

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Cedar Falls Council Chambers

September 8, 2020

The City Council held a special work session at City Hall via teleconference at 6:00 p.m. on September 8, 2020, 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. Amie Rivers from the *Waterloo Courier*, as well as members of the community teleconferenced in.

Mayor Green introduced the only item on the agenda, Role of Human Rights Commission. Director Jennifer Rodenbeck presented a PowerPoint on the Role of Human Rights Commission.

Director Rodenbeck explained that depending on the case we either keep it in house or send to the state for investigation (Iowa Civil Rights Commission). The benefits of sending investigations to the state are its cost effective, state doesn't charge, trained professionals, a better perspective and doesn't put the city in a conflict of interest situation.

Mayor Green opened it up for discussion. Mayor Green stated HRC (Human Rights Commission) members want to be in the investigation role, but want the city to give them training/certification. We need to discuss the pros and cons on having an investigatory role or having the HRC focus on education, outreach and advocacy. Councilmember Darrah asked what are some examples of outreach and what kind of further education. If we are not doing investigations, what are the tasks? Mayor Green stated the HRC has done a study with Cedar Falls businesses to put together a survey, but the survey has not moved forward. Mayor Green stated Waterloo's HRC posts activities/celebrations/videos on social media that are informative. Councilmember Miller asked the commissioners terms and what training is necessary. Director Rodenbeck stated it's difficult to find good/appropriate training, local training and it's challenging to retain that information if you're only doing one case per year. Also, the commissioner may leave the commission. Mayor Green stated HRC terms are 3 years. Councilmember Darrah asked why the survey didn't get completed. Mayor Green stated he didn't have a good answer for that. Councilmember Kruse suggested delegating this to people who are trained. Do we need to amend the ordinance? Attorney Rogers confirmed if council gives direction it would be appropriate to amend the ordinance. Commissioners are concerned they are not fulfilling their charge. Director Rodenbeck confirmed we want to amend the ordinance to what the HRC is actively doing. Mayor confirmed there are two different roles and it can be frustrating for commissioners. We want to make the ordinance clearer on what we expect from commissioners. Councilmember Darrah asked if we've sat down with commissioners to ask what value and outreach they see. Can they help us define these roles and what the purpose of the HRC is? Mayor Green stated we needed council's direction on what they want from the HRC. Do we want to proceed with a joint City Council Work Session or Committee of the Whole with the HRC? Councilmember Kruse asked if Iowa code

has a minimum on commissioners. Attorney Rogers stated the Iowa code is bare bones, but we will review as we build our ordinance. Councilmember Kruse commented that we should review other cities codes and he agrees with what staff has proposed. Councilmember deBuhr agrees with Councilmember Kruse, but why was this brought to our attention at this time. Mayor Green stated there have been complaints, commissioners want to know their roles, there's dissatisfaction on how things are being run and action needs to be taken before more problems arise. Councilmember Harding asked if we need 9 members, can we have less, and has the HRC worked with the school system? Director Rodenbeck stated we have great participation within the schools. Councilmember Harding agreed to send investigations to the state, give commissioner's guidance on education/outreach and review the number of members. Director Rodenbeck will gather information on how many commissioners other cities similar to Cedar Falls have. Mayor stated to maybe move to 5-7 commissioners. Councilmember Miller stated he'd like to hear the details and complaints and understand the issues. Mayor Green suggested having a second work session with HRC members. Councilmember Miller agreed to have a joint meeting. Councilmember deBuhr asked to have a memo sent to councilmembers outlining the issues of the HRC. Councilmember Miller stated we need to outline what the HRC duties are and investigations should go to the state. Councilmember Kruse agrees we need to clarify the focus of the HRC. Councilmember Dunn agreed to send investigations to the state and focus on education. Councilmember Harding commented that it seems we have a consensus and we should move towards changing the ordinance that investigations will go to the state, but agrees with Councilmember Miller that a joint meeting to support HRC should be scheduled. Councilmember Sires suggested meeting with HRC before amending the ordinance. Mayor Green clarified HRC has 8 active members. Councilmember Miller asked if HRC has a budget. Director Rodenbeck stated a budget of \$1,500/year. Mayor Green will confirm with staff on having a Committee of the Whole or City Council Work Session meeting prior to a council meeting. Councilmembers agreed to another meeting.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Green adjourned the meeting at 6:48 p.m.

Minutes by Kim Kerr, Administrative Supervisor