



# Michigan City Human Rights Commission

100 E. Michigan Blvd, City Hall  
Michigan City, Indiana 46360  
(219) 873-1427 ext. 2019

## Michigan City Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes Tuesday, March 7, 2023, at 4:30 p.m. EOC Room, City Hall Lower Level, East Side Community Room

**Call To Order:** Chairman Diana Gore called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

**Roll Call** was conducted. Attendance recorded below with a quorum of seven members.

**Present** - Greg Coulter   Bunny Dimke   Diana Gore   Jaime Llorens   Jessica O'Brien  
Mary Ellen Quinn   Tyra Robinson-Walker

**Absent** - Albertine Allen   Soljourna Atwater   Dennis Carroll   Marty Corley

**Others Present** - ALCO   Larry Arness   Diane Gonzales   Mercedes McMullen

**Approval of Minutes:** A motion to approve the February 7, 2023 minutes was entered by Greg Coulter and properly seconded by Bunny Dimke. Motion carried. Vote 7-0.

**Finance Report:** Report was presented with a balance of \$2,047.09 by Treasurer Bunny Dimke. A motion to approve the Finance Report for the beginning of March 2023 was entered by Tyra Robinson-Walker and properly seconded by Mary Ellen Quinn. Motion carried. Vote 7-0.

**Executive Director's Report:** **Director Diane Gonzales** reported on activity in the office. For January there were 28 contacts, two referred to Legal Services and two to other agencies. February had 38 contacts, two sent to EEOC in Indianapolis which was out of our jurisdiction, three referred to Legal Services and five to other agencies. A list of subcommittees was included in the Commission's packets for their review, the By-Laws require members to be on at least one or more committees under Powers and Duties. In July and November of 2022, the committees were restructured as following: Executive Committee, Development-Fundraising Committee, Education Committee and Community Engagement Committee.

**Staff Attorney Report:** No Report.

### **Committee Reports:**

**Special Events:** **Mary Ellen Quinn** stated the Humanitarian of the Year Award is the Commission's biggest fundraiser however due to the pandemic in 2020, the event has not taken place the last three years. Preliminary research has been done; tickets may be approximately \$50 each. The last Humanitarian of the Year Awards held only produced one nomination. **Bunny Dimke** asked Mary Ellen Quinn, for the benefit of the new members, to explain the costs involved for the event. **Mary Ellen** reported food costs have increased. The previous dinner events would be on a grand scale held at the Senior Citizen Center, food would be catered in then it was changed to a luncheon at Krueger Memorial Hall, catered food, however the current ticket price is

something to think about, the event may have to be scaled down. **Attorney Larry Arness** said historically the dinner/luncheon was always the main fundraiser for the Commission.

**Disability Awareness Month:** **Bunny Dimke** read a Proclamation by Mayor Duane Parry designating the month of March as ‘**Disabilities Awareness Month**’ to celebrate and recognize people with disabilities. Proclamation attached to these minutes. She then reported on the death of Judy Heumann, known as ‘Mother of Disability Awareness,’ who passed away March 4, 2023 at the age of 75. Judy contracted polio at a young age and used a wheelchair. Her mother enrolled her in school but Judy was denied due to being considered a ‘fire hazard’ because she could not walk. Bunny spoke to Shannon Eason, Parks Department, about special equipment at Water Tower Park for people with disabilities. The Water Tower Park Renovation Project is being funded through two grants and a Park Board meeting will be held March 15<sup>th</sup> for more information. Bunny asked Shannon for suggestions on anything the Human Rights Commission would be able to help with that the grants would not cover. Last year equipment was donated to the Special Education Department of the school system. **Attorney Larry Arness**, it’s nice to know some things have changed for the better about not being able to attend school because a wheelchair is used and considered a fire hazard. He asked if Judy Heumann lived in our area, Bunny replied no. (Note - Judy lived in Brooklyn, New York.) **Larry** reminded the Board of Ordinance 4284 with guidelines for expenditures directly related to the following: 1.) materials and supplies; 2.) education of the public, including promotional, educational, training supplies, and community events; 3.) education of the Human Rights staff and commissioners, including training supplies and travel expenses; and 4.) educational scholarships. **Bunny** asked Shannon about equipment used on the beach for those with disabilities, possibly a sign stating the services offered to the public be displayed at the park entrance. **Jessica O’Brien** added currently there is a blue path or walkway on the sand down to the beach near the Senior Center.

