

**EDINA HUMAN RIGHTS & RELATIONS COMMISSION  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2009  
7:00 PM – MAYOR’S CONFERENCE ROOM**

**Members Present**

Arnie Bigbee  
John Cashmore  
Jessi Kingston  
Bob Mayer  
Shara Mohtadi  
Meg Newell  
Ralph Overholt  
Russ Stanton  
Emma Weisberg

**Member Absent**

Lisa Finsness

**Guests**

Gordon Hughes  
Gwen Jackson  
Roger Knutson

**Staff**

Susan Howl

**Agenda Approved**

Member Cashmore seconded Member Bigbee’s motion to approve the agenda of this meeting—November 24, 2009. The motion carried.

**Funding Process, Domestic Partner Benefits & Open Meeting Law Discussed**

Gordon Hughes—City Manager, and Roger Knutson—City Attorney, were introduced and welcomed. Regarding the funding of human services, Mr. Knutson explained that the City of Edina is a creature of the State of Minnesota and cannot do anything on its own. Edina, without a charter, is a statutory city and cannot make charitable contributions or fund political activities. However, the City could fund the speakers for particular public events. As long as providers act as the City’s agent for human services that the City could otherwise provide, professional services—such as a food shelf—can be funded. However, it would be beneficial to have a contract in place with each provider, specifically detailing the proposed use of the funding. In regard to the Edina ABC Program, Mr. Hughes indicated he would meet with the Executive Director to investigate legitimate ways for the City to fund specific needs within the infrastructure of the ABC Program.

Regarding the question of domestic partner benefits, the City’s insurance programs are covered by State Statute; however, there could be partner benefits such as sick and bereavement leave. The City must be mindful of the interplay between sick leave, bereavement and FMLA. What is done locally must meet minimum requirements under FMLA; however, the City, like other employers, is always free to provide benefits above and beyond federal FMLA and State leave laws. FMLA does not currently require that employers provide unpaid leave for the care of a domestic partner. At this time, specific State law only applies to married couples, but there is no statute that prevents the registration of domestic partnerships within a city. There were questions regarding the homestead law, and Mr. Hughes indicated he would provide follow-up information. The Commission indicated that it intended to continue its work on preparing a resolution with background for the City Council’s

consideration regarding domestic partner benefits and a City registry. This could be a topic for a work session with the City Council in 2010.

Regarding the Open Meeting Law and the requirement of public notice, serial and virtual meetings (group e-mail) are considered violations. Sub-committees numbering less than a Commission quorum would not require public notice. Special meetings of the Commission always require an agenda.

#### Revised Bylaws Accepted

Member Bigbee seconded the motion of Member Newell that the work of the Bylaws Committee—Members Bigbee, Kingston, and Stanton—be acknowledged and that the Bylaws revision be accepted by the Commission. The motion carried.

#### Domestic Partner Subcommittee Report Tabled

Student Member Mohtadi seconded Member Cashmore's motion that the Domestic Partner Subcommittee report be tabled until the Commission's meeting in December. The motion carried.

#### Report Given Regarding School District Equity Teams

Gwen Jackson, Director of Human Resources and Administrative Services of the School District, was introduced and welcomed. She shared that the School District's Diversity Council had unsuccessfully tried to find its purpose for the past three years. As a result, it has disbanded. In order to continue efforts to respect diversity, work will be done directly with each of the school buildings. The focus will be "race," and there will be diversity and equity training with the principal. Because the student population has changed quite a bit, this particular focus is necessary. Fifty people are being trained at this time in order to have an equity team within each of the buildings by spring of 2010. The overall goal is for people to be comfortable with people who are different and to learn about other cultures. The equity teams will provide training for all staff and opportunities for students. There will be students on the equity team at the High School. The Commission questioned whether the School District could broaden its definition of equity, and it was explained that learning about other cultures and races would help narrow the achievement gap. A Somali tutor is providing help for students after school, and their parents will be invited in to learn about expectations. A desired outcome is that counselors improve connections with students.

#### Minutes Approved

Member Mayer seconded the motion of Member Newell to approve the minutes of October 27, 2009; the motion carried.

#### Nominating Committee Selected

Members Bigbee, Mayer and Newell will constitute a Nominating Committee and will present a slate of officers to the full Commission for nominations at the February 2010 meeting.

**Commissioners Reminded of Upcoming Human Rights Day Conference**

On Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, the League of Minnesota Human Rights Commissions (LMHRC) will host the Human Rights Day Conference and Forum in St. Paul. The day will be filled with break-away sessions, and the Commissioners were reminded of particular ones to attend to qualify as attendees through Bremer funding.

**December Meeting Rescheduled**

In order to conduct business at hand before the holidays, the December Commission meeting was rescheduled to Tuesday, December 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Russell Stanton, Chair  
Edina Human Rights & Relations Commission

RS/sh