

TOWN OF IPSWICH | MASSACHUSETTS
Ipswich Human Rights Commission
Tuesday, April 26, 2022; 7:00PM
Ipswich Town Hall, Meeting Room B2, 25 Green Street

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order:** H. Leonard called meeting to order at 7:07pm. *Meeting relocation, meeting reconvened, 7:19pm*
 - a. In Attendance:
 - i. IHRC member attendance: N. Mazer, C. Donehew, S. Shiffer, A. Markos, H. Leonard, L. Polvinen, S. Lynch, J. Duff (7:35pm), R. Thuotte (7:35pm)
 - ii. Not Present: C. Wms-Sweeney, B. Allen
 - b. Review of [4/12 minutes](#)
 - i. Edits proposed and approved
 - ii. N. Mazer, move to accept minutes, C. Donehew 2nd, All in favor
 - c. Review of Open Meeting Law permissibility for remote participations

2. **New Business**
 - a. Introductions of IHRC and Community Members in attendance
 - b. Discussions of some IHRC members attending Winthrop School Council meeting
 - i. N. M.-Shared perspective about clarifying Commission vision, expectations for responding to citizen requests, establish routines for attendance and policy/procedures for attendance of other public meetings as HRC members while ensuring members follow all appropriate regulations/laws.
 - ii. H.L.-Reads excerpts from [Open Meeting Law](#) Guide:
 1. *With certain exceptions, all meetings of a public body must be open to the public. A meeting is generally defined as “a deliberation by a public body with respect to any matter within the body’s jurisdiction.” As explained more fully below, a deliberation is a communication between or among members of a public body. These four questions will help determine whether a communication constitutes a meeting subject to the law:*
 - 1) *is the communication between or among members of a public body;*
 - 2) *if so, does the communication constitute a deliberation;*
 - 3) *does the communication involve a matter within the body’s jurisdiction; and*
 - 4) *if so, does the communication fall within an exception listed in the law?*
 2. *What constitutes a deliberation? The Open Meeting Law defines deliberation as “an oral or written communication through any medium, including electronic mail, between or among a quorum of a public body on any public business within its jurisdiction.”*
 3. *To be a deliberation, the communication must involve a quorum of the public body. A quorum is usually a simple majority of the members of a public body...Note that the expression of an opinion on matters within the body’s jurisdiction to a quorum of a public body is a deliberation, even if no other public body member responds. For example, if a member of a public body sends an email to a quorum of a public body expressing her opinion on a matter that could come before that body, this communication violates the law even if none of the recipients responds.*
 4. *The Open Meeting Law applies only to the discussion of any “matter within the body’s jurisdiction.” The law does not specifically define “jurisdiction.” As a general rule, any matter of public business on which a quorum of the public body may make a decision or recommendation is considered a matter within the jurisdiction of the public body.*
 - iii. A.M.- Don’t yet have established role in our community. Communications and decisions about meeting felt rushed, not a good way to move forward.
 - iv. S.L.- expressed concerns about group emails, clarifies IHRC role following a citizen’s request: gather information, bring it to the meeting, let the citizen know when/where we meet, and encourage to come. IHRC has to come up with a thoughtful response plan.
 - v. L.P.- Apologies for sending email, Plan about how to communicate to our group and put on the agenda items happening for discussion.
 - vi. S.S. - we learn from these things, helps us become clear about responding.
 - c. **Mission Statement**
 - i. S. Lynch: motion to revisit mission language, C.Donehew 2nd
 - ii. S.L-reference on agencies/community groups seemed narrow (businesses, religious, schools, local govt.)
 - iii. Discussions about alternative wording for “Agencies” (*local entities, institutions, all community*)

- iv. Discussion about what goes in “glossary” - how to ensure we define critical terms
 - v. S.S.- Vision is 10 yr plan, the reason for mission statement is to generate interest - don’t want to lose people with terminology.
 - vi. A.M. - important to state, in some capacity - our vision is to be “this” to the community - this is what we stand for, this is what we stand against. This is how we see ourselves as parts of the community. That needs to be clear in the vision. The terms - diversity, inclusion, discrimination - need to be in our glossary.
 - vii. SL - move to table discussion for a future meeting SS -2nd, vote to approve (8 - for, NM - against)
- d. Meeting Access
- i. J.D. - making sure all inclusive - want to think about meetings available virtually
 - 1. H.L. - according to open meeting law: *Remote participation may be used during a meeting of a public body if it has first been adopted by the chief executive officer of the municipality for local public bodies, the county commissioners for county public bodies, or by a majority vote of the public body for retirement boards, district, regional and state public bodies.* (OML pg.16)
 - ii. All boards committees/commissions - have a designated town point position - is this town manager’s office? Seek clarity with town hall -
 - 1. Town employee zoom account - what town zoom account would HRC use?
 - iii. liaison members and participation/attendance?
 - 1. AM-Impression was that they would rotate, important to include via email - request about attendance.

3. Citizen Queries:

- a. Has HRC discussed hate crime reporting processes?
 - i. Discussion of current status of HRC, plans for future.
 - ii. Conversation about anonymous reporting option rolled out with schools
- b. Has HRC identified ways for community members to engage with commission, request support, report issues, propose topics for IHRC to explore?
 - i. Discussion of need for Step-by-step process - table what needs to happen/who responds/how following reports
- c. What’s going forward next? What is the next step?
 - i. SS - one of us will send out the vision and mission and we will spend the next 2 weeks working on it,
 - ii. NM - start on a glossary of terms
- d. Found this meeting because I found out from website - how would somebody from community find out about commission meetings?
 - i. Communication
 - ii. Need to plan website - perhaps include email should you want to be contacted
 - iii. Plan to have an event where we roll out our group.
- e. Were you all appointed? Do only IHRC members vote?
 - i. SS - explains process & difference between open dialogue today and more structured contributions from citizens in future meetings

NM - move to end meeting, AM - second 8:36pm, unanimous vote for ending meeting.

Next meeting agenda outline:

- Commission member expectations
 - What happens if you miss a meeting and want to comment/contribute?
 - Engagement with community/citizen requests
 - Attendance, Communication, Open Meeting Laws
- Old Business
- New Business