

## **CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

Cedar Falls Council Chambers

November 16, 2020

The City Council held a special work session at City Hall at 5:30 p.m. on November 16, 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. Human Rights Commission members and members of the community were in attendance and 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.

Mayor introduced the Chair of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) Nicole Winther.

Nicole Winther presented the HRC Annual Report for FY2020. HRC Chair Winther highlighted the mission statement, primary commitment and principal responsibilities. HRC Chair Winther discussed the training/conferences/events section on page 37 of the handout and pointed out that in March 2020 most events were cancelled due to COVID-19. HRC Chair Winther moved discussion to case activity on page 36 pointing out the inquires in 2020 were 5. HRC Chair Winther explained 5 could mean the City is doing a great job or that people don't know about the HRC and that's where advocacy, education and outreach come in. In 2021 this number may spike as people learn of the HRC. HRC Chair Winther moved into discussion of the HRC draft plan and discussed the HRC is very mindful of the partnership with the city. The mission statement was read, "The Cedar Falls Human Rights Commission protects Human Rights and promotes Diversity and Equity for ALL through Advocacy, Education, and Outreach". HRC Chair Winther discussed the items the HRC would like to accomplish and conversations will continue on how to improve and what the priorities are moving forward. HRC Chair Winther discussed prioritizing the list and the first item is calendar of events. Commissioners will be discussing what is coming up in future months like upcoming events and opportunities for outreach, advocacy and education. Commissioners would like to put information on Channel 15 and submit information quarterly to the Currents publication. HRC will be developing a slogan (Got Equity) and approving that around the January 2021 meeting. HRC has meet with the city's communication specialist and discussed social media (Twitter, Facebook, webpage and Instagram) doing personal stories, a banner, short commercial on Channel 15. Commissioners have discussed partnering with the Hearst Center, other groups in the community, PSA's and promotional material. A current list of partnerships are Cedar Falls City Council, UNI, Waterloo Commission, CF Schools, CF Police Department, Pride Fest, ICRC, Iowa League of Human Rights, NAACP, CV Economic Inclusion Work Group and Summit Planning Committee. New partnerships identified are the Resilience Team, other city Boards and Commissions and BHC Public Health Department. Advocacy items discussed have been Place to Play Park PSA, update the city's website, partnering with claimants with navigating complaint process, conferences on race and equity, Inclusion and Diversity Summit and implicit bias training. Education

items discussed are accessing the City's social media, develop a short video, research history of city policies/laws/practices and its impact on current culture/environment-report the findings and make recommendations for action to the commission, and develop/offer/promote/attend trainings on social competency, cultural bias, implicit bias, and inclusion.

Mayor Green discussed the HRC has been frustrated that they are not doing the investigation portion of the job, have not been trained and do not have the resources. The Council consensus is to move away from the investigative component. The new HRC mission statement is moving away from the investigative portion as well. Mayor Green's concern is the HRC doing what it's supposed to be doing and some of these changes have addressed that concern. Mayor Green asked to discuss the Council and HRC thoughts on the number of commissioners. It was eleven and dropped to nine, do we want to move it to seven as a more practical number? HRC Chair Winther stated that many hands make less work. HR Commissioner Susan Langan shared part of the problem is keeping a full commission and people don't realize there's a time commitment. If they have nine commissioners who are willing, committed and diverse to represent the community that's great and if we can't then we go to seven. Mayor Green asked if they have to stay at a specific number or can the number fluctuate back and forth. Attorney Rogers stated there's no legal requirement for specific number of commissioners, but we need to land on a number to know when we have a vacancy and need to fill it. Mayor asked council if there is any objection to staying at nine. Mayor Green stated at this time we have six commissioners with three vacancies. Councilmember deBuhr stated we should try to stay at nine. Mayor Green asked for any objections. Councilmember Harding and all councilmembers agreed to stay at nine HR commissioners.

Councilmember Harding asked what does the HRC see as difficulties going forward under this new process/mission and how the council can help support you. HRC Chair Winther stated this meeting with the council is fantastic and been a great opportunity to share the HRC mission and gather impute from the council. The biggest challenge is time and COVID with the ability to do things in person. HR Commissioner Susan Langan agreed time being an issue since they are a volunteer group and they only meet once a month; sometimes issues arise that are difficult to resolve over email. It's critical to make sure the council and people in the city understand what they do or that they exist. Councilmember Harding recommended a joint meeting with HRC once a year.

Mayor Green asked what does HRC need from council and asked about the remaining funds in the HRC budget. HRC Chair Winther stated the commission doesn't spend a lot of money, but the funds are devoted to trainings and COVID has affected the number of trainings they were able to attend. Personnel Specialist/Human Rights Liaison Colleen Sole commented that this money is normally spent on trainings and claim processing. With claims reduced this year money didn't go towards a mediator or attorney fees and will continue to remain low if we no longer process claims. Costs also fluctuate depending on commissioners wanting to attend trainings and summits; more of these funds will be available if we no longer process claims. Mayor Green asked if funds are used for the Economic Summit or Martin Luther King Day banquet. Colleen

Sole stated funding is used to provide commissioners the opportunity to go to those events and we have donated money in the past to the Inclusion Summit. Mayor Green would like the citizens of Cedar Falls to know the HRC is doing these sorts of funding and we are recognized as sponsors when sponsoring tables and activities as these things go unnoticed.

