

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION MINUTES

September 21, 2023, 4:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers

PRESENT: CHAIRPERSON Richard Zaker
COMMISSIONERS Mark Schleeter, Minnie Walker, and Jerry Pelz

ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS Tracey Kelly, Vivian Goodman, Joyce Keller

ALSO PRESENT: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER Penny Rogers
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Sherry Beasley
HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATOR Fred Spannaus

I. Call to Order

Commission Chairperson Zaker called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Three out of seven Commissioners were present at the time of roll call. Commission Chairperson Zaker declared a quorum does not exist to approve business. Commissioner Pelz entered the meeting at 4:04 p.m. Commission Chairperson Zaker declared a quorum does now exist to conduct and approve business.

II. Appearance of Citizens

There is none.

III. Approval of August 17, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Mark Schleeter made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Jerry Pelz. Upon roll call, Commissioners Mark Schleeter, Minnie Walker, Jerry Pelz, and Commission Chairperson Richard Zaker voted aye. Commission Chairperson Zaker declared the motion carried.

IV. Monthly Activity Report & Summary of Cases

Human Rights Investigator Fred Spannaus provided a monthly status report of cases. (Exhibit A)

V. Unfinished Business

Commission Chairperson Zaker called for Unfinished Business.

A. Pride Fest Re-Cap

Commission Chairperson Zaker stated the following:

- Commissioner Schleeter noticed that our table was staffed. The people who ran the event gave the Commission a very nice card thanking us for participating.
- Commission Chair Zaker staffed our table with Commissioner Kelly for the first part of the Pride Fest.
- There were at least 20 - 25 people who stopped at our table and took flyers during the time he was working the table.
- One of the individuals who stopped by our table said he was from Lincoln, and he was surprised that we had a system in place for discrimination complaints. He took a flyer and said that he was going to see if Lincoln could adopt a similar system.
- Commission Chair Zaker appreciates the effort that Commissioners Pelz, Kelly and Keller made to staff our table.

Commission Chairperson Zaker asked the Commissioners if anybody knew how many flyers were handed out. Mrs. Rogers stated 100 flyers were printed and only one was left; therefore, 99 flyers were handed out.

Commissioner Walker wanted to know if she could see the final copy of the flyer. Ms. Beasley will email the Commissioners a color copy.

Commissioner Schleeter stated the following:

- He stopped by the table several times and noticed some activity.
- It would be good if the Commission could send a thank you card to Jim Barr who donated the table for the Commission to use.
- Be aware of other groups that are covered by Chapter 28 of the City Code that might be hosting an event. Maybe the Commission could attend these events.

Commission Chairperson Zaker stated he will send a thank you card on behalf of the Commission to Jim Barr. Commissioner Schleeter will give Commission Chair Zaker Jim's contact information. Also, attending other events is something to keep in mind. The Commission doesn't want to be indiscriminate about how the events are selected.

Commissioner Pelz stated the following:

- It looked like the event was well attended and had a number of people that came to the table to ask questions and we handed out the flyers.

B. Input from Commissioners about places to distribute flyers about Commission

Commission Chairperson Zaker stated in a previous meeting he took names of Commissioners who expressed interest in particular places where they would take flyers. Commission Chairperson Zaker handed-out the list to the Commissioners.

The following is a list of Commissioners and where they will distribute the flyers:

- Commissioner Pelz – Richland Community College, Millikin University, Northeast Community Fund, Old Kings Orchard,
- Commissioner Walker – Public Aid Office, St. Mary’s Hospital, Decatur Public Library, Northside, Antioch and Main Street Churches and Driver’s License Facility
- Commissioner Keller – Dove, CONO, Decatur Memorial Hospital, and Oasis
- Commissioner Schleeter - First Presbyterian, First Congregation, and First United Methodist Churches
- Commission Chairperson Zaker – Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Ms. Rogers stated she will talk to Ryan Huffer, the City of Decatur’s Communications Coordinator, to see if he can put the flyer on the City’s Facebook page.

Ms. Beasley stated she will put the flyer on the Commissions Facebook page.

VI. New Business

Commission Chairperson Zaker called for New Business.

A. Review of Articles 1-3 of Chapter 28 of the City Code

Commission Chairperson Zaker asked for discussion. Commissioner Schleeter stated he mentioned before that the category of sex is an antiquated category and needs to be replaced with gender. He came up with a proposal. (He handed-out his proposal.) Discussion followed.

Commissioner Schleeter made the following suggestions:

- To remove transgender from the sexual orientation section – transgender is not a sexual orientation, it’s a gender orientation.
- One category he left off is intersex. He explained the meaning of intersex.
- Maybe drop gender and use gender fluid. He gave an explanation of gender fluid.
- Remove sex and replace with gender.
- Remove he or she and replace with “they” with the appropriate grammatical changes that would go with that.

Human Rights Investigator Spannaus suggested working on a consensus of how Commissioner Schleeter wants to approach the definitions of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Maybe use the City of Champaign’s definitions as a starting point. Discussion followed.

Commission Chairperson Zaker stated what is being done today is important. This is going to be a preliminary look at things and not going too far into it without having more Commissioners present to bring them up to speed is going to be vital. He suggested making sure the rest of the Commissioners get a copy of Commissioner Schleeter’s proposal. He asked the question about taking transgender reference out of sexual

orientation. Commissioner Schleeter stated sexual orientation can stand as it is, but transgender reference is a gender orientation, and it would go under the gender category.

Human Rights Investigator Spannaus suggested having Commissioner Schleeter come up with a draft that would include what he has and combine it with what Champaign has and indicate what should be separate sections and what should be included. Commissioner Schleeter stated he would draft something and send it to Ms. Rogers to distribute at October's meeting because he will not be in attendance.

Human Rights Investigator Spannaus also suggested that the Commissioners look at the first three Sections, defining race, defining color and maybe adding what the State says about the traits associated with race. Also look at the third page regarding some of the forms of discrimination that are covered someplace else but are not covered under Decatur's code. He is not suggesting that the Commission do these. The last one source of income, the State of Illinois also prohibits discrimination on the source of income but this might be strictly with housing.

Commission Chairperson Zaker suggested the Commissioners go over the code and look at the information from the other cities and think about questions they might have from what was discussed.

Commissioner Walker stated she needed a little clarification with what's proper and what's not proper, looking at the mechanics of this document and quite a few things that weren't clear to her or she thought could be changed. Human Rights Investigator Spannaus stated to make notes and bring them to October's meeting.

VII. Other Business

Commission Chairperson Zaker called for Other Business.

There is none.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Minnie Walker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Jerry Pelz. Upon call of the roll, Commissioners Minnie Walker, Mark Schleeter, Jerry Pelz, and Commission Chairperson Richard Zaker voted aye. Commission Chairperson Zaker declared the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.