

**MINUTES
CITY OF WOODSTOCK
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL AWARENESS COMMISSION
October 5, 2015**

The Regular Meeting of the Cultural and Social Awareness Commission of the City of Woodstock was called to order at 4:30PM on Monday, October 5, 2015, by Chairperson Laurie Crain in the Council Chambers at Woodstock City Hall, 121 West Calhoun, Woodstock, Illinois. A roll call was taken by City Clerk Cindy Smiley.

Chairwoman Crain asked that the agenda be amended to include:

2016 Meeting Dates

It was the consensus of the body that the agenda be amended.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: William Donato, Jose Rivera, Ivy Sagrado, John Hudson, and Chairperson Laura Crain.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Human Resources Director Deborah Schober and City Clerk Cindy Smiley.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments forthcoming from the Public.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by J. Hudson, second by J. Rivera, to approve the minutes of the April 6, 2015 meeting as presented. Ayes: J. Hudson, J. Rivera, I. Sagrado, and Chairwoman Crain. Nays: None. Abstentions: W. Donato. Absentees: none. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Introduction of New Member

Chairwoman Crain introduced new Commission member William Donato and welcomed him to the Commission. She noted that he will play an important role as the Commission moves into new and important issues. She asked Commissioner Donato to introduce himself.

Mr. Donato stated he has been a resident of the city and a Woodstock High School teacher for 30 years, teaching environmental science, forensics, and biology. He stated he is excited to serve on the Commission and was welcomed by fellow Commission members.

B. Sister City

J. Rivera reported that the Mayor of Guadalupe, Zacatecas will be arriving on Wednesday evening of this week, staying in Woodstock on Thursday and Friday, and then leaving for Chicago on Friday.

He detailed the Thursday and Friday events, including visits and tours of various City facilities, luncheon in Sesquicentennial Park, tour of Harley-Davidson, tour of a Woodstock Industry, tour and luncheon at Royal Oak Orchard, boat ride at Lake Geneva and dinners at Bull Valley Golf Club and Jose's home.

J. Rivera noted that it is hoped the Mayor and a delegation from the City's newest Sister City, Zacatecas, Mexico, will visit the City of Woodstock in December.

C. New Americans' Initiative

I. Sagrado noted she contacted Victoria at Rock Valley College and was informed that their program is no longer in existence due to lack of funding. They no longer have any type of immigration program.

L. Crain described this program for the benefit of new Commissioner Donato.

At the request of Chairwoman Crain, D. Schober contacted former Human Resources Coordinator Terry Wilcockson who informed her that in previous years, the HR Department worked with immigration officials in Chicago and Rock Valley College. I. Sagrado noted that this is the program which Rock Valley no longer has. D. Schober indicated that there should be files within the HR department, but is uncertain as to their usefulness in this situation.

In response to a question from L. Crain and further discussion, it was the consensus of the Commission that J. Rivera will contact Janelle Crowley to determine how this program was organized in previous years. He also indicated that Maggie Rivera will assist in talking with immigration authorities and reaching out to immigration attorneys. I. Sagrado suggested that they speak with her father, Ramon, who is an immigration agent.

It was agreed that the Commission will develop its own program for this initiative rather than pursue avenues used in previous years.

D. Cultural Winter Festival

As there is no Chamber Director in place, it was agreed that this event will not be held in December 2015.

Discussion followed of holding this in the Summer, perhaps centered around a City Band Concert. It was the consensus of the Commission to leave the event on the Agenda for future meetings and planning.

D. "Bag-less" Community

L. Crain stated that Mayor Sager has discussed this program with her, stating it is his desire for the major retailers in the community to move away from plastic bags and that there seems to be some interest from the retailers. She stated the Cultural and Social Awareness Commission and the Environmental Commission should schedule a joint meeting because this is of interest to both Commissions.

W. Donato discussed the importance of this issue, noting that the Environmental Defenders have encouraged other McHenry County communities to pass proclamations encouraging businesses and individuals to go bagless. He noted that Mayor Sager wishes to go beyond this with some type of legislation that prohibits the use of plastic bags by certain retailers.

