

BLOOMINGTON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Minutes of August 26, 2019 Meeting

The Bloomington Human Rights commission met on Monday, August 26, 2019 in the McCloskey Conference Room of Showers City Hall. Present were commissioners Ryne Shadday, Byron Bangert, Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, Pam Jackson, Jacob Simpson, Valeri Haughton-Motley and Irena Micajkova Otten. A quorum was present. Also present was Barbara E. McKinney, BHRC director/attorney.

Call to order: Chair Shadday called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Unfinished business

Uyghur follow-up: McKinney said that she had sent the approved letter to all members of the Indiana congressional delegation who have not already signed on to the Uyghur bill, and also a modified version to the Herald-Times. Thus far, she has received no reply. Bangert said that if the HT had not followed up with a request for confirmation, McKinney should follow up with the HT to make sure they had received it.

2020 Essay/Art contest theme: The commissioners discussed various possible themes, including Whom Do You Love, The People You Love, The Freedom to Love and You're Welcome to Love Whomever You Want. McKinney and Shadday will see if they can find ideas online.

Survey update: Simpson said he is still interested in getting the community survey to include questions about sexual orientation and in getting it to reach more members of minority groups. McKinney said the survey is random; Jackson said they could reach more members of minority groups by over-sampling. Simpson would like to meet with Mary Catherine Carmichael to talk about expanding the sample and including LGTB information.

McKinney said the next survey would not be done until 2021.

Simpson would also like to do some sort of assessment of the BHRC, maybe surveying other HRCs to come up with ideas on what we can do better. The BHRC talked about choosing similar cities to survey, perhaps based on size, college towns, similar demographics, etc. Bangert said he would be more interested in finding creative ideas than making comparisons. Jackson said perhaps the community survey could help us get ideas about issues relevant to various communities and on how to improve. The commissioners agreed that Simpson and McKinney would meet to come up with goals and benchmarks.

Conversion therapy: McKinney summarized her memo to the BHRC. She said she has serious reservations about whether the City had authority to ban conversion therapy, given the restrictions on local authority under the Home Rule Law.

Shadday asked if we passed such an ordinance, would that encourage the state to take similar action? McKinney said that in recent years, the exact opposite happened: when the City was considering banning plastic bags, the state passed a law saying we can't.

Calloway-Thomas asked if there was evidence that anyone actually practices such therapy in Bloomington. Simpson said that he heard at a Stonewall Democrats meeting that two people do so in the area, but he didn't know if they were in Bloomington or in Monroe County.

McKinney said that when local communities have passed such an ordinance, they are able only to issue fines. They can't take away licenses, as the state issues licenses. The ordinances and laws apply only to non-religious mental health care providers, not to faith leaders who provide counseling.

Shadday said the BHRC may want to revisit this issue later.

Facebook update: Shadday asked each commissioner to agree to provide one link to an article or video each year to be added to the BHRC page. Bangert said he believes Facebook is a social evil. Calloway-Thomas asked what is compelling about having a Facebook page; Shadday said it helps people know we exist. He knows people who had issues but didn't know that Bloomington had an HRC. Bangert said that we could post articles from our newsletter. Jackson said Facebook can be helpful because comments are in one place. Shadday said that he would commit to doing a Facebook Live page. Simpson said we need to create a messaging plan.

Simpson moved that the BHRC start a Facebook page after City Legal hires a new Risk assistant, as Oswalt does not have time to take on more duties at this time. Haughton-Motley seconded. Six in favor; Bangert abstained.

Community solidarity gathering: McKinney reminded the BHRC that Bloomington United was holding a gathering on Tuesday, August 27, beginning at 5:30 p.m., and invited everyone to attend.

Homecoming parade: After discussion, Micajkova Otten moved that the BHRC participate in the 2019 homecoming parade. Jackson seconded. All in favor except Haughton-Motley and Bangert, who abstained. Haughton-Motley moved that the BHRC order more bracelets or buy candy, budget permitting.

Bangert seconded. Passed unanimously. Haughton-Motley said the BHRC may use her convertible.

CCA co-sponsorship: After discussion, Haughton-Motley moved that the BHRC co-sponsor the CCA Gather 'Round the Table event in the amount of \$100. Calloway-Thomas seconded. Passed unanimously.

New case: Simpson accepted a new case alleging discrimination in employment on the basis of disability.

Public input: No public input.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. McKinney', is written over the typed name.

Barbara E. McKinney, director, BHRC/assistant city attorney