

## **BLOOMINGTON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

### **Minutes of February 24, 2020 Meeting**

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission met on Monday, February 24, 2020, beginning at 5:32 p.m., in the McCloskey conference room of Showers City Hall. Present for this meeting were commissioners Ryne Shadday, Pam Jackson, Byron Bangert, Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, Valeri Haughton Motley, Latosha Williams and Jacob Simpson. A quorum was present. Also present were Nicole DeCriscio Bowe, new BHRC/Legal assistant, and Barbara E. McKinney, BHRC director/attorney.

**Approval of minutes of January 27, 2020 BHRC meeting:** Minutes were approved by consensus.

#### **Unfinished business**

**Welcome to new people:** The commissioners rearranged the agenda to welcome both the newest BHRC commissioner, Latosha Williams, who replaces Irena Micajkova-Offen, and Nicole DeCriscio Bowe, who replaces Jessica Oswald. Everyone present introduced themselves and welcomed their new colleagues.

**Human Rights Award:** After discussion, the BHRC unanimously approved Cindy Stone as the 2020 recipient of the Bloomington Human Rights Award. Calloway-Thomas praised Shadday's excellent nomination. Shadday, as chair, will present the award to Stone at an upcoming common council meeting.

**Essay/arts contest:** All entries have been submitted. Calloway-Thomas and Simpson will judge the essays; Simpson asked for the essays to be scanned to him; Calloway-Thomas will pick hers up when ready. Jackson and Haughton-Motley will judge the art work.

**Annual report:** McKinney distributed copies of the final 2019 BHRC annual report.

#### **New business**

**Selection of vice chair:** Since Micajkova-Offen, who was elected vice-chair at the January meeting, was not reappointed, the BHRC selected a new vice-chair. Shadday moved that Simpson be elected vice chair. Haughton-Motley seconded. Passed unanimously.

**VITAL Quiz Bowl:** Bangert reported that MCPL had decided not to continue the quiz bowl, as it did not raise sufficient funds given the staff time required.

**Assignment of new cases:** No new cases to assign.

**Other business:** The commissioners had a wide-ranging discussion. Simpson asked what the commissioners think the BHRC needs to accomplish to be at the forefront of its field. Calloway-Thomas said that she thinks the BHRC and the City are doing a good job and making gains. She said she hopes the BHRC works itself out of a job. Shadday said the BHRC is not catching all incidents of discrimination. Williams said the commission could do more to publicize itself, on social media and elsewhere. She said the quarterly report shows that a lot of people are aware that the BHRC exists because they call the BHRC. She wondered if we could do a better job of making referrals. She was saddened to read that one caller, when told that the BHRC could not help him and referred him to another agency, said, "So I don't have any human rights then." She asked if the BHRC could write letters to callers to make referrals. McKinney said that people want immediate referrals, and she does the best she can to make appropriate referrals. Some people are angry when they call, especially when they realize they called the wrong place.

There was discussion of sending out public service announcements, which the BHRC has done.

Williams said the BHRC needs to do more outreach. She said that we could better track what we do to help figure out how to be more visible.

Simpson said investigating complaints is a retroactive approach to justice and asked how the BHRC could be more proactive. He asked what policies we could advocate. He said he wished the BHRC could have done something to prevent the market controversy from ever happening.

Bangert said the three roles of the BHRC are to enforce/adjudicate, educate and advocate. He said the second two are harder to make visible. He said the FLI was a good example of advocating, but it was labor-intensive and the HT didn't buy in.

Shadday asked that Facebook be placed on the March agenda.

Calloway-Thomas said that she has attended the market for years and never had a problem. She said people who disagree with her have every right to be there.

Simpson said we need to do assessments, have better data. We need an intentional process. We need perhaps listening sessions to find out what the problems are in the community.

Calloway-Thomas suggested we do people on the street interviews, asking people what crucial problems they are aware of with human rights implications. We could get a sense of things, what the perceived problems are.

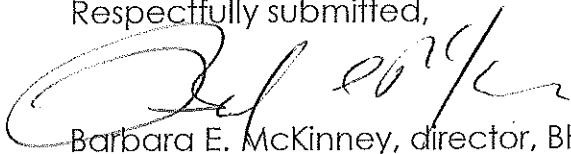
Jackson said one challenge is reaching students. She suggested live-streaming the people on the street interviews. We could also ask people what is working for them.

Simpson noted that the City has more diversity-related commissions than most cities, which have only a HRC, if that. He asked how we could network better with the other commissions. McKinney suggested asking representatives to come to a BHRC meeting.

Commissioners also discussed having a table at the market.

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara E. McKinney', written over a horizontal line.

Barbara E. McKinney, director, BHRC