

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION
Minutes from the Meeting held on Monday, July 16, 2018

Persons in Attendance: Brian Sweeney (Chair) Joe Penze – Deputy Chief of Police
Joe Kuffel Katie Schneider – Secretary CRC
Keith Sokolowski Vicky Duka
Trustee John C Jekot Carolyn Drblik
Tony Hollenback – Director of Family Services

Persons Absent: Steven Vinezeano – Village Manager
Luis Tigera – Chief of Police

Commission Chair Brian Sweeney called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. on Monday, July 16, in the 3rd Floor Family Services Group Room at the Human Services Building, 999 Civic Center Drive.

Joe Kuffel motioned to approve the April 12, 2018 meeting minutes, seconded by Vicky Duka, all were in favor, none opposed. Minutes approved.

Reported Citizen Comments/Complaints

a. Police and Other Village Departments

Mayor Andrew Przybylo was in attendance for General Government and thanked the commissioners for their participation. He explained that the CRC is one of two commissions required by law and wanted to highlight the importance of the commission. The ordinance with mission and objectives of the CRC was distributed. He also explained that the Village of Skokie uses their CRC to survey the community. In addition to an annual print survey, Skokie CRC members go out into the community, block parties, community events and talk to residents. Mayor Przybylo was suggesting that the Niles CRC consider doing the same thing. He thinks that by the nature of the committee, people may be more inclined to speak freely.

Andrew Przybylo also suggested a Council of Churches and a Council for Ethnic Diversity to bring people together to counter prejudices and create a forum to better understand one another. He is asking the CRC to consider ways to better engage community members and foster strong relationships between groups and individuals. The councils are some ideas.

Carolyn Drblik stated that historically the CRC has struggled to expand the role of the CRC so that it is not just about housing. Commissioners are interested in going out into the community. It was refreshing to hear that the Mayor was supportive of the CRC being more visible and active in reaching residents. Andrew replied that the commission should ask itself “how can we help families and neighbors?” Brian Sweeney suggested that we have a social media presence to better promote resources, events and programs.

Katie Schneider asked if we have ever looked into what other towns have done. Brian responded that to some extent like Morton Grove and Skokie. Mayor Przybylo already stated what Skokie’s CRC does and Brian stated that Morton Grove CRC hosts events and has a larger CRC with more frequent meetings.

Marlene Victorine, Village Clerk, was in attendance and asked if members would want a name badge or something identifiable when working with the public. Carolyn Drblik stated that having a name badge and/or a name tag brings credibility and helps to build trust with residents.

The commission agreed to have name badges with a picture and name tags for each commissioner. Marlene directed everyone to coordinate with IT Department to have your badge name. The group also discussed marketing materials to promote the role of the CRC. Tony Hollenback distributed a current flyer promoting Fair Housing, but the commission agreed that we want to promote more than fair housing, and promote quality of life.

Joe Penze gave the Police Department report. He stated that the Police Department is heavy around town with different mobile outreaches and college student bicycle units helping at parks and traffic and major events. He reiterated that people need to lock their cars. There has been an abundance of people stealing items from unlocked vehicles. John Jekot complimented the bicycle units at the St. John Brebeuf Carnival they were very professional enforcing traffic and safety at the event. Joe Penze stated that the St. Haralambos Greek Church complimented the bicycle units for their festival as well.

b. Telephone/Email Hotlines

No reports, complaints or inquiries were submitted or reported to the Commission. Tony Hollenback did state that Family Services has seen an increase in referrals from the Police Department. Family Services hosted a resource event for the South Asian population to share resources and services available to them.

c. Commissioners

No reports, complaints or inquiries were submitted or reported to any Commissioners.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Brian Sweeney asked each person to introduce themselves.

Open Discussion and Public Comment

Marlene Victorine had four items to discuss since the commissioners are appointed positions. Each person will need to complete a Statement of Economic Interest; an email would have come from Village Attorney Danielle Grcic. All new commissioners need to take the Illinois Open Meetings Act training. Once completed the certificate of completion should be submitted to Marlene to keep on file. She asked everyone to sign up for the Village e-newsletter and each person is entitled to one fitness center membership. You will just need to bring the blue card to the Fitness Center and they will sign you up. Marlene clarified that there is a Village economic interest form and also one from the County.

Carolyn Drblik asked about the senior housing development that is rumored to begin construction. Marlene clarified that there was an advisory referendum asking if voters would encourage senior housing. It has not moved past the discussion phases. Carolyn thought that this would be something that the CRC could be involved in. Mayor Przybylo who had left the meeting briefly returned and also weighed in on the senior housing referendum. He stated that 60% of voters supported senior housing in Niles. But Andrew rhetorically asked “well what does that mean – affordable and what is it worth to the tax payer?” Other towns will take vacant land and donate for senior housing for a \$1 as a transfer for the benefit on the community. He explained that TIF dollars and tax credits could be used and that appraisals have been made. The Village will need to assess its role in providing affordable senior housing and how do you quantify it. These are questions that the Village Board is exploring. They hired a developer and legal representation to assist the Village in

these decisions. The YMCA will be closing in the next three years and where do those residents go? These are the current housing issues that Niles will need to address. Carolyn thanked Andrew for the update.

Carolyn asked if there were any upcoming events that the CRC could participate in. Katie Schneider replied that there are two upcoming ones: Community Block Party and the FM Radio Polish Fest where family services will have a tent. Katie suggested that the CRC join Family Services with information on the commission. Katie will put a list of events and block parties and other community programs that the CRC could participate in and 1-2 commissioners could sign up to attend.

Next Meeting

The commissioners agreed to meet more regularly and scheduled the next meeting is Thursday, September 13, 2018 at 6:00pm.

Adjournment

Joe Kuffel made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Carolyn Drblik second the motion. All were in favor, none opposed. Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Minutes Submitted by: Katie Schneider, Secretary Community Relations Commission