**LGBTQA Subcommittee:** **Greg Coulter** reported on the Parks Department and the Pride Event for this year which was voted on unanimously after members of the LGBTQ community and Bryant Dabney spoke on the need for these type of events for our community. He announced a letter writing campaign workshop at 6:00 p.m. tonight at the First Presbyterian Church will take place, letters will be written to State Senators on bills currently going through the State House right now, such as one that forces teachers to ‘out’ queer students or the Library bill that censors libraries. **Tyra Robinson Walker** asked for the date of the Pride Fest Event and a point of contact for our local PFLAG, Parents and Families/Friends of Lesbians and Gays. **Greg**, June 17<sup>th</sup> is Pride Fest, and he will get her the contact information.

**Martin Luther King Event Subcommittee:** **Tyra Robinson-Walker**, PNW continues to be in transition after moving in a different direction after a long history of corroboration with them for this event. No new updates.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** **Chairwoman Diana Gore** thanked our newest members and asked for them to introduce themselves to the Commission. **Jessica O’Brien**, lifelong resident of Michigan City, currently works for Michigan City Area Schools but is in transition and next week will be working for Salvation Army in Michigan City and is excited to be a part of helping the community. **Jaime Llorens**, grew up in Michigan City, moved away for a bit then moved back 3 years ago, currently an attorney practicing in Lake County and works from home. **Mercedes McMullen**, lived most of her life in Michigan City, a few years ago she took her grandmother and 4-year-old niece in, she works at Aldi’s and is a member of Nora’s Trash Angels who picks up all trash and debris around the Meijer store area. **Chairwoman Diana Gore** thanked all three members for being a part of the Michigan City Human Rights Commission. **Attorney Larry Arness**, be sure new members get the Ordinances and By-Laws to understand what the Commission does and why it was created. He mentioned a retreat in the future. **Mary Ellen Quinn**, would be happy to have everyone over to her house, it would be very helpful to the new Commission members and a great way to get to know each other.

**Commissioner Comment:** **Greg Coulter**, if the Park Board would have been split on a decision to allow the Pride Fest to take place this year, would that be considered a form of discrimination? **Attorney Larry Arness**, that would not be a typical complaint under the Ordinance, it can be brought up here at the Commission however a citizen would have to file a complaint that they have been discriminated against and under the Ordinance that is usually regarding housing and employment. The complaint would be brought to the Commission where a Probable Cause Committee is put together of three members from the Commission to investigate the complaint and determine if there is probable cause. Trying to determine that against a governmental entity, the City Parks Department, would be difficult to do.

**Tyra Robinson Walker** recognized La Porte County Drug Free Partnership for training La Porte County's first Crisis Intervention Team, who are trained to go onsite during a mental health crisis for safe treatment for those in need instead of being incarcerated. **Bunny Dimke**, are we ahead or behind in this type of treatment? **Tyra Robinson Walker**, behind, Michigan City adopted a plan through a 5-year grant to put a social worker in the Michigan City Police Department, who will be onsite for those having issues in the community.

**Public Comment:** No comments.

**Adjournment:** The meeting concluded at 5:10 p.m. with a motion by Greg Coulter and properly seconded by Tyra Robinson-Walker.

**Next Meeting:** April 4, 2023, 4:30 p.m. at City Hall.

Respectfully submitted,  
Diane Gonzales, Human Rights Director