

Chelsea Human Rights Commission

Annual Report

February 2021 – January 2022

Commissioners: Susan Morrel-Samuels, Chair; Joanne Ladio, Vice-Chair; Debbie Osborne, Secretary; Eric Stricklin, (to 3/21); Katy Tinsley, (4/21-8/21); Brenda Donaldson, (9-21-present)

Council Liaison: Tony Ianelli

The Chelsea Human Rights Commission carried out its 2021 Plan as adapted for restrictions necessitated by the COVID pandemic. The Commission's meetings were held remotely, with the exception of a few during the summer and early fall. Likewise, HRC programs were conducted remotely. The Commission hopes to return to in-person events at some point in 2022, conditions permitting.

Internal Activities

1. In March of 2021 the HRC held a work session to discuss the mission, vision and values that guide our work. Participants agreed that it would be useful to hold a session of this kind annually.
2. Commission members reviewed the HRC by-laws and submitted proposed amendments to City Council for approval in July of 2021. The proposed amendments to the by-laws were approved by Council, as revised, in October 2021.
3. Pursuant to its plan to share information and resources with Human Rights Commissions in other localities, the HRC heard presentations by leaders from the Jackson Human Relations Commission and the Traverse City Human Rights Commission concerning their structures and activities.

External Activities

1. City Council approved the HRC proposal for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) be engaged to provide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Implicit Bias Training for the Commission, City Council, and members of other City Boards and Commissions. This four-hour virtual training, facilitated by MDCR staff, took place in May of 2021 and included approximately 27 participants. MDCR conducted a follow-up survey and provided a final report to the City. The MDCR report included the following recommendations:
 - a. Conduct an organizational systems review;
 - b. Provide opportunities to increase cultural competence. . . at the individual and group level (Cultural competence is defined as the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own.);

- c. Create a core team with the purpose of increasing shared learning that shapes institutional change;
 - d. Provide opportunities to conduct root cause analysis to arrive at comprehensive solutions.
2. The HRC helped to coordinate and publicize a series of events in November 2021 under the umbrella of Civility Month. The Commission hosted a kick-off panel comprising local leaders and citizens who addressed this question: *Words like divisiveness, polarization, intolerance, bullying and meanness have been used to describe our current climate. How do these show up in your experience and what do you think we can do about it?* The panelists shared brief statements followed by discussion and questions from attendees. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Vince Elie. Panelists and their areas of expertise included: Dr. Julie Helber (schools), Jeanne Franks (faith community), Melissa Johnson (government), Jean Vargas (seniors), Michelle Tuplin (area business), Justin Heinze (parent and expert in school safety), and Kate Gaiser and Logan Dever (two youth School Board representatives from Chelsea High School). Approximately 40 people participated in this virtual presentation.

Additional Civility Month events included: Chelsea Community Forum; Civility in the Visual Arts; a CLARA workshop sponsored by One World One Family about building and maintaining respect and common ground; Twelve Angry Men movie and discussion hosted by CRC; and a Civil Discourse Workshop sponsored by Chelsea District Library.

3. Given COVID concerns, it was challenging to conduct in-person community awareness activities. A plan to have a table at Chelsea Expo was cancelled. The HRC Chair provided a presentation for Rotary members at their October meeting, and HRC members gave informal updates on Commission activities to groups they attended.
4. The HRC sponsored a panel in observance of Martin Luther King Day entitled *Health Equity: How Far Have We Come?* The speakers were Jeremy Lapedis, Executive Director of the Washtenaw Health Plan; Maria Militzer, Researcher and Community Organizer with Mexiquenses; and Spring Quinones, Community Impact Director with the American Heart Association. Forty-four people participated in the panel, which was held virtually.

The HRC also partnered on additional MLK activities, including a film and discussion at the Chelsea District Library, a multi-cultural concert hosted by First United Methodist Church, and a service event to collect art and school supplies and make fleece blankets for refugee families, sponsored by One World One Family.

Complaints

No formal complaints were received by the HRC in 2021.