

## **CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

Cedar Falls Council Chambers

February 15, 2021

The City Council held a special work session at City Hall at 5:10 p.m. on February 15, 2021, with the following persons in attendance: Mayor Robert M. Green, Frank Darrah, Susan deBuhr, Kelly Dunn, Simon Harding, Daryl Kruse, Mark Miller, and Dave Sires. Staff members attended from all City Departments. Members of the Human Rights Commission and members of the community teleconferenced in.

Mayor Green introduced the only item on the agenda, Joint Work Session with Human Rights Commission to discuss future roles, responsibilities, and City Council expectations for the Human Rights Commission (HRC).

Mayor Green introduced the Chair, Willie Barney, Jr., and Vice Chair, Susan Langan, of the Human Rights Commission.

Mayor Green referenced the memo in the packet, Creation of Steering Task Force for the Cedar Falls Human Rights Commission.

Mayor Green introduced the first topic of discussion, Purpose.

Mayor Green opened the floor.

Councilmember Darrah would like to see what are the HRC roles, their functions within the community, have a clearer understanding of the Council's expectations, and what the city needs to do. Council needs to be supportive and engaged with the HRC.

HRC Chair Barney discussed how the city has an opportunity to evaluate its role in addressing equity and injustice. He also discussed the HRC becoming a secondary role in the work, since they are supporting the community in that bigger work. We need to figure out the work of the City of Cedar Falls to determine the next steps going forward. The HRC, Housing Commission, and Public Safety Department are all reflective of the work that the governance defines for the whole City of Cedar Falls. The HRC is one entity that will have some work once the City defines what is necessary for its move forward.

Mayor Green stated since the groups that were mentioned are City entities it could be expanded.

Councilmember Harding suggested providing direction to the City and including all Boards and Commissions and City Council, so it's not limited to the HRC.

Councilmember Dunn would like to see education and discussion, collaboration with Waterloo, show our history of this town, admit there was wrong in the past and listen to our HRC members. We need to focus on being inclusive, welcoming and how do we fix the black unemployment rate.

HR Commissioner Melissa Heston asked if the Council is on board with the issues of equity, social justice, economic justice, and inclusion. To do this well, people are going to feel uncomfortable and your constituents might get uncomfortable. Race is a very difficult issue in this country to talk about and there could be repercussions and unhappiness from Cedar Falls citizens if the commission becomes [more] active, present, and visible than it has been in the past 30 years.

Mayor Green stated approval was unanimous from City Council to have this joint Work Session with the Human Rights Commission.

Councilmember Miller stated this can't bind future Councils to set course, but the steps we are taking can solidify a direction. He agrees with Councilmember Dunn that the history of Cedar Falls is going to lend information on how we got here and offer guidance on moving forward.

Councilmember Harding wants to support the HRC (Human Rights Commission) and the goal towards equity in Cedar Falls for all races and religions. He hopes an end report from the Task Force will direct Council, City staff, HRC, and other Commissions on the actions that need to be taken.

Mayor Green asked HRC if there were any concerns or objections to having this be a Task Force which provides direction to the City government rather than just the HRC. HR Vice Chair Susan Langan agrees this is bigger than just the HRC. Mayor Green stated we have a consensus and will move forward.

HR Commissioner David Kivett stated it would help if the City was intentional about recognizing the reality of racism in particular in our community and we want to address that openly and honestly, but also discuss all forms of discrimination. Waterloo and Cedar Falls mayors should join together and do a letter in support of the 1619 project as a supplement to our education.

Mayor Green introduced/discussed slide, Task Force Charge.

HR Chair Barney commented many times when you look at the reports that identify the State of Iowa as one of the worst states in the country, they are looking at unemployment rates, incarceration, graduation rates and universities [to] help move that category. We need to make sure we are looking at all the listed factors and over-representation or under-representation.

Mayor Green introduced/discussed slide, Deliverables, Initial Membership and Full Membership.

Councilmember Dunn asked if there is a preference that you need to work or live in Cedar Falls and Mayor Green confirmed that is the preference.

HR Commissioner Teri Lynn Jorgensen recommended if your children go to Cedar Falls schools, but if you work and your home address is in Waterloo, you should be considered. Mayor Green agreed children in Cedar Falls schools can be one of the considerations of the Task Force to decide.

Mayor Green introduced/discussed slide, Staff Liaisons, Budget, Schedule, Public Participation, and Open Meetings/Open Records.

