

HUTCHINSON
Human Relations
COMMISSION

MINUTES
HUTCHINSON HUMAN RELATIONS
COMMISSION
Wednesday, April 21,
2021

1) Call to Order

- a. Present: All Members

2) Oral Communications by Audience

- a. Ms. Teresa Delgado, a Hutchinson Resident, informed the Hutchinson Human Relations Commission (HHRC) that recent artwork in the proposal for Hutchinson Police Department memorial is tone-deaf. She asked commissioners to address community concerns about moving forward with the proposed statue of officer kneeling. This artwork was part of a presentation by Chief of Police Jeff Hooper at the April 20, 2021 City Council meeting. In the sketch drawn by the artist, a police officer kneeling is portrayed. The image is upsetting to citizens. Commissioners learned this through word of mouth and social media.

Charles Johnston, a member of the Art Council, informed the council that the image in the Council's meeting was part of a request for proposal and not the final rendering of the artwork. He said that the commission had heard loud and clear the community's concerns.

Chair Natasha Russell-Iverson asked the Human Relations Officer (HRO), Dave Sotelo, if the conversation about the statue could be moved to the beginning of the meeting, to help address community concerns. Mr. Sotelo agreed. HRO Sotelo informed the commission that he had spoken with Chief of Police, Jeff Hooper about the ongoing concerns. Mr. Sotelo said that the chief wanted the HHRC to know that a design not been decided for the statue and that the art council and the chief were far from making a final decision on the artwork. Mr. Hooper hoped the artwork was welcoming to everyone in the community and honored fallen officers. Mr. Sotelo informed the commission that Chief Jeff Hooper asked Mr. Sotelo to be a part of a committee to select and approve the final artwork to ensure it was welcoming and sensitive to all community members.

Chairperson Russell-Iverson asked Charles Johnston to inform the commission of the process of choosing public art. The Art Council helps with the process. Rebekah Starkey Keasling informs the commission that they have voted to approve the artist but not the artwork. Russell-Iverson asked the Commission to table the letter Commissioner Armstrong had drafted. Armstrong still wanted to release a toned-down letter to address community concerns and welcoming HRO Sotelo joining Chief Hooper's committee.

Discussion on whether to release a public statement drafted by Commissioner Armstrong. Commissioner Armstrong expressed that she wanted a public commitment that the final artwork would not be a kneeling officer. Commissioner Cowser makes a motion for Commissioner Armstrong to draft a statement. Russell-Iverson seconds. Passes unanimously.

3) Approval of Minutes

- a. Motion by Russell-Iverson to approve March Meeting Minutes, Commissioner Frischenmeyer seconds. Passes unanimously.

4) New Business

- a. Meet applicants for the Hutchinson Human Relations Commission
 - i. Gleysha Mendez-Rosario is recommended for appointment to the Commission. She is a senior branch manager at Heartland Credit Union. She is a member of the Hutchinson Chamber of Commerce and Young Professionals of Reno County. She is bilingual and strives to help Spanish speakers with their finances.
 - ii. Charles Johnston is recommended to the Commission. Charles is self-employed. He is an active member of the Hutchinson Community serving in Public Art Design Council, Mark Hutch, Visit Hutch Advisory Board, Hutchinson Symphony Association and Hutchinson Municipal Band. Mr. Johnston wanted to meet with commissioners before applying to the commission. Commissioners encouraged Mr. Johnston to apply.
- b. Chairperson Russell-Iverson asked HRO Sotelo about elections of new officers at the May meeting. Sotelo informed commissioners that once new members were appointed, the commission would appoint new officers.

5) HRO Report

- a. HRO Sotelo express his gratitude for the work of the commissioners for addressing community concerns around the art proposal for the Law Enforcement Center.
- b. Vaccination Efforts
 - i. HRO Sotelo shared vaccine updates. The Health Department has improved its efforts in vaccine equity. He is working closely in ensuring vaccine equity.

6) Communications and Comments

- a. Commissioner Armstrong shared Bishop Michael Curry's message he shared during compline after the verdict of Derek Chauvin.
- b. Chairperson Russell-Iverson informed commissioners that COVID-19 Community conversations efforts were still ongoing with a slow process.
- c. Commissioner Armstrong asked the HRO to consider developing a calendar to celebrate different groups in the community.
- d. Chairperson Russell-Iverson continued to encourage HRO Sotelo to reach out to the Justice Department's Office of Community Engagement.

7) Adjournment

- a. Russell-Iverson makes a motion to adjourn. Grissom seconds.
Passes unanimously.

Minutes prepared by David Sotelo, Human Relations Officer

**Next Meeting: May 19, 2021, at 4:00
p.m.**