlined how it would apply to issues with historical landmarks going forward.

Commissioner Schreiberman emphasized the importance of the Commission engaging with the City's Legal Department when making recommendations to City Council about historical landmarks going forward, especially when the landmark is an artistic work. He noted that the Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 creates many issues that apply to works of art, and that getting City Legal's perspective would save a lot of headaches down the road.

Commissioner Archer inquired if the Executive Committee would consider how the Commission could develop its relationship with City Council to better provide advice. For example, getting regular briefings from Council so that the Commission can be in the best position to effectively fulfill its mandate. Chair Kissler agreed, noting that the Commission's City Council Liaison and the future OCREI staff will be the primary avenues for cultivating the Commission and Council's relationship.

Commissioner Archer sought clarification re. the specific next steps for the Monaghan statue. Chair Kissler responded that the first step will be hearing presentations from community stakeholders and the next step will be developing a tentative framework for addressing issues with historical landmarks generally.

Commissioner Peace stated it was his personal preference that the Executive Committee take the lead on specific actions regarding the statue itself and that the Civic Impact Committee focus on developing a plan for how the Commission will address similar issues regarding historical landmarks going forward. Chair Kissler inquired whether it would be helpful for the Executive Committee to put together a briefing paper incorporating what the Commission has learned throughout the process. Commissioners Arballo-Saenz and Peace stated that would be useful and Chair Kissler agreed to do so.

2. Civic Impact Committee Report

Commissioner Peace shared that the Civic Impact Committee met on April 3, 2022 and provided a review of the topics discussed during that meeting.

Commissioner Peace provided an update on the courageous conversation series for reimagining public safety in our community. He shared that Spokane Community Against Racism had agreed to partner with the Commission on this project and a planning document is currently being drafted. Commissioner Peace hopes to share that document with the Commission for review and input soon. Commissioner Peace has had initial conversations with the Carl Maxey Center regarding hosting the series but has not yet received specific information regarding pricing.

Commissioner Peace shared that he attended the Spokane Citizen's Advisory Council's April 5, 2022 presentation at Gonzaga University, along with Chair Kissler and Commissioner Schreibman. He found the presentation informative and inquired whether the Commission would be interested in arranging for the group to give another presentation to the Commission in light of the new commissioners who have not yet seen the presentation and the additional information that had been discussed since the group last presented to the Commission. Commissioner Archer was in favor of arranging for another presentation from the Citizen's Advisory Council to the Commission.

Commissioner Peace also shared that the U.S. Department of Interior is currently taking comment regarding an initiative to rename national landmarks across the United States that contain words that are derogatory or demeaning. Commissioner Peace thought this process would be of interest to the Commission in light of the issues surrounding the Monaghan statue.

Commissioner Peace further shared that he attended a stakeholder meeting hosted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Washington's Racism Taskforce. Other stakeholders in attendance included Judge Gloria Ochoa-Bruck and members of the Spokane County Bar Association. The taskforce discussed and requested input from stakeholders as to whether any recipients of federal funds have applied those funds in a way that creates disparate impacts on individuals of protected classes in violation of Title VI. The taskforce also discussed the Department of Justice's Unite Against Hate presentations with a focus on spreading awareness as to how to report hate crimes and hate instances. The Department of Justice is working with the Spokane County Human Rights Taskforce to incorporate its hate crimes reporting tool.

The Civic Impact Committee discussed the possibility of arranging for the Commission to attend a shoot/don't shoot simulation with Police Ombudsman Bart Logue. Commissioner Peace inquired as to whether there would be interest from the Commission in pursuing this. Chair Kissler stated that he was in favor of arranging for the Commission to attend a shoot/don't shoot simulation and also suggested that the Commission or individual commissioners attend a ride-along if that option is also available. Chair Kissler noted that partnering with the Police Ombudsman may be a more long-term goal due to the Commission's time and staffing constraints.

Commissioner Archer inquired about the status of City Council's 24-point proposal developed during roundtables, which have stalled. Chair Kissler stated that he would reach out to the City Council Liaison and requested that Commissioner Peace provide him with any details to help facilitate that discussion. Commissioner Peace agreed to provide that information to Chair Kissler.

Commissioner Peace had planned to meet with Councilmember Jonathan Bingle to discuss the City's response to homelessness issues. That meeting was postponed and will be rescheduled.

