

BLOOMINGTON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Minutes of July 22, 2019 Meeting

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission met on Monday, July 22, 2019, beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the McCloskey Conference Room of Showers City Hall. Present were commissioners Ryne Shadday, Byron Bangert, Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, Pam Jackson and Jacob Simpson. Commissioners Valeri Haughton-Motley and Irena Micajkova Otten had notified staff that they could not attend. A quorum was present. Also present were Vickie Darcy from the League of Women Voters, Mustafa Asku, guest, and Barbara E. McKinney, BHRC director/attorney.

Unfinished business

Call to order: Chair Shadday called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Approval of minutes of June 24, 2019 BHRC meeting: Calloway-Thomas moved that the minutes be approved as presented. Simpson seconded. Passed unanimously.

Parade update: McKinney reported that the parade had literally gone off without a hitch. She said she's asked for more money in the 2020 budget to buy more wristbands and will ask the MCHRC to do the same. Calloway-Thomas said she thinks it's good that we participate in the parade.

Nametags: McKinney distributed the new nametags to commissioners who had requested one.

Pridefest: Pridefest is scheduled for August 31, and we need to staff a table from 1:30 to at least 8. Jackson said she could work 4 to 6, and Simpson said he could work 6 to 8. But no one has yet volunteered to staff a table from 1:30 to 4, and we need to cover the entire day. Shadday said this was a better venue than the market. McKinney will check in with Micajkova Otten and Haughton-Motley to see if they want to take a shift. She will also check with MCHRC. We may want to order more wristbands to give out.

New business

Mustafa Asku, an IU student, talked about the treatment of Uyghurs in China. He said that current reports say that China is keeping between 1 and 3 million Uyghurs in what are essentially concentration camps. The Chinese government claims they are re-education camps, but many of the people held are quite educated, including his brother. His brother was a physician who went into the camp in good health and died shortly after being released. He said the situation is getting worse, with China holding more and more creative people in the camps, People who do not pledge loyalty to China and

renounce their views are killed. People who are not sent to the camp are called surplus labor and transferred to China, especially women.

Calloway-Thomas said she had been in China recently, and her mind was ignorant of the issue. She asked about surveillance of residents.

Asku said that Congress is considering a bill to address this issue. Senator Braun has signed on as a sponsor, but Senator Young has not. Nor has Congressman Hollingsworth.

The commissioners asked McKinney to summarize the bill and its current status and draft a letter to our local representatives, to be signed by Shadday once approved.

Shadday thanked Asku for coming.

BCOS collaboration letter: The commissioners discussed the recent letter to the BHRC from Nejla Routsong and Erin Hatch, vice chair and secretary, respectively, of the city's commission on sustainability. They agreed that some issues the sustainability commission works on overlap with BHRC issues. Food and economic security, and having a livable planet, are human rights issues, broadly speaking. McKinney will invite Routsong to a BHRC meeting for further discussion.

Quarterly report: After discussion, Calloway-Thomas moved that the director's quarterly report for the second quarter of the BHRC be approved as presented. Jackson second. Passed unanimously. McKinney noted that she had reviewed quarterly reports going back to the beginning of 2017. The average number of miscellaneous reports over that time period in a quarter is 29.9. The highest number in any one quarter is 42; the lowest is 19, the number in the current report.

Bloomington Community Survey: Simpson noted the low number of responses to the survey from members of minority groups, and noted that the survey did not ask about sexual orientation or gender identity. He said a survey that reached more minority groups might help the community have a better understanding of what members of different minority groups think. If we want to be more equitable and inclusive, we need more facts. McKinney will follow up to see what City department works on the survey.

Theme for 2020 art/essay contest: McKinney asked the commissioners to start thinking about a theme for next year's contest. She said a parent suggested at the last awards ceremony that the theme be "The Case for Reparations." Shadday suggested the theme be LBTTQ related. Bangert suggested something along the lines of "Who Do You Love?"

On a related note, Shadday mentioned that BHSN allows students to use the restroom that matches their gender identity. South does not; transgender students must use the office restroom.

Conversion therapy: Shadday noted that some states and some cities have banned conversion therapy for people under 18. Such therapy attempts to convert GLBT people to straight. The evidence is overwhelming that it does not work and is detrimental. He said he had asked McKinney to research whether the City could pass an ordinance against such therapy for teens. This is an issue for the new local group, Stonewall Democrats. McKinney said that she and the legal department's law clerk are still researching the issue, and they have not come to a legal conclusion yet. But she has concerns about pre-emption and the state's limited home rule law.

Assignment of new case: McKinney said that a complaint alleging discrimination in public accommodations had been filed earlier in the day. Haughton-Motley had expressed interest in this case and so it will be assigned to her.

Other business: No other business.

Public input: Darcy asked about the BHRC's facebook page. McKinney explained why the BHRC does not have a facebook page. This will be on the August agenda, now that the vacancies have been filled.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbra E. McKinney, Director, BHRC