



**CITY OF BLOOMINGTON**  
**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION COMMISSION**

**Wednesday February 27, 2019**

The meeting began at 4:42 p.m. no quorum

**Commission Members:** Marcus Debro, Lily Kleinlein, Dianne Shewmaker

**Associates and Guests:** Michael Shermis

**Approval of Minutes:** No quorum, so minutes will be approved next meeting.

**Staff Liaison Report:** Michael shared an update about an unfortunate event that occurred on the MLK Facebook page. Throughout the month of February, he was posting daily quotes from notable figures, provided by Service for Peace. One day the quote was a Thomas Jefferson quote, which he posted without any additional consideration on the source. Quickly members of the public and Black Lives Matter began making comments about the inappropriateness of this quote by a known slave owner and rapist. After numerous failed attempts to explain the situation and communicate with public through the city's communication director, Michael received permission to write a formal apology accepting responsibility for the post. He received support from the mayor, city employees, and commission members in this post. There were a few more comments online, some of which were aimed at the mayor rather than the situation at hand. Eventually an upheaval within the Black Lives Matter leadership in addition to a different city Facebook post took the attention in a different direction. Michael noted that next year he may not post any quotes since so many historical figures have controversy and mixed reception. Marcus thanked Michael for handling the situation with care and for his concern over doing the right thing. Lily noted that she felt Michael handled the situation the best he could.

Michael shared that Shatoyia Moss put together an amazing presentation for the Montessori School's 40 Days of Peace presentations, all about the Bloomington Underground railroad. He will share the information with the commission. He said that the younger group from Montessori will have a presentation next week.

**Old Business:**

None

**New Business:**

**A.Elections:** No quorum, will hold election at the next meeting.

**B.Remembrance Day:** We reviewed the ideas for an event in April. Last month the ideas scattered in many directions and most of those in attendance weren't at the meeting this month. Michael said that it is very difficult to put together an event with only 5 weeks left, and that by not having quorum at the meeting (and being down a couple of commissioners in general) it makes it difficult to assign tasks to help make it a team effort. His recommendation is to not hold an event this year, and maybe reconsider a multi-generational storytelling/march style event next year instead, planning earlier than a month in advance. All agreed that we didn't have enough commissioner support to put something together last minute. Lily suggested making a public statement as a commission and sending it to the Herald

**City of Bloomington Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission**

City Hall · 401 N. Morton St., Suite 260, Bloomington, IN 47404 · [www.bloomington.in.gov/mlk](http://www.bloomington.in.gov/mlk)

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Times editorials page. Michael said he can help with the editing and delivery, but a commissioner (or group) should write the first draft. We discussed some ideas and Lily agreed to put them into sentence form and send to the group. Ideas: a public statement remembering his death and the controversies that contributed to MLK becoming a targeted figure. Listing some of the issues of the time that people were having problems with, and how in many cases we still are (fair wages, racial justice, anti-war). Since so many of the issues of MLK's time are still happening, this is why it is important we continue to remember his legacy through things like commissions, remembrance days, etc. Asking "Why Did He Die?" He fought for things that people were struggling with and we still are.

**C.2020 MLK Day Celebration:** Marcus spoke with Provost Robel and Beverly Calender Anderson about a potential partnership in 2020 (IU's Bicentennial and they may support bringing a really big name to town). Michael noted that it is important for our work to lead to a city celebration rather than something on IU's campus with our name attached. He said that in his experience, IU has been generous to financially support our event, but it has proved difficult to partner to create an event together. All agreed that if IU were to bring someone in that we want to tag onto, we would need to hold some type of secondary event or ticketed event for members of the Bloomington community. Michael said he would ask Beverly if she heard anything, and in the meantime will compile a list of people we've considered asking in the past. Dianne was still very interested in bringing Daryl Davis to town, and Lily agreed that is a great storyteller. Michael confirmed he was interested and has a variety of creative presentations he could bring.

**Public Comments (non-MLK Commissioners):** None

**NAACP Update:** Dianne updated that Bill Vance is president again of NAACP and they are moving their meeting day but she isn't sure when it will be. Because the NAACP said they will be asking Dianne to be their representative on the commission, Michael noted that Dianne needs to resign from the commission in her current capacity, and re-join as NAACP representation. Dianne was hesitant because she indicated her first priority is to stay on the commission as long as possible, and the NAACP is only a one-year guarantee. Michael said she can't hold both roles at the same time, and Marcus agreed to speak with Bill Vance to determine the best path forward.

**Commission on the Status of Black Males Update:** None

**Announcements:** None

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

#### **Upcoming Meetings:**

March 27, 2019 4:30-5:30 p.m. (McCloskey)

April 24, 2019 4:30-5:30 p.m. (McCloskey)

May 22, 2019 4:30-5:40 p.m. (McCloskey)

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