

Isabella County Human Rights Committee Minutes
December 7, 2020
Zoom Meeting

Attending:

Maureen Eke, Chairperson (joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)
Elizabeth Husbands, Vice Chair (joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)
County Commissioner Steve Swaney (joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)
Cheryl Gonzalez (joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)
Alicia Paterni (joining from Shepherd, MI)
Erica Hopcraft (joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)
Shelly Smith (joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)
Laura Gonzales (joining from Mt. Pleasant Union Township, MI)
Laura Gourlay (joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)
Sarvjit Chowdhary (joining from Mt. Pleasant Union Township, MI)
Matt Mertz (joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)
Mark Elgersma, HRC graduate intern (joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)

Un/Excused Absences:

Amy Shawboose

Guests:

Nicole Frost (Zoom room host joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)
Mount Pleasant Police Director Paul Lauria (Director of Public Safety/Chief of Police at City of Mt. Pleasant joining from Mt. Pleasant, MI)

Minutes

- 1) **Welcome:** Dr. Maureen Eke called the meeting to order at 5:18. She held a mic check and location check. Locations are reflected above with the attendance notes.
- 2) **Agenda:** Dr. Maureen Eke asked somebody to approve the agenda.
 - a) Laura Gonzales asked that two points be moved under the Community Education Subcommittee.
 - b) Laura Gonzales moved to approve the agenda as amended. Sarvjit Chowdhary seconded.
- 3) **Public Comments:**
 - a) Mount Pleasant Police Director Paul Lauria: no new business, the Mt. Pleasant Police Department has been introducing more diversity and inclusion training for its staff. .

- i) Training was put on by Rodney Patterson, titled “Dissecting Racism.” Rodney Patterson looked at the history of racism and its role in power dynamics.
 - (1) Rodney Patterson looked at race as constructed; Patterson has worked with many schools and police departments. He argues that if race is constructed, it could be deconstructed.
 - (2) He stated that it’s vital to understand how race is construction from exercises of power. The hostilities are sourced from a construction. This then gives rise to discrimination and bias.
 - (3) The implication, he stated, is that race is not an inherent value or identity.
 - (4) The effects of race and racism, although constructed, are not nonexistent. It’s important to remember the actual lived effects of these things.
 - (5) The Isabella County Human Rights Committee will collaborate with the department to plan another training next year (2021).
- ii) Mount Pleasant Police Director Paul Lauria sent the Use of Force policy to Dr. Maureen Eke, and she will disseminate to the group at large.
- iii) Dr. Maureen Eke deeply thanked Mount Pleasant Police Director Paul Lauria on behalf of the HRC
 - (1) Cheryl Gonzalez seconded this, as he has shared a lot of knowledge about law enforcement in the community with us. .
 - (2) Laura Gourlay believed that he is a vital part of the community as well.

4) **November Minutes:**

- a) Suggestions:
 - i) Alicia Paterni stated that titles should be consistent along with tense.
 - ii) Cheryl Gonzalez stated that Laura Gourlay’s name appears several times in the attendance notes.
 - iii) Dr. Maureen Eke asked that the minutes be posted on the Google Drive to be edited by the larger group.
- b) The edits will be applied and shared with the committee at large, and the committee will vote on the minutes in January along with the December minutes.

5) **End of Year Report:** Report to the Board of Commissioners went well, and Dr. Maureen Eke was able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the HRC in a trying time.

- a) Cheryl Gonzalez, Laura Gonzales, and County Commissioner Steve Swaney were able to attend.

6) **I’m Still Here**

- a) Elizabeth Husbands moves that we hold a meeting separate from the general HRC meeting in February.

