

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE  
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION  
January 12, 2022 – 5:30 PM  
SPECIAL MEETING**

**PRESENT:** Comms. Puentes, Rodriguez, Quinn, Sakiyama

**ABSENT:** Comms. Bencola, Terretta

**STAFF:** Cassandra Adediran, Dr. Danielle Walker

**CALL TO ORDER:** 5:48 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Comm. Sakiyama motioned for agenda approval Comm. Quinn provided a second. All were in favor.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Comm. Quinn motioned to approve minutes from the 11/16/2022 meeting; Comm Sakiyama seconded. Comm Quinn motioned to approve minutes from the 12/12/2022 meeting; Comm Sakiyama seconded.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

DEI Officer Dr. Walker opened the meeting by offering support for the intentional efforts of the Community Relations Commission (CRC) as it works on the 2023 Work Plan. She expounded on being of service. CRC members participated in answering what the does CRC do? Responses included:

- outreach to get the community voice and to better inform the [village] board,
- gathering information about how the community feels and their issues
- social justice issues/ key programming
- education
- financial support
- support different organizations through grants; speaks out against injustices via public comment
- provide opportunities for community building by connect people with such activities as Dinner & Dialogue

The CRC then select is top priorities:

1. stand up for social injustices/making recommendations to the board
2. awareness in the community

Next, the CRC reviewed its Mission Statement and concluded that the work that the CRC does aligns with the mission. However, some members of CRC felt that the CRC and the Community Relations Department (CRD) did not align due to misconceptions about the services that the

CRD provides to the community overall. Suggestions were made to possibly update the mission to reword “reduce tensions” and to add “belonging”, “equity”, “equitable service and treatment.” Dr. Walker thanked the CRC for their insight into what is included or missing from the mission statement.

The commissioners reviewed past work plans from 2013 to present to get an idea of what the CRC’s work plans have consisted of. Comments were made about the pushback that the current CRC has received about certain items on their work plans as opposed to the acceptance of [non-confrontational] events such as the Day In Our Village festival, [July 4<sup>th</sup>] parade, etc. Commissioners were encouraged to look at their top choices from the 2021-2022 Work Plan and focus on what the CRC can do effectively. Commissioners agreed on community engagement and institutional change. The use of technology and social media was proposed as an effective method to reach the community as well. Cultural events were described as the type of key event that the CRC desires to be involved in. Suggestions included a youth event (youth-lead pride event or intersectional event), educational event, annual workshop (intentional event) to invite the community to. VOP staff reminded members to be aware of all of the events that take place during the end of Spring through the end of the Summer seasons as there is burn-out. CRC agreed that the suggested activities can take place at other times of the year. In summation, the CRC suggested events which they can initiate and host annually.

The Commission moved on to talk about evaluations which have gone before the board. The commission was asked to think about a study that is needed in VOP. An example of asking Oak Park residents how they feel about belonging was used to go through the evaluation process. Chairwoman Rodriguez proposed that the commission not spend so much time on evaluations but rather deal with the capacity and accomplish a few things for the year. DR. Walker suggested having a built-in evaluation as part of the integration between the DEI office and the CRC, through the DEI Office and consultants. A question was asked if the CRC can evaluate the Village (Admin) on what they are aware of while they are making policy. An idea to break the work plan down into quarterly calendar and use the DEI tools to evaluate was offered.

Under the priority of “Awareness” education specifically for the commissioners was added as one of the priorities on the work plan, with training on the Racial Equity Toolkit as the first order. Future CRC meetings can start with updates on what is going on in the community as the training will enable the CRC members to better assist with other commissions and community members by disseminating knowledge. Other educational topics for commissioners included:

- Racial Equity Toolkit
- How to Build a Workshop
- Facilitating
- Research 101
- Public Speaking

CRC was asked to think about the components of the initiatives of the CRC and to also think about how the CRC is going to grow this year. Commissioners were discussed the vacancies that exist on the commission. The commission is seeking to have a diverse group with varying skill sets, backgrounds, and experience. The outreach for new members will be created around who would be a good fit for the CRC.

Prior the meeting’s end, in order to show the connection between the Community Relations Department and the CRC, Staff Cassandra Adediran provided insight into the overall work of the

CRC when dealing with the daily quality of life issues in the Oak Park community including investigations into fair housing, racial discrimination, landlord/tenant issues, mediation, community outreach in addition to the annual events that the CRC is aware of. Cassandra also commended the Commission for the efforts with the work of the commission despite not being fully staffed. The commission members acknowledged their clearer understanding of the connection between the Community Relations Commission and The Community Relations Department.

CRC Chairperson Rodriguez closed the meeting. The next regularly scheduled meeting which is on 1/18/2023.

Motion to adjourn was made by Comm. Sakiyama and seconded by Comm. Puentes. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.