



MINUTES

BOARD OF EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSIONERS

April 24, 2019 at 2:30pm

Room 301-A, City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street Milwaukee, WI 53202

Present:

Commissioner Chez Ordonez, Acting Chair

Commissioner Tony Snell

Commissioner Sheila Ashley

Commissioner Jennifer Bennet

Commissioner Nathan Guequierre

Jessica Langill, Dept. of Administration

Rebecca Rabatin, ADA Coordinator, Dept. of Administration

Shelley Gregory, FORGE

John Griffith, Milwaukee County Commission on Aging

Stacey Williams-Ng, Wallpapered City

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:37 p.m. by Commissioner Ordonez. Quorum met.

2. Roll Call

Present at roll call:

Commissioner Chez Ordonez, Acting Chair

Commissioner Tony Snell

Commissioner Jennifer Bennet

Commissioner Nathan Guequierre

Commissioner Sheila Ashley arrived after roll call

3. Approval of Minutes from December 14th Meeting

No objections. Minutes approved.

4. Committee Updates

Commissioner Snell stated the Committee on Outreach and Events began as the Human Rights Day Committee, but has expanded scope. The Committee has decided to move the Human Rights Day Celebration to Saturday, December 14th out of respect to the Hmong New Year event. He stated that there is a subcommittee working on a larger venue space to accommodate the event. Commissioner Snell stated story-telling will be a major focus again this year and that public and private collaborations/partnerships are being considered. He stated that resources tables will be brought back in 2019. Commissioner Snell stated the committee discussed that speaker focus would be on stories from the community and would not highlight speeches from elected officials. He also stated that the committee is planning to work with local organizations to bring in art that will also be used to tell Human Rights' stories.

Commissioner Snell stated that the committee also discussed partnering with other organizations for listening sessions, but not necessarily planning individual ERC listening sessions in 2019 due to the 75th Anniversary event and strategic planning. Commissioner Snell stated that the 75th Anniversary event would be held either September 10th or 12th in the City Hall rotunda. He stated this event would be a time to include City leadership and to recognize former Commissioners. The event will also include a history video and will be marketed throughout the community. Commissioner Snell suggested that the ERC could also roll out the strategic plan during the 75th Anniversary event. Commissioner Ordonez also suggested that a legislative policy could be unveiled for the 75th, such as renaming Columbus Day, adding protections to Chapter 109, etc.

Commissioner Snell asked if the Commission was still entertaining the idea of a new ERC logo. Commissioner Ordonez suggested that the ERC find internal city graphic designers to work with or talk with DOA about requesting community designers to work on a new logo. Commissioner Bennett suggested this was a discussion for the Communications committee. Commissioner Guequierre stated that the Communication Committee had discussed it in the last meeting and that the committee had decided it was not a top priority over the next several months. Commissioner Bennett and Guequierre suggested a commemorative logo for the 75th anniversary.

5. Olek's "Love Across the USA" Project Proposal (Stacey Williams-Ng)

Stacey Williams-Ng thanked Commissioner Bennett for inviting her to the meeting. She stated that the project was no longer in need of financial support, but that she would love to have the ERC as a partner and would like to ask for some advice. Williams-Ng stated she runs a consulting agency called Wallpapered City that does murals and public art such as Black Cat Alley and Walnut Way. She stated that Olek is an internationally renowned feminist fiber artist

that had reached out about doing a project in the Milwaukee area. The project is called “Love Across the USA” and will be documented by Netflix for a documentary. She is going to states across the country to highlight “women’s work” by doing large crochet murals as public art. Her focus is to do portraits of underrepresented women, or women of color, such as Sojourner Truth. Williams-Ng stated Olek does not do all the crocheting on her own. Instead, she comes to the location and teaches 100-120 community volunteers to crochet in her style, and community volunteers all crochet small squares that will be put together by Olek’s team. Williams-Ng stated she has suggested Vel Phillips as the subject of the piece. She also stated Olek’s team has requested that a diverse group of community volunteers will work on the project. Williams-Ng stated she is seeking advice on how to bring in a diverse group of volunteers (Hmong, LGBTQ, Indigenous, etc.).