- b) The HRC will put together information as soon as possible and share it, as we will then be able to have others outside the committee.
 - c) Laura Gourlay recommends February 15, 6-7 pm, as members would likely have it available.
- 7) Clare Gratiot Isabella County (CGI) Human Trafficking Coalition**
- a) Next month is Anti-Human Trafficking and Human Slavery Month
 - i) Clare Gratiot Isabella County (CGI) Human Trafficking Coalition is looking at doing an event next month, and the HRC might be able to collaborate with them, being a co-sponsor. The event would be January 28, 2021, 7-8 pm.
 - ii) Recovery, Independence, Safety, & Empowerment (RISE) Advocacy, Inc., Elizabeth Husband's workplace, will be working with CGI Human Trafficking Coalition as well.
 - iii) Laura Gonzales moved to collaborate with CGI Human Trafficking Coalition and RISE Advocacy, Inc. for the January 28, 2021 event. Alicia Paterni seconded.
 - (1) Elizabeth Husbands abstained, as she is an employee of RISE.
 - (2) Dr. Maureen Eke, for transparency, stated that she brought up the possible collaboration to the CGI at their most recent meeting.
 - (3) Motion passes unanimously, with only Elizabeth Husbands abstaining.
- 8) Community Education Subcommittee**
- a) The subcommittee reviewed the Isabella County Human Rights Committee informational powerpoints and the two letters for clarity and transparency. The next meeting will be December 9 at 5:30 pm.
 - i) PowerPoint - The presentation was revised from Dr. Maureen Eke's presentation to the Student Government Association at Central Michigan University
 - ii) Mt. Pleasant Board of Education - Laura Gourlay stated that she would like to read the letter in January at the Mt. Pleasant Board of Education Meeting. It regards the Mount Pleasant Public School's statement regarding diversity and inclusion.
 - (1) Elizabeth Husbands moved to have Laura Gourlay read the letter with the support of the HRC. Cheryl Gonzalez seconded.
 - (a) Motion passed unanimously
 - iii) Alicia Paterni stated that she would like to send a letter regarding accessibility to the Interim Superintendent at Shepherd Public Schools.
 - (1) Laura Gourlay recommended that Alicia Paterni send the letter to the Shepherd School Board rather than the interim superintendent.

(a) Laura Gonzales stated that Alicia Paterni might be able to send it to both the interim superintendent and the school board alike.

(2) Dr. Maureen Eke recommended that the letter be sent from the HRC rather than Alicia Paterni as an individual.

(a) As such, Laura Gourlay stated that Alicia Paterni should revise the letter based on this discussion, and the HRC will be able to vote on the letter at a later date.

9) **Disability Subcommittee** - Matt Mertz had no new business

10) **Law Enforcement Subcommittee** - Maureen Eke had no new business

11) **Isabella County Restoration House**

a) Dr. Maureen Eke stated that food insecurity seemed to be the largest issue as is with the pandemic. This has been reflected in food pantry numbers and requests for support.

i) The Isabella County Restoration House (ICRH) has been attempting to address this.

12) **International Day of Human Rights**

a) The event will begin on December 10, and the Isabella County Human Rights Committee will release videos in which people will read the articles of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

b) The Blue Background with the Green fist seemed to be the flyer with the greatest support.

c) County Commissioner Steve Swaney, Dr. Maureen Eke, and Laura Gourlay have volunteered to read for the event. Others will email Mark Elgersma if they wish to participate as well.

13) **Human Rights Brochure**

a) Mark Elgersma designed a brochure for groups to review to begin a human rights group.

i) As the issue is not pressing, the vote will be moved to the January meeting regarding the vote.

14) **Martin Luther King Jr. Week announcement had been posted by Central Michigan University**

a) Laura Gonzales will send a link regarding the events on the week of January 17, and we will review them for the next meeting.

15) **Announcements:**

a) Contact Mark regarding the International Day of Human Rights event as soon as possible.

16) **Questions:**

a) Matt Mertz asked if the local activist groups have graduating members, and how the HRC might be able to best network with them.

- i) Committee members will reach out to their connections to explore possibilities.

17) Dr. Maureen Eke asked for a motion to adjourn.

- a) Matt Mertz motioned to adjourn. Elizabeth Husbands seconded.
 - i) Passed unanimously.