

Valparaiso Human Relations Council
February 27, 2018
Minutes

Heath Carter, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30pm

Present: Heath Carter (Chair), John Albers, Bill Lewis, Jeff Balon, Alex Clanton, Tatiana Hurtado, Margeaux Lustina, John Seibert, Gene Tanner, Cicely Powell, Willow Walsh, Roxane Mendez-Johnson,

Minutes of the January 23, 2018 meeting were approved.

- 1) **Maggie Clifton**, starts March 1, 2018. She will be invited to an upcoming meeting.
- 2) **Gene Tanner**, Pastor for Valparaiso Nazarene Church presented about the *Night to Shine* held at the church for the adult disabled community. This is the 3rd year of the event. Sponsors donated to fund the event and more than 1,000 community members were attendance.
- 3) **Julie Storbeck**, Valparaiso resident, led a presentation on the disability community. Offers that there is no transportation to polling places, and many polling places are not accessible to the disabled community. Many businesses that are not accessible for consumers are not accessible for disabled workers either.

Matt MacIntyre: Valparaiso resident, spoke about challenges associated with simply traveling around the city. Some of his concerns included:

- Sidewalks that present dangers such as tree stumps, uneven pieces, large debris
- Snow plows throw snow onto sidewalks making it necessary to use wheelchair on the road, he has tipped his chair on Lincolnway
- Buses: many of the drivers do not know how to properly strap down a wheelchair
- There are many businesses that have stairs and are not welcoming to wheelchairs (Greeks, Pat's Parlor, Stacks, Ben's Pretzels)
- Downtown businesses have large lampposts or sale signs that impede movement
- Buttons for crossing the street are out of reach for wheelchairs

Rachel Storeman: Valparaiso resident, spoke about challenges associated with transportation around the city and accessibility within spaces

- Many times businesses will offer handicapped-accessibility but it is not always functioning. It needs to be prioritized
- Many public (City of Valparaiso) buildings do not have wheelchair buttons to open doors. Doors and sidewalks are usually extremely narrow
- Many public restrooms (even the handicapped stall) are much too small and do not accommodate a person with a wheelchair
- Soap dispensers and changing tables are out of reach
- Public transportation is in extremely high demand, making it difficult to rely on (only a few handicapped spots on the bus)
- Public transportation routes: the stops are very unsafe. She would like to see a stop to Aldi. We have a stop to Wal-mart, but that's the only option.

- PCACS: very busy, do not provide trips on short notice
- OE: doesn't take her insurance.
- VLINE: drops off at Vale Park Road. There is no variance that is granted for going to hospital, YMCA, or Walgreens. She has been hit by a car trying to make her way to different areas that they won't drop off to.

Christina McClain: Valparaiso resident, spoke about challenges for her brother, who is a paraplegic person.

- Shares that bathrooms are impossible to use and create embarrassing and dehumanizing position of having to use with the door open
- Challenges for walkers and not just wheelchairs.

John Seibert: spoke about the city's short and long term ADA accessible plan. Informed the HRC that the City Council has the final say on funding to get the projects started and completed. Tyler Kent is charge of the 5 – 10 year plans and VLINE. The traffic and safety commission would also be involved in some of the concerns regarding signage.

Tatiana Hurtado: suggested that the HRC facilitate a conversation with the Chamber of Commerce to address accessibility concerns with business community.

John Albers: offered that Kiwanis makes available semi-permanent ramps for the community.

4) **Announcements:**

1. Maggie Clifton has been hired and will visit the HRC in the near future.
 2. The Cultural Arts Grant has a deadline of March 15th.
 3. Girls Who Code – FREE afterschool club at Valparaiso University for middle schoolers
 4. Cicely Powell: Update on MLK Day, the school will continue to observe the national holiday. They will also be looking to set up a committee to plan MLK Day activities.
- 5) Margeaux Lustina and Alex Clanton discuss their recommendations with respect to the HRC website.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:49 PM. with the next meeting being scheduled on Tuesday, April 24, 2018, at 5:30pm at City Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tatiana Hurtado
Secretary Pro-Tem