

BLOOMINGTON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Minutes of January 25, 2021 Meeting

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission met on Monday, January 25, 2021, beginning at 5:35 p.m., via Zoom. Present for this meeting were commissioners Ryne Shadday, Byron Bangert, Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, Pam Jackson, Valeri Haughton-Motley and Jacob Simpson. Absent with notice was commissioner Latosha Williams. A quorum was present. Also present were Nicole DeCriscio Bowe, BHRC legal assistant, Vauhxx Booker, Dave Askins from BSquare Beacon and Barbara E. McKinney, BHRC director/attorney.

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

Approval of minutes of December 14, 2020: The commissioners approved the minutes by consensus.

Election of officers: Bangert suggested that the 2020 slate of officers be re-elected for 2021. Shadday said that Simpson, the current vice-chair, is resigning. Commissioners agreed to table election of officers until the February meeting.

New business

Fourth Quarterly Report: After discussion, Calloway-Thomas moved that the director's fourth quarterly report for 2020 be approved as presented. Jackson seconded. Shadday called the roll; approved unanimously.

Annual Report: Calloway-Thomas asked what the biggest problem that COVID-19 had presented to the BHRC. McKinney said she finds it much harder to do intakes via telephone, email or in the atrium than in person, in the office. It's more difficult to connect with people. After discussion, Calloway-Thomas moved that the annual report be approved as presented, subject to corrections of typos. Bangert seconded. Passed unanimously.

Unfinished business

Interview with Daniel Olsson, candidate for BHRC appointment to

CSBM: The commissioners thanked Olsson for his interest in the CSBM. Shadday asked why he wanted to be involved. Olsson said that he is from Bloomington, went to IU and works in IT. He applied to several commissions, including the CSBM. He wants to get more involved in politics. He said he is a millennial, he knows Bloomington, works in Bloomington and has a unique perspective. He said the status of Black males is a big issue, locally and nationally.

Calloway-Thomas asked what Olsson thought the attention of the CSBM should be right now. He said he thought employment was the biggest issue. He believes that as businesses open back up, they are hiring fewer people, and often the people who don't get hired are the Black and Brown people. He thinks the focus should be on creating equality in job opportunities. He said when he was on the environmental commission, they focused on environmental racism.

She asked Olsson to talk about his experiences interacting with Black men. He said he has a perspective on this issue. He is part of the writer's guild. He's met talented people of color who find it hard to get a job, especially Black and trans people.

Shadday asked Olsson how he would approach racism in the workplace. He said he would first go to HR; he thinks that is better than going to management. He said he is exposed to sensitive information working in IT. It's HR's job to protect employees.

Jackson asked Olsson if he would turn down CSBM if he got appointed to another commission. He said no. He had to leave the environmental commission because of a scheduling conflict.

Calloway-Thomas asked Olsson what skill set he brings to the CSBM. He said he had the knowledge and skills of a young man. He said he helped a friend from Gary find a job. He knows the county well. He sees the county as being quite diverse.

Shadday asked Olsson about his familiarity with Black men. He said he knows Black men from school, high school and IU, including friends, classmates and study groups.

Calloway-Thomas asked what was special about millennials. He said he grew up in the age of social media and the internet, which provides a new avenue for racism. He said maybe the City did not anticipate how the Farmers' Market issue would blow up on social media.

Haughton-Motley asked if he felt intimidated by Black man, hesitant to speak up. He said no. He said the CSBM needs to hear all perspectives. She asked how he would respond if someone told him the county was not all that diverse. He said he felt it was diverse as he grew up here.

Calloway-Thomas moved that the BHRC appoint Olsson to the CSBM. Haughton-Motley seconded. Shadday called the roll; passed unanimously.

Facebook live and 2021 goals and objectives: The commissioners agreed by consensus to table these issues until all commissioners were present.

Homeless proposal: Booker discussed his homeless bill of rights proposal. He said that he had talked about it with council members and several are interested. They are inclined to adopt a variant of the Indianapolis ordinance. The City would have to give 15 days' notice before removing people from parks, and they can't do that unless there is transitional or permanent housing available (not just emergency shelters). He said they are trying to recognize the right of everyone to live in the community. He said breaking up the camps is bad; there is safety in numbers. He asked the BHRC to urge the council to approve this.

Bangert said he could not support the ordinance without seeing the language. Other commissioners agreed. Booker said it would be substantially similar to Indy's. McKinney explained that given that the next BHRC meeting would be after the council meetings, the BHRC would not have the chance to review the final language as a group before the council considers it. Booker said the BHRC could have a special meeting and should be flexible as caretakers of human rights.

Bangert asked if there is opposition to the proposal. Booker said there is concern about the burden on the park system and the financial demands of providing facilities and services at the parks.

2021 Essay/art contest: The commissioners agreed by consensus not to sponsor a contest this spring because of COVID-19, wanting to avoid imposing another burden on teachers.

2021 Human rights award: The commissioners agreed by consensus to solicit nominations for the 2021 human rights award and to go ahead and present the 2020 award to Cindy Stone in a virtual setting.

Assignment of new cases: No new cases.

Other business: Jacob Simpson announced that he had to resign due to his academic schedule. He thanked the commissioners for welcoming him to the BHRC and they thanked him for his service.

Public input: No public input.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara E. McKinney, BHRC director/attorney