Councilmember Darrah asked about partnerships, how often does the HRC work with Waterloo HRC, the resilience team and how do you see the HRC building into the process. HR Commissioner Teri Jorgensen stated people don't feel like they are being heard or taken seriously. Not so nice things do exist and we have to have uncomfortable conversations and act on it. Citizens want to be part of Cedar Falls and they want people to listen and to hear them so we need to develop a sounding board or a suggestion box so people can be heard and something is being done about their concern. HR Commissioner Angela Waseskuk agreed with Teri and added she's very interested in strengthening our current partnerships and working to forge new partnerships. There are misconceptions that there are issues in Waterloo and Cedar Falls doesn't share that, but we do. We are primarily a white city and there are reasons for that. Angela has interest in looking at historically how Cedar Falls has gotten to be as demographic as it is. We need to look at our own issues and faults as well as supporting people that are working to better things, whether that's in Waterloo or Cedar Falls and we do these things together.

Councilmember Darrah asked what's the next step in the resiliency plan. Director of Community Development Sheetz stated we have done several different public input opportunities that include a survey and public workshops. Over the course of the next three month we may have more public input and move forward with drafting a plan and have recommendations, a plan for review and then adoption of the plan. Councilmember Darrah suggested the HRC become more active in the next stage of the resilience plan and add city council as one of the HRC partners.

Councilmember Miller thanked the HRC commissioners for the roles they are doing and is also interested in the history of how we got to this point. Tough conversations need to be had to move the city forward. Councilmember Miller had concerns on if the budget is enough. Colleen Sole stated if the HRC doesn't have to fund claims; more funds will be available to the HRC. Director Rodenbeck stated the city has just started the budget process and this is a good time to work with the commission to see what funds they would need to accomplish the goals they have set.

Mayor Green encouraged HRC to recommend ideas/policy changes to the council and push them on what's important to the HRC. Councilmember Dunn agreed we need people to be heard and the council need to support the HRC and the commission needs to feel comfortable to come to the council. The council needs to be advocates for the HRC.

Councilmember Harding asked how does the commission view equity and equality. HR Commissioner Angela Waseskuk stated equity is making sure everyone has a fair shot and some need a little extra to make equitable. Equality is everything is the same across the board. When we talk about equity there's an intentional distinction by saying

equity and not necessarily equality because if we are really being advocates for everyone in Cedar Falls we have to acknowledge that there are people that need a little more support or different kinds of support in different situations to make sure their voices are heard. There has to be a platform for people that normally don't have that and we need to work extra hard on our end that we are offering and creating this platform. Mayor Green stated that advocacy, education and outreach are great, but HRC might want to add research in order to show the public where some of the concerns are in Cedar Falls. UNI students are passionate about these topics and Mayor encourages HRC to reach out to these resources and include it in the budget.

Councilmember Sires asked if HRC meetings are televised and Mayor Green stated these are not televised at this time. Councilmember Dunn stated these can be touchy subjects and some citizens will be hesitant in front of a television to discuss topics. HR Commissioner Teri Jorgensen stated most people will not speak freely and the HRC needs to make sure people feel comfortable. This is where our social media page and calendar will be helpful in communicating. We need to make sure everyone is on a level playing field at the starting line and not the finish line. HR Commissioner Susan Langan stated when they were doing investigations this would have been too personable to have on television to share. When they move away from investigations it might be interesting to see the public's reaction and they might get more involved, but specific guidelines would need to be set in order to not violate confidentiality.

Mayor Green is encouraging the HRC to use your events calendar and inviting councilmembers to events to show their commitment and dedication to racial and other equity in our community. Councilmember Harding reaffirmed the HRC needs to reach out to council and have an update each year for council. Councilmember Darrah suggested coming to council meetings once a month and giving an update to establish a relationship with council.

Mayor Green referred to the HRC ordinance in the packet stating there are a lot of redline on the ordinance and much of this is how we define human rights, investigation process and housing requirements. We will be using the states definitions and guidance going forward since investigations and complaints will be forwarded to the state.

Mayor Green asked for final thoughts or comments. HRC Chair Nicole Winther thanked the council.

On behalf of the council, Mayor Green thanked all the HR Commissioners for volunteering.

Mayor Green stated if you are interested in serving on the Human Rights Commission visit [www.cedarfalls.com](http://www.cedarfalls.com) or email [rob.green@cedarfalls.com](mailto:rob.green@cedarfalls.com).

There being no further discussion, Mayor Green adjourned the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

Minutes by Kim Kerr, Administrative Supervisor