

VILLAGE OF LIBERTYVILLE
Human Relations Commission
DRAFT

Minutes
July 22, 2020

A meeting of the Human Relations Commission was held on July 22, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. virtually through GoToMeeting. Those in attendance included Commission Members: Sharon Starr, Tom Gore, Wolfgang Josenhans, David Young, Rashied Davis, Brenda O'Connell and Jennifer Rich. Also, in attendance was Mayor Terry Weppler, Trustee Donna Johnson and Deputy Village Administrator Ashley Engelmann.

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Starr began by welcoming new members Rashied Davis, Brenda O'Connell and Jennifer Rich to the Commission. She asked that each member introduce themselves and provide a brief background on their experience as it relates to the Human Relations Commission.

Open Meetings Act Overview

Deputy Engelmann gave a brief overview of the Open Meetings Act ("OMA"). Explaining that the HRC falls under the rules of the OMA. She noted that it is important to ensure that items discussed during the meeting are listed on the agenda and that e-mails are sent so that the whole Commission is blind copied to ensure that reply to all is not selected which could potentially lead to having a discussion via e-mail that would be in violation of the OMA.

She noted that each of the new members should have received a letter in the mail from the Village Administrator welcoming them, providing a copy of the Appointed Officials Handbook and instructing them how to take the electronic open meetings act training which is required to be completed within the first 90 days of their appointment.

Trustee Johnson noted that if 3 or more members begin a discussion regarding a topic pertaining to the HRC a quorum for the purpose of the OMA would occur, which result in a meeting under the OMA.

Scope of the Human Relations Commission

Chairman Starr discussed the duties and powers of the HRC per the Village Code:

- To review and make recommendations to the president and board of trustees with respect to the adoption of an affordable housing plan and any ordinances and/or regulations implementing such plan, as provided by the Affordable Housing and Appeal Act, 310 ILCS 67/1 et seq.
- To foster, encourage and stimulate the improvement of relations among and between citizens of all races, creeds, national origins and economic and educational levels; and to provide all individuals with an equal opportunity to grow and participate to the best of their ability in the economic educational, social and cultural activities available in the community and enhance the quality of life of all residents.

She noted that with respect to the scope of the Commission if it meets the guidelines of the duties and powers it is within the scope.

Deputy Engelmann added that currently the HRC has two focuses which include the draft attainable housing ordinance and identifying and planning small group discussions for the community. She noted that we will try to conduct separate meetings for the two topics. The next meeting will be held on August 12 at 5:00 p.m. to discuss the attainable housing ordinance.

Small Group Discussion Planning

Chairman Starr introduced the topic of small group discussions. She noted that she and the Mayor discussed the idea of hearing from the community on if and where inequalities may exist or what opportunities there may be for us to improve the quality of life and access to the Village. She stated that the goal of the meetings would be to give residents a chance to speak freely and openly.

Member Rich asked if the intention of the August meeting was to push the attainable housing document to final because she wants to ensure that if there are issues that are raised during the small-group discussions related to housing that there is an opportunity to address them.

Chairman Starr noted that it is not final yet. If there are things that we should or need to tweak there will be an opportunity.

The Mayor noted that there is a legislative process that must occur in which a recommendation from the HRC would be presented at a public hearing by the Plan Commission and then final approval of the ordinance by the Village Board.

Deputy Engelmann further clarified that once the draft is ready to be recommended it will first go to the Village Board to ensure that it is line with their goals and then the public hearing would occur by the Plan Commission because there is a zoning amendment that would occur to establish a section in the Village Code for attainable housing. Then it would go to the Village Board for final approval.

Trustee Johnson also noted that the Comprehensive Planning Committee has been meeting the document contemplates attainable housing. In addition, she further clarified that Committees and Commissions are recommending bodies to the Village Board and that no final action is taken at these levels.

Member O'Connell asked where the areas are in the community that the Village has control over which would help us design and focus the small group discussions. She also asked what is in-bounds or out of bounds. What answers are we looking for at the end of these discussions.

Mayor Weppeler responded that he asked Sharon for the HRC to take on this goal because he had been approached by members of the public wanting him to hold a town hall meeting but he felt small group discussions would provide a more open opportunity for conversation and to discuss ways for us to improve. The goal is to find out if there are issues and what are they and how can we address them.

Member Rich noted that it is important that if we are asking the public to participate in these meetings and share their issues and concerns that there are actual changes or actionable items that can be achieved.

The Mayor noted that the HRC has recommending authority for changes to the Village Board.

Trustee Johnson stated that as a representative of the HRC we can work to get members of the community experiences shared.

Chairman Starr expressed the importance of giving people an opportunity to talk freely.

Member Rich asked if these meetings are open to anyone, even those members that do not currently live in Libertyville but may aspire to live here.

Trustee Johnson noted that in this community economics do pay a role in access to the community. We want to be sensitive to this issue from all perspectives. There are people who don't feel as comfortable, but it is important for their feelings and message to be conveyed to us.

Chairman Starr discussed diversity as a goal for the community.

Member Davis asked if our goal is to try to make Libertyville more affordable to those that grew up here or to give more people the opportunity to live here that otherwise would not be able to.

Trustee Johnson responded that she believes it is both.

Chairman Starr discussed the hope of reducing barriers to living in Libertyville by having an attainable housing ordinance.

Chairman Starr returned the conversation to the goals of the small-group discussions.

Member O'Connell stated that we need to ensure that the meetings are focused on Village policies that can be influenced.

Deputy Engelmann pointed to an example of Guiding Principles for Diversity and Inclusion from Homewood as an example and noted that the Commission could look at adopting guiding principles to help begin to focus areas to address in Village operations.

Member Gore liked the idea because that way we can have a guide for being consistent and what we want to accomplish. Once we identify this then we can figure out the approach.

Member Davis noted that often these types of group discussions do not lead to actionable items and he wants to make sure there is an opportunity for change as a result of the discussions.

Trustee Johnson noted that we need to take the feedback we get and then look at what is realistic and what are the top areas to focus on and communicate that.

Trustee Johnson suggested that we get input from the community and then we could develop a template for guiding principles and small-group focused discussions.

Deputy Engelmann suggested that we develop a survey to gather this input from the community.

The Commission agreed that a survey would be a good idea. It was determined that Deputy Engelmann and Chairman Starr would work to develop a draft to send to the group for review before publishing it. The survey would be offered during the first two weeks of August and then the results would be discussed at the September 5, 2020 HRC meeting.

Meeting Schedule

Deputy Engelmann noted that the HRC typically meets the first Wednesday of the month at 5:00 p.m. She asked if this would work for the members. Member Davis noted he may have a conflict but was ok with leaving the meeting as planned for now.

Adjournment

Trustee Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Member Gore seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Engelmann
Deputy Village Administrator