Councilmember Darrah asked about what the role for City staff would be. City Administrator Gaines stated they would act as liaisons, provide data, legal advice, and reports. Councilmember Darrah asked if someone would be keeping minutes and City Administrator Gaines confirmed someone will be keeping minutes. Director Rodenbeck stated staff will do the minutes, post agendas and the Communication Specialist can distribute any communication from the task force.

Mayor Green discussed completion of the Task Force deadline due to current Council election rotation. Councilmember Harding stated December 10<sup>th</sup> would be too late to take any action with the current council. Mayor Green stated the report will have detailed information and possibly sub-reports and the sub-reports can be approved/recommended prior to the final report. Councilmember Miller stated the report should be available for goal setting in September, but the Task Force can continue if needed. Councilmember Harding agrees with Miller that a report should be provided in September and asked if goal setting will remain in November due to the election. City Administrator Gaines confirmed goal setting will be in November, but will wait until after the first election and then invite all candidates to participate in goal setting. Councilmember Harding suggested October 1, but the date will remain flexible. Mayor Green agreed to change date to October 1 and an extension can be requested.

Councilmember Miller asked the HRC if they are satisfied with having the investigations portion removed from their tasks and is everyone satisfied with the direction the HRC is headed. HR Vice Chair Susan Langan stated they would like to get training to help provide assistance to those citizens that are filing claims. HR Commissioner Teri Lynn Jorgensen stated her concern is the lack of training and wants to make sure she is asking the correct questions and following the correct procedures to make sure we are serving our citizens to the best of our ability. HR Vice Chair Susan Langan stated that when they did some research on investigations, they discovered that Cedar Falls was the only volunteer-run Commission doing investigations and it does take lots of training. She stated they are assisting a citizen at this time with the initial investigations paperwork and more training on that would be helpful. Also, getting the word out the HRC is here to assist citizens with completing that paperwork. HR Commissioner Melissa Heston believes training is essential.

Councilmember Harding stated that he's under the understanding the Commission has not only stepped into an education, outreach, and advocacy group but a supportive role of helping file the claims with the ICRC (Iowa Civil Rights Commission). Does the HRC need a higher budget or training to support and help people file claims? HR Chair Barney confirmed in the past, if they received an investigation case, that case could deplete the budget quickly; but if you're doing education and sponsoring events that budget is acceptable for the HRC. HR Commissioner Spencer Luvert confirmed that even though they've had a \$1,500 budget it hasn't been a hindrance in getting their job done and they've always been granted extra money if needed. HR Vice Chair Susan Langan stated the ICRC does provide training for free. HR Commissioner David Kivett stated there is an unsettled survey with community businesses and he would like to

resolve this hindrance. Mayor Green stated he assisted with getting the final draft of that survey last year during the strategic planning session and some of the members of the HRC members were here for that and it was sent back to the Commission with Mayor's approval, and he was looking for the commission to move forward with the survey. Mayor Green stated the Commission has the authority to issue that survey; it's not up to the Council or Mayor to give a final approval, and that's the whole idea of autonomy, and how can the staff liaison support you in getting that out. Mayor does not expect to see that survey again and he expects the survey to be issued. Mayor Green stated the survey was a directive prior, and he doesn't want this to be addressed during the Task Force meetings; it should be addressed by the HRC. Director Rodenbeck stated this will be a nice fresh start to do a lot of things and see how everyone does in their new roles. We have talked about a budget and at this time we are just going to try things for a while and see how they go and then re-adjust if needed. HRC will be meeting twice a month for the next 2-3 months and Director Rodenbeck gives them kudos for volunteering their time with the HRC. Councilmember Harding welcomed the HRC to speak at Council Meetings during the special presentation portion.

Councilmember Miller thanked the HRC for serving and asked if citizens have a fair shot with the process we have in place. HR Chair Barney stated there's a couple things that need to be put in place: the process of filing a complaint; who's the point of contact; review the literature; and what's in writing and how do people gain access to it. Mr. Barney stated if we are going to be involved, what does it look like, how do we support it, where do we need the training in order to support it, and sit side by side with an applicant and helping them go through the process of filing that complaint. We need to make sure there are no obstacles in filing that complaint and seeing it through, or refer the applicant to some else. HR Chair Barney stated this is a great starting point for us to look at what documents are there and making sure the contacts, phone numbers, etc. are included.

Mayor Green would like to set up another time for a joint HRC session in the near future.

HR Chair Barney will provide Mayor Green with two HR Commissioners names of who will be serving on the Task Force by Tuesday, February 23, 2021.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Green adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.

Minutes by Kim Kerr, Administrative Supervisor