

## **BLOOMINGTON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

### **Minutes of May 21, 2018 Meeting**

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission met on Monday, May 21, 2018 at 5:30 p.m. in the Hooker Conference Room at Showers City Hall. Present for this meeting were commissioners Byron Bangert, Ryne Shadday, Irena Micajkova Otten, Carolyn Calloway-Thomas and Rhonda Gambill. A quorum was present. Commissioner Valeri Haughton-Motely was absent with notice because a hearing ran late. Also present were Chris Abert, executive director of the Indiana Recovery Alliance, and Barbara E. McKinney, BHRC director/attorney.

#### **Approval of minutes of April 23, 2018 Human Rights Commission meeting:**

Shadday asked that the spelling of his first name be corrected in the April minutes. The BHRC approved the corrected minutes by consensus.

#### **Unfinished business**

**BHRC appointment to the Commission on the Status of Black Males:** The BHRC considered the merits of both applicants. After discussion, Shadday moved that the BHRC appoint Kourtney Byrd to the CSBM. Calloway-Thomas seconded. Passed unanimously.

**Vital quiz bowl update:** Bangert reported that the Rights Stuff team lost in the first round.

**International children's singing event:** Micajkova Otten reported that she has been working with teachers at Childs Elementary and they have secured a date for the children to sing at the farmers market, on August 18. Teachers will e-mail parents to see if they want their children to participate. Children will sing in different languages. They will have up to 90 minutes to perform, but do not have to use the entire allotted time.

**Cross commission bicentennial event update:** Gambill reported that the announcement of the contest is out. The History Center has been very supportive, pulling together research resources for the students. The Center will host a celebration of the winners on July 27. Committee members are seeking prize donations from donors. McKinney said she had just approved a grant application for the group to get money from the Building A Thriving and Compassionate Community.

**Fourth of July parade:** McKinney asked people who will participate in the parade to sign a release form. Bangert said he is still not sure if he will be in town for the parade. McKinney noted that we have been asked to have a bicentennial theme. She said she and Margie Rice will order bracelets to distribute. If Bangert can't participate, we hope to have the use of a convertible.

## **New business**

**Indiana Recovery Alliance:** Chris Abert, executive director, talked about his organization. He said addiction is a human rights issue, not a criminal issue. He described how drug laws had been used against minority groups since the 1880s. He said their syringe exchange program is very effective. Abert noted that addicts are treated horribly; people cheer on their deaths. Politicians have paid more attention to it since addiction has hit rural white citizens.

The IRA is led by recovering addicts, including Abert himself. They want to empower people who use drugs or who are affected by drugs. It's a very grassroots organization which tries to meet people where they are. They recently staged a die-in near the governor's office and got a meeting with his staff. The staff members did not understand why people in recovery need to be at the table.

They've met with the chief of the BPD and the mayor, trying to get BPD to stop arresting people just because they have a needle in their possession.

Calloway-Thomas asked Abert what he wants from the BHRC. He said he wanted the BHRC to recognize addiction as a human rights and health issue. He talked about the need to keep people out of the justice system whenever possible. She asked if they do prevention work; he said they try to prevent disease through their needle exchange program, and have done focus groups on how to talk to children about addiction.

Abert said that IRA is involved with Bloomington Solidarity, Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, Black Lives Matter and PRIDE. He said they would be glad to work with the BHRC on shared concerns.

**Assignment of new cases:** Calloway-Thomas accepted a new case alleging discrimination in employment on the basis of race.

**Other business:** Calloway-Thomas announced that she was giving notice that she could not attend the June meeting. Micajkova-Otten announced that her daughter will have a lemonade stand at Kroger Seminary Square on 6/13.

**Public input:** No public input.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara E. McKinney', followed by a date '6/13/13'.

Barbara E. McKinney  
Director, BHRC