

**MEETING OF THE MONROE COUNTY  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

Wednesday, July 26, 2017 at 5:00 p.m.

1. Roll Call and Call to Order
  - a. Members present were: Sharon Ackerman, Byron Bangert, Darcie Fawcett, Doris Parlette, Eric Sader, Kathleen Sideli and Paul White. Staff present: Margie Rice, County Attorney.
2. Members introduced themselves, with new member, Eric Sader, explaining that he is currently the City of Bloomington's assistant director for housing and neighborhood development. He also teaches courses at IU.
3. Minutes for June were reviewed. Doris Parlette moved acceptance and Darcy Fawcett seconded the motion. Minutes were accepted unanimously.
4. Old Business
  - a. Jail tour: Kathleen Sideli reviewed the reasons the meeting in June was used to visit the local jail. She invited those who participated to comment on their impressions. She herself was surprised at the crowded conditions, the minimal nature of the sleeping mats and the length of time individuals are kept in the jail which Sam Crow, the jail commander, explained had to do with allowing them to serve most, if not all of, their time locally prior to their trials. It seems as if this may have been his interpretation and not necessarily an intentional plan of the prosecutors. Department of Corrections has more complete services so it isn't necessarily an advantage for individuals to serve their time locally. Many are held longer due to previous offenses and probation problems. Many cannot post bail. Others were equally dismayed at the crowded conditions and the minimal space for rehabilitation activities. The layout of the facility is also not in keeping with best practices today. All were surprised that there are no longer face-to-face visits permitted since those have been replaced by on-line visitation. (After the meeting there was an article in the HT regarding this same issue now being mandated in Lawrence County).

The group felt as if follow-up action was in order. At the very least we could write a letter to the County Commissioners regarding the overcrowding, the length of time spent in the facility and a lack of sufficient programming space. The jail was built for 127 and now has over 200 located there. (An article in the HT a few days after the meeting indicated that the official 'cap' is 278 but the jail has routinely edged over 300 in the preceding weeks.

The group decided it may be best to invite the Chief Probation Officer to a future meeting to discuss how things are handled. Afterwards we can consider whether a letter is in order or whether we should speak with the County Commissioners at one of their meetings.

- b. July 4 Parade: There was positive feedback about participating in the parade. Many onlookers recognized the Human Rights banner and specifically cheered the marchers on. Paul White said he specifically chose to march with our group instead of another since he is

known in the community as a conservative and wanted to show his commitment to human rights.

- c. Fair Labor Initiative: The group reviewed briefly the history of the Fair Labor initiative as conducted by the City's Human Rights Commission. Byron Bangert indicated that the group has gone quiet on this issue right now. The group agreed to put this on the back burner for the moment. The City might focus on educational outreach to the Hispanic community to sensitize them to workers' rights rather than to continue contacting restaurants to ask for them to pledge that they are following fair labor standards. There has been no further news on the investigations into some of the restaurants beyond what was initially reported in the local press about a handful of establishments.

#### 5. New Business

- a. Margie Rice had received a formal complaint through the HRC site from a Bloomington employee who was concerned about the rigors of lifeguard training which seem intentionally directed at young people, given the intensity of the hours involved and the high costs of devoting those hours to training. Rice told her that it didn't fall under our jurisdiction but referred the individual elsewhere. It is believed that it was resolved as a Human Resources issue.
- b. Rice mentioned the upcoming Summit on the opioid crisis, organized by Shelli Yoder and Amanda Barge. It would be good for some of our group to attend it on Thursday, September 28, 9 – 5.
- c. There has been a request to see if Bloomington could be part of the Compassionate Cities Initiative. This is something put forward by religious leaders. Indianapolis has already engaged in this. According to Byron Bangert, the Monroe County Religious Leaders looked at it a while back but hadn't gotten positive encouragement to move forward despite it being on their agenda for a couple of years. John Venderzee was the convener of the group but it is not David Garshaw.

6. With no new complaints, no Commission nor public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

K. Sideli