Commissioner Peace inquired whether the Commission would be interested in authoring op-eds to speak on topics of importance to the Commission. Chair Kissler recommended that the Outreach Committee address the process for drafting op-eds. Chair Kissler also stated that the Commission can author op-eds as long as the drafting process complies with the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). Chair Kissler reiterated Commissioner Schreibman's prior admonition that "Hub-Spoke" meetings violate the OPMA. Chair Kissler reminded the commissioners that they can write op-eds individually, but cannot write on behalf of the full Commission and any statement by the full Commission must go through the OPMA process.

****Motion****

Commissioner Peace moved to refer the issue of devising a process for drafting op-eds on behalf of the full Commission to the Outreach Committee, which shall then report its findings to the full Commission.

Commissioner Archer seconded

Discussion: None

In favor: Commissioners Harrison, Arballo-Saenz, Peace, Knox, Schreibman, Archer

Opposed: None

Abstentions: None

Motion carries; the issue of devising a process for drafting op-eds on behalf of the full Commission is referred to the Outreach Committee, which shall then report its findings to the full Commission.

3. Outreach Committee Report

Commissioner Schreibman provided an update on the Outreach Committee's ongoing work. He stated that he visited Mead High School in late March and presented to each senior Citizenship class, which is a course all Mead seniors are required to take. The school originally hoped to combine all Citizenship classes into one large assembly so he would only have to present once,

but that did not work out and he ended up having to present to each class period separately. The presentation focused on the evolution of human rights issues and was entitled, “Bending Toward Justice: An Overview of Historic and Contemporary Human Rights Issues in Washington.”

Commissioner Schreibman reported that the students were very engaged and were particularly receptive to the Will Smith/Oscars references contained within the presentation. He further reported that many of the students expressed interest in the Commission’s work, wanted to know how they could get involved, and were also interested in interning for the Commission or serving as the youth commissioner. Finally, Commissioner Schreibman stated that he promoted the Title 18 complaint form, the OCREI, and the County Human Rights Taskforce’s hate reporting tool to each class period.

Next, Commissioner Schreibman invited commissioners to consider joining the committee organizing the 2022 Spokane Human Rights Champion Awards, which will occur in November 2022. The committee currently meets every other week, but the meetings will start occurring weekly as the event gets closer.

With respect to outreach efforts, the committee contacted the Spokane chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Spokane Treatment and Recovery Services, and the Spokane County Behavioral Health Advisory Board (which shares a director with the Spokane County Department of Community Services, Housing, and Community Development). Commissioner Knox spearheaded the conversations with the County entities because of his experience serving on County boards.

Finally, with respect to upcoming outreach events, April 18 – 22 is Eastern Washington University’s celebration of Diversity & Inclusion Week. EWU invited the Commission to participate in a guest lecture presentation on April 21 at the Catalyst Building downtown. EWU also invited the Commission to participate in its Diversity Festival on the Cheney campus that same day from 10:00 – 3:00. Commissioner Schreibman implored commissioners to volunteer to cover a tabling shift for that event. Chair Kissler volunteered to assist with both the lecture and tabling for the festival.

****Motion****

Commissioner Archer moved to invite Commissioner Schreibman to give his presentation—“Bending Toward Justice: An Overview of Historic and Contemporary Human Rights Issues in Washington”—at a future Commission meeting.

Vice Chair Harrison seconded

Discussion: None

In favor: Commissioners Harrison, Arballo-Saenz, Peace, Knox, Archer

Opposed: None

Abstentions: Commissioner Schreibman

Motion carries; Commissioner Schreibman is invited to give his presentation—“Bending Toward Justice: An Overview of Historic and Contemporary Human Rights Issues in Washington”—at a future Commission meeting.

Chair Kissler noted several additional upcoming events for commissioners to keep on the radar: e.g., Unity in the Community (August) and various summits (affordable housing, etc.). Chair Kissler and Vice Chair Harrison discussed the logistics of procuring a booth at the 2022 Spokane Pride Festival.

Adjournment:

Chair Kissler thanked the commissioners for their time and the committees for moving the Commission's work along between meetings. He noted that the May 2022 meeting will be in person at City Hall. Meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.