

MINUTES	Thursday, May 14, 2020 at 12:00 p.m.	 CITY OF SIOUX FALLS
Human Relations Commission Meeting	No Physical Meeting Teleconference Only 605-367-8898 Ext 8898 Code 955-7239	

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Alex Ramirez, Karen Gourley, Kassidi Smith, Justine Schoolmeester, Anny Libengood, Megan Myers, Sarah Bouwman, Bill Wood, Megan Grode Wolters

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Melinda Obach

STAFF PRESENT: Daniel Hagggar, Beth Jost

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 12:06 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Wood and seconded by Bouwman to approve the minutes from the January 2020 meeting. Motion passed.

BUSINESS OR PENDING ISSUES BROUGHT BEFORE THE BOARD

Officer Elections: Alex Ramirez was nominated for Chair, Sarah Bouwman was nominated for Vice Chair, and Justine Schoolmeester was nominated for Secretary. All three were unanimously elected.

Poverty Simulation: Libengood discussed the poverty simulation that will take place at the South Dakota Multi-Housing Conference on the afternoon of Friday, October 16, 2020. The Multi-Housing Conference is a two day conference, beginning on Thursday, October 15, 2020. The Commissioners discussed that they would like to have a representative from the HRC office or board at the poverty simulation. Ramirez and Myers volunteered to attend. Hagggar said the HRC office has materials that can be handed out, and more materials can be printed if needed. Libengood will send the event information to Ramirez and Myers.

Commission Initiated Complaint Follow Up – The commission continued discussion on the process of commission initiated complaints in situations where the commission is aware of possible discrimination, but the individual experiencing the discrimination may be afraid and unwilling to file a complaint. Hagggar reviewed the ordinance and state law regarding the issue and concluded that a

complainant is needed to file a complaint. Libengood wondered if in a situation where a commissioner is made aware of possible discrimination, our office could investigate in order to find a willing complainant. Haggar said he believes the office could do that, but we would need to figure out a process for that. Myers offered that the education piece is what the commission should be focusing on in order to prevent discrimination in the first place and educating people about discrimination is how we get complainants. Ramirez brought up the possibility of putting together some educational materials and training for landlords and creating a program with a certificate or reward for completion. Libengood suggested that the commission partner with other organizations and volunteered to speak with Kelli from Sioux Empire Housing Partnership and Denise from South Dakota Multi-Housing Association and ask them to join us at our next meeting. The Commission agreed that this topic will be added to the next agenda as an ongoing discussion of educational materials and partnerships.

Potential Education Material Distribution and Partnerships – Libengood discussed whether the commission could send out a notice or letter to landlords when certain conditions are met, such as two or more complaints against the same landlord, and then follow up with notification to the South Dakota Multi-Housing Association. However, because some places are large complexes, they are going to have more complaints than others, which could create an issue. The commission decided that sending educational materials in a broader sense would be a better option. The commission will work on a process for that to happen. Ramirez wanted to know if the commissioners have the ability to contact places when they have been made aware of possible discrimination. Commissioners are able to do that as concerned citizens, but should be careful about representing that they are acting on behalf of the commission in situations where there has not been a formal complaint. Ramirez would like the commission to work on some educational materials that could be distributed. The commission could work with Kelli from Sioux Empire Housing Partnership and Denise of the South Dakota Multi-Housing Association on materials to send to landlords in Sioux Falls. Haggar will find out if some of those educational materials already exist. The cost could potentially be split with Sioux Falls Housing. We will continue the conversation at the next meeting to develop how we identify people that should receive the training materials. There will be an attempt to gather some of those educational materials before the next meeting.

Housing Legal Aid Group Update – The City Attorney’s Office is working to get a Housing Legal Aid Group together. The HRC office is trying to hire an intern to help with the Housing Legal Aid Group. The HRC office has people contacting the office saying they are facing eviction, so we have people who could possibly be referred to that group. Efforts to get the Housing Legal Aid Group started have been reduced because of COVID, but not cancelled. The plan is to move forward with those efforts. East River Legal Services is looking at doing something similar.

Introduction of New Human Relations Specialist - Beth Jost has been hired as new Human Relations Specialist. Haggar introduced her to the group.

PUBLIC INPUT

No public was present for public input.

NEXT MEETING

June 11, 2020

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Wood and seconded by Bouwman to adjourn the meeting.
Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Jost
Human Relations Specialist