Commissioner Snell stated the ERC could reach out to all of our partnering organizations to help recruit a diverse volunteer pool. Commissioner Bennett also suggested that it is very clear that anyone can volunteer, regardless of skill and experience. Commissioner Ashley suggested that Williams-Ng connect with Jonah from Lacrosse, who has made international news with his crochet skills. Commissioner Snell suggested panels be crocheted in different neighborhoods as well. Williams-Ng stated the tentative installation date is September 14th. Williams-Ng stated they do not yet have an outdoor location to hang the piece. Commissioner Snell stated that City Hall hangs large pieces on the building and Commissioner Ashley stated that St. Frances church on Vel Phillips Ave has a large enough space. She also suggested that they reach out to the faith community for volunteers. Commissioner Guequierre also suggested they reach out to the homeless population to help crochet the pieces. The Commission also suggested the team think about having it be a traveling art piece.

Commissioner Ordonez stated the ERC would be able to help target diverse audiences and could help craft the wording for outreach. He also stated the ERC can also work to put together a list of potential locations, including City Hall. She stated it would hang for 4-6 weeks. Commissioner Ashley suggested it be moved inside when the weather gets bad so that it can be hanging for longer. Commissioner Snell stated Vel Phillips also made an impact in Madison as Secretary of State.

6. Inclusive Restrooms Discussion

Commissioner Ordonez stated the Legislative Reference Bureau completed a report regarding inclusive restrooms in peer cities. Commissioner Snell stated that we need to move from the term “gender inclusive restrooms” to “inclusive restrooms/bathrooms.” Commissioner Ordonez stated the study covers what cities have mandated inclusive restrooms within city/state buildings and what municipalities have done it city-wide by ordinance. He stated the report also includes fiscal notes. Commissioner Guequierre stated he was happy with the report and happy to see there is more than ample precedent across the country for the city to take action on this issue. He also stated he was happy to see low costs and that there is a range of ways to implement the change. He stated the report gives the ERC the base of information needed to move forward on the project.

Commissioner Bennett stated DPW would need to provide a comprehensive list of all city bathrooms and the bathroom occupancy requirement. She stated multiple options should be considered. Commissioner Snell suggested the ERC propose a workgroup that would include Commissioner Guequierre, Commissioner Bennett, community members, and representatives from DPW. Commissioner Guequierre stated the workgroup could outline both short-term and long-term remedies. Jessica Langill stated there are two representatives from DPW that have already agreed to be a part of the process.

Commissioner Ordonez stated it was important to set a timeframe for the workgroup to have recommendations to bring back to the Commission. He stated the workgroup would need to come up with an implementation plan and some findings that would guide the Commission in moving forward with bringing inclusive restrooms to the city. Commissioner Bennett suggested it would only take a couple months to have a recommendation and implementation plan. Commissioner Ordonez stated that inclusive restrooms in city buildings could be approved through executive order, but that expanding it city-wide would need an ordinance. Commissioner Ordonez suggested UWM be included in the workgroup since they have brought inclusive restrooms to their campus. Commissioner Ordonez requested the workgroup come back with a preliminary report in July. Commissioner Ordonez stated he would send Jessica Langill a formal letter that states the ERC is creating an Inclusive Restrooms Workgroup that will include the criteria. He asked Commissioner Guequierre to chair the committee and appointed Commissioner Bennett to the workgroup as well.

Shelley Gregory, FORGE, thanked the Commission for moving this issue forward. Gregory requested that the workgroup also consider multi-user bathrooms. Gregory recommended that city messaging be focused on universal access. Gregory also stated the LRB report was not comprehensive as there are many more municipalities and states that have implemented inclusive restrooms. Commissioner Ordonez asked Gregory to send the ERC any additional information that was missed in the report. Commissioner Snell also asked Gregory to be a representative on the workgroup. Gregory cautioned the Commission that there are a lot of people who are coming forward as knowledgeable advocates who may not actually have the expertise needed to be beneficial to the workgroup.

John Griffith stated he is very supportive of bringing inclusive restrooms to the City. He stated the workgroup should highlight the fact that money will be saved in the future on duplicitous bathrooms. Commissioner Snell stated that Griffith is on the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging. Rebecca Rabatin

1:15

7. Strategic Planning Update

8. Community Dialogue & Upcoming Events

9. Next Meeting Date: *TENTATIVE* Wednesday May 15th, 2019

10. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 3:57pm

jml