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HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

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ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY SERVICES
JANUARY 3, 2020
CIVIC CENTER ROOM 301

MINUTES

MEMBERS

Megan Utley
Matt Hoffmann
Mark Weatherwax
Robert Guzzo
Brian Kellems

STAFF

Diane Clements-Boyd

The monthly meeting of the Advisory Board on Disability Services was called to order on the above date by Chairman Matthew Hoffmann.

All recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Requests – There were no requests added to the agenda.

Roll was called with the above named board members and staff in attendance.

It was reported that there were corrections to be made to the December 2019 minutes. The first discrepancy noted was under the 2020 Priorities. Board member Guzzo reported AccessAbility issues were listed under the ordinance revision section and it should have been listed separately. It was also not recorded that the director was to arrange a meeting with members of the Advisory Board, Chairperson Robert Dion of the Human Relations Commission and Chairperson David Wagner of the Social Status of African American Males. Board Member Guzzo reported that the minutes did not reflect that the director would contact board member Goebel to determine if she is still interested in being a board member and to ask the City Council to appoint another person. It was properly moved and seconded by board members Weatherwax and Utley respectively to accept the minutes of the December meeting with the noted corrections. Board members voted unanimously.

Director Clements-Boyd reported that instead of revised minutes being given out the corrections would be reflected in the January minutes. She also reported that she has tried to contact Board Member Goebel and has been unsuccessful. It was reported that the call to replace or remove members is the call of the appointing board and they do receive the attendance records of the boards.

There was confusion as whether or not the director was supposed to share the link with the board members for applying to the various boards but she said she would do that.

PRESENTATIONS:

No presentations scheduled at this time.

NEW BUSINESS:

Disability Awareness Month – March 2020

The director reported that the state has not announced the theme for Disability Awareness Month and the board usually adopts the theme used by the state. Board members Guzzo and Hoffmann reported that the theme was announced at the state conference in November but neither could remember it. Director Clements-Boyd reported that the website may not have been updated yet due to the holidays. The director asked for ideas and suggestions from the board members on what can be done for public awareness. She reported this is the 30th anniversary of the ADA and the focus could be making others aware by engaging businesses and promoting employee resource groups for employees with disabilities commonly known as affinity groups. She also encouraged doing what is most beneficial for people with disabilities in the month of March that would best highlight an important issue and have a significant impact. It was reported there may be ideas and suggestions online.

Board member Weatherwax reported he heard that 25% of all Americans have a disability. He explained that he would like to get that information out but doesn't quite know how to do that. Board member Guzzo reported that he heard the same statistics and his personal opinion is that quoting high numbers does a disservice to people with disabilities and the ADA. He reported that many people have disabilities and there are different levels and degrees of disabilities ranging from moderate to severe and the focus should be on the five or ten percent who have more significant life limiting abilities.

Board member Bozikis added that businesses like to use statistics and some employees just think so what. The numbers become irrelevant to them so messaging has to be more than numbers and percentages.

The director reported that the banner is placed in front of the civic center in March and it is only up for one day. Board member Guzzo inquired about having the banner up for the entire month or at least longer than just one day. He is interested in having posters put up in the building on each floor and possibly more than just one per floor. The director did explain that there are designated areas for posting information and she will check with the building's general manager on having the sign up longer and where posters can be hung to be more visible. Director Clements-Boyd reported that in past years the board has put announcements in the newspaper and held a press conference in the mayor's chambers. It is important to let the community know what the Advisory Board is about and where to go for assistance. Since this is the 30th anniversary this should be a bigger production. If local statistics can be found even if it is census data, that can be provided in a statement. There needs to be thought put into whatever the board wants to do. The director will look

over notes of previous years for more ideas. Board member Bozikis asked about the board's Facebook page and the director reported that one has to have access to it. The director reported that the page was deleted, but the past chairperson created a new page. Chairman Hoffmann reported that he will contact him to get the information for the page. The director will email the agenda and other information of the past news conference to board member Bozikis.

OLD BUSINESS:

2020 Priorities –

Meeting with Other Board Chairs –

The director reported that Dave Wagner is aware that the board wants to meet with them. She was unable to schedule a meeting for December because of Dr. Dion's class schedule. Dr. Dion was also unavailable in December due to winter break.

Board member Weatherwax said he wrote a letter to the director about addressing the new city council for a part time/full time person for assistance to the Advisory Board. He put together a letter that he would like each board member to send to the city council to help in getting assistance. The director appreciates what he is doing but she did explain that departments such as Human Relations might not be given high consideration. She explained that she has been to council meetings and has seen departments get funding for new positions but they are much larger departments and are considered essential services. It will not be as easy for this department. She explained that it is not just here but her colleagues across the country face the same challenges when it comes to funding new positions. The board hopes that between the three boards together and others who think that staffing is a problem might join in. Director Clements-Boyd reported that request will be vetted and it has to be clear as to what the board wants. Bloomington is a model city as far as having a full time person over cultural commissions. Indiana Civil Rights Commission does not have a disability advisory commission, but they do have a full time person that works with Social Status Commission and the Women's Commission. It would be good to search cities that are comparable in size to Evansville that have full time positions and not only in Indiana but in other states as well. It's important to make the case and let it be known the successes and accomplishments of having a person to do the work of the board. It was reported that there is a small town in northern Indiana that has a very active disability rights group within municipal government. The director reported that timing is key and new city council members may have new ideas and be supportive. It was reported that it is best to try to get funding for 2021 and the board knows that it may not happen then but it can be said that the 2020 Advisory Board tried to make a difference.

The Transition Fair and Homeless Connect are events that the board has participated in past years. The director reported that the date is set for Homeless Connect but she did not have the exact date.

The director reported that she will try to set up the meeting with the Bob Dion and David Wagner and that Tuesday and Thursday are better days for Dr. Dion. It was decided to meet on the January 23rd at 3:00 in HRC office with board members Hoffmann, Weatherwax and Guzzo representing the board. The director will let the board know for sure if they are available.

Ordinance Revision –

This will be taken off the agenda.

AccessAbility Decal Program – Chairman Hoffmann reported that he has not heard back from his contact but he will send another email and will call him if there is no response to the email.

Resource Guide –

Board members hope the resource guides will be replaced by Finders. Board member Guzzo asked members at the December meeting to access Finders website to try it out. The only problem reported was with the screen reader. Board member Bozikis spoke briefly on using screen readers. Board member Guzzo will contact Finders to get information about how to proceed with getting Evansville agencies on the site.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Board member Kellems gave information on an event sponsored by Special Olympics on January 17, 2020.

Board Member Weatherwax reported that e-scooters are restricted on the greenways, which he questioned, and was informed that no form of transportation is allowed.

The Advisory Board on Disability Services was properly adjourned.