W. Donato stated the Defenders would design reuseable bags and the City would provide one to every household in the City as a start. He noted that the Defenders have received a grant to be used to educate the public concerning the BYOB (Bring Your Own Bag) Campaign. He further stated that stands would be placed at the retailers' locations should customers need additional bags, and it is hoped that various City businesses would sponsor them, with their names and business information on them.

W. Donato noted that it would be a year before the program is in place, with an ordinance passed allowing enforcement. In response to questions from the Commission, he noted that no community in McHenry County mandates the prohibition of plastic bags. He further noted that Chicago, Austin, and San Francisco have some type of ordinance requiring the use of some type of reuseable bag, frequently a rigid plastic bag that is reused rather than disposed of. He stated that the Mayor is currently leaning toward not allowing plastic in any form. A brief discussion followed of the effect raw meat would have on cloth bags. In response to a question from J. Hudson, W. Donato stated the program being considered would not permit the use of paper bags as they are disposable.

Discussion followed of the recycling of plastic bags with W. Donato noting that most plastic bags do not get recycled. He further stated that it is the opinion of large companies that this will save them thousands of dollars.

J. Rivera noted that he owns a grocery store in another community and has given reusable cloth bags to his customers without success. W. Donato stated that raising awareness is the key and suggested that students from the Environmental Science class would visit stores to provide information to their customers.

Discussion followed of scheduling a joint meeting of the two Commissions. It was the consensus of the Commission that Liaison Debbie Schober will work with Environmental Commission Liaison Jim Kastner to select three or four suggested meeting dates which will then be forwarded to their respective commission members to determine availability. A meeting date will then be set. It was asked that Commission members research this topic and come prepared to the meeting so that it may be successful.

F. Teen Runaway Program

In the absence of Susan Keller of the Pioneer Center, L. Crain detailed for the Commission a Teen Runaway Program that is being conducted by the Pioneer Center and the McHenry County Health Department. She noted that for those teens under the age of 18, the goal is to get them to return home. For those 18-21, PADS has designated beds specifically for that demographic as they are reluctant to co-mingle with the older PADS clients. L. Crain further stated that the Health Department has set up an STD testing program, as well as providing advice and counseling. Ms. Crain asked anyone aware of or observing a youth in this situation to contact the Pioneer Center and give them a location where they can reach out to the individual. She is providing this information because it is her opinion that the Cultural and Social Awareness Commission should be aware of this issue in McHenry County and in Woodstock. She feels that, at some point, this will be discussed by the Commission as efforts to help the homeless continue, particularly the goal to develop a permanent homeless shelter in addition to the Kishwaukee site.

D. Schober stated that as she has gotten more involved with United Way allocation, she has become aware of the many excellent resources that are available in McHenry County. She stated that the public should be made more aware of these resources.

Discussion ensued concerning the various needs of the community that may not be being met and how to communicate available services to the people in need. Discussion continued on how the State budget is affecting social service providers and the need to be aware of future repercussions.

L. Crain urged Commission members to suggest speakers and presentations for future meetings. She noted that she and D. Schober have had training in QPR and discussed suicide statistics in McHenry County, noting this may be a topic for a future meeting.

OTHER DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. 2016 Meeting Dates

After some discussion, it was the consensus that the 2016 meeting dates be set as follows:

Monday, January 4, 2016 – 4:30PM

Monday, April 4, 2016 – 4:30PM

Monday, July 11, 2016 – 4:30PM

Monday, October 3, 2016 – 4:30PM

ADJOURN

Motion by J. Hudson, second by Jose Rivera, to adjourn this Regular Meeting of the Cultural and Social Awareness Commission to the next Regular Meeting on Monday, January 4, 2016 at 4:30PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall. Ayes: J. Rivera, I. Sagrado, J. Hudson, W. Donato, and Chairperson L. Crain. Nays: none. Abstentions: none. Absentees: none. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 5:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Smiley
Chief Deputy Clerk