

City of Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission Workplan Session – Notes

Monday, December 9th, 2024 from 5—6pm at City Hall Council Chambers

Attending: Angie, Doug, Ron, Julee, Katelyn, Rick, Chery, Cindy

Absent: Amy

This information was collected through reflection and dialogue, and then used to guide the initial planning of the 2025 Human Rights Commission Work Plan.

What were successes/should we keep?

- **Events**
 - o Indigenous Peoples Day – student portion great, would have liked more community engagement
 - o Juneteenth – need to increase participation
 - o Pride event
 - Lots of community members wanting to be involved after that event
 - Lots of community interest and great community participation
- **Marketing**
 - o New banners!
- **Presentations & Training**
 - o Outside organization presentations
 - Justin Page from MN Dept. Civil rights
 - GRPD Chief Morgan
 - o Onboarding
 - Doing more – still need to do more

What were our challenges or barriers?

- **Community Engagement**
 - o Lack of community participation
 - o Students at MN North – concerns of safety and feeling welcome in community
- **Commissioner Expectations**
 - o Planning too late
 - o Time & other time commitments
 - o Participation of commissioners
 - Are expectations clear for work groups, showing up, volunteering equally?
 - Lack of quorum
 - o Subject matter – staying on task?
- **Missing – mission-focused work**
 - o Lot of time in meetings spent on marketing and business (though necessary) also takes away from discussion around issues in community
 - *Briefly discussed looking at other rules to run meetings (i.e. get rid of Roberts Rules)*
 - o Should have done more with Pride (larger sponsorship, actively volunteer, etc.)
- **Others**
 - o Seek opportunities for funding
 - o Systemic structures
 - Sexism, racism, ableism, etc.

What else could we be doing

- **Presentations & Data** – Continue having speakers come to the Commission; Do more with data collection in a variety of capacities.
 - o Work with GRPD and Chief Morgan
 - 2024 Bias report
 - *Other reports / opportunities to partner*
 - o Protected Classes
 - Scanning and ensuring we are hitting on all and finding opportunities to support wide range
 - Better statistics on understanding our community, diversity, and the needs
 - o More guest speakers
 - Community partners
 - school personnel
 - others
 - o 2-303. F – *data collection on low-income concentrations within the city and send recommendations to planning commission and council*
 - o Reports to utilize or seek out re: data
 - MN Community Civil Rights Needs Report – *To be released February 2025*
 - ALICE
 - HRA – PIT report
 - KOOTASCA
- **Events**
 - o More events for Juneteenth
 - o Education to the public on protected classes
 - o Increase event participation through advertising
 - Use of radio, newspaper, etc.
- **Partners**
 - o Find a group to partner with like the blankets for homeless etc. of food bank
 - o Partner with other city departments / commissions
- **Policy**
 - o Policy recommendations / engaging with City Council
 - o Voting protections
- **Others**
 - o Seek additional funding
 - o Do what we can to make GR more welcoming (ex. bring back “all are welcome” materials)
 - o Combat misinformation – *what is our role or how can we support*
 - o Discussion and/or actions on national/international human rights situations
 - o Plan for the future to find ways to engage the next generation to take our places in future

WHAT and WHO is missing?

- **Housing / Homelessness**
- **Mental Health**
 - o Community-based options for MH crisis (instead of police response)
- **Partner/Community Connections**
 - o Opportunities to bring in students for planning / volunteering?
 - o More interaction with other community stakeholders (schools, religious, social organizations, etc.)
 - o Opportunities for connection in faith and nonfaith communities

- Big View – how to help support and create a wider reach
- **DEI/IDEA + Recruitment**
 - Need to recruit more commissioners generally
 - *Unaware of the diversity of current commission make up – opportunity here to learn more*
 - Government Academy
 - Opportunities to help push visibility in different groups of people outside of facebook and newspaper
 - Other ways to recruit and engage?
 - Diverse population – ensuring representation and activities
 - Indigenous / Native American distrust of GR (city, policies, groups)
- **Others**
 - Accountability framework for City – ensuring actions by City (policies, regulations, projects, etc.) are viewed through a human rights lens
 - Immigration & Welcoming Communities
 - What opportunities are available here?