



MINUTES
HUTCHINSON HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Wednesday, August 15, 2018 – Council Conference Room

1. **Call to Order** – Present: Joe Allen, David Dove, Jerome Kahn (Chair), Olivia Martinez, Kalene Nisly, Natasha Russell-Iverson. Meryl Dye (Staff Liaison) was also present. Absent: Carrie Myer, Mike Sullivan and Sue Wray (V. Chair).
2. **Oral Communications by Audience** – Mayor Steve Dechant, Vice Mayor David Inskeep and City Manager John Deardoff were in attendance.
3. **Approval of Minutes** –Dove made a motion to approve the minutes of July 18, 2018. Nisly seconded the motion and motion passed.
4. **Reports**
 - A. Attendance Record - Dye said HHRC attendance complies with the attendance rule.
 - B. Informal Complaint Report – Kahn shared the Informal Complaint Report that noted there was one (1) complaint/inquiry in the month of July from a woman requesting a complaint form for the Kansas Human Rights Commission to make a race discrimination in employment complaint for her husband who is in prison.
5. **Unfinished Business** –
 - A. Discussion of HHRC Role/Activities – John Deardoff began the discussion saying Dye will retire in September which will give cause to review what the Human Relations Commission will do going forward. He said if we are not going to follow the ordinance to investigate cases, then we need to make changes to the ordinance. He suggested looking at models in other cities. He said we would continue to refer people to the Kansas Human Rights Commission and suggested the HHRC continue to do outreach.

Joe Allen said the HHRC needs to have a defined purpose that everybody recognizes. Dove agreed and said the outreach is part of the purpose, but there are a lot of people who have no idea about the Commission. He said the Community Conversation series provided outreach and visibility.

Jerome Kahn said the HHRC needs to continue to have presence that shows Hutchinson is a community of diversity and inclusion, and that businesses looking to come to Hutchinson will want to see a progressive environment. He said we aren't following the ordinance now, so it may need some adjustment. He said the HHRC also needs to have a budget for outreach/education activities. He believes that we currently have a Commission that really wants to do something for the community.

David Inskeep wondered why people are not coming forward to make complaints. Dove suggested people are aware there is no staff to investigate complaints and that they will just be referred to the state. Nisly believes the small number of informal complaints is not reflective of the level of the problem in the community. Iverson said people go to the local NAACP for mediation assistance or referral to the state agency.

Iverson said the City needs to make a level of commitment toward Human Relations and provide resources that support those values. She said this needs to be conscientious decision, and not just let things slide to the wayside by default.

Inskeep asked if the board relations within the group have improved. Iverson said there is some improvement, but we need some kind of qualification to serve on the board so that members are truly committed to supporting civil and human rights. Members should be representative and open to the inclusiveness of all people. She said this hasn't always been the case and it has led to divisiveness among board members.

Inskeep asked what a human relations staff person would do. Dye provided materials with the number of informal complaints since 2001, the number of formal cases handled when we had staff, and a listing of outreach/education activities over the years. She shared statistics on the number of formal charges from Hutchinson handled by the state for the last 3 years. She also provided materials on human relations commissions across the state and described how they are staffed.

Dove said that if we are looking at changing the ordinance, we should look at redefining the scope. We need to have staff support and a level of expertise available to us to do our work. He also suggested considering quarterly meetings rather than monthly.

Iverson said if there is a long, agonizing number of months trying to figure out what to do, this group will become frustrated. She would like to continue with Community Conversations because community feedback is showing there is a need to dig into these issues.

Steve Dechant believes the HHRC should continue with outreach and education. He is certain the City Council and City Manager will continue to support these efforts. But if we are not going to follow the ordinance, then we need to change it. He said we will begin looking at models in other cities and talk with people. He said we would come back to this discussion with some ideas. Iverson and Kahn stressed the importance of keeping the HHRC in the conversation about how to move forward. Dechant said of course this will happen.

There was no other business.

6. **Adjournment** – Dove made a motion to adjourn. Nisly seconded the motion that passed.

Minutes prepared by Meryl Dye, Staff Liaison.

Next Meeting: September 19, 2018 at 4:00 p.m. – Council Conference Room