

# Human Relations Commission Minutes

Monday, February 27, 2023

6:30pm

**Location: Village Hall, 5127 Oakton Street – Conference Room D&E (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor)**

**In attendance:** Commissioners: Alexander Chaparro, Sheila Crumrine, Krishna Goyal, Jonathan Levin, Maria Monastero Bueno (chair), John Muszynski, Marcos Levy, Swarupa Pahan, Ralph Ruebner, James Specker, Mayha Syed; Trustee Khem Khoen; Skokie Staff Liaison: Mike Charley

**Not in attendance:** Daphnee Camilien, David Donegan, Jaili Fajardo, Anwar Haq, Michelle Reitman, Pearl Rubenzik, Jeremy Segall, Karen Sherman

**I. Call to Order @ 6:35 pm**

**II. Approval of Agenda:** Agenda approved.

**III. Introduction of New Members & Existing Members:** Two new members have joined the commission, John Muszynki & Mayha Syed. They both introduced themselves and the existing members/participants in attendance also introduced themselves.

**IV. Approval of Minutes of November 28, 2023:** Approval of November's minutes tabled and moved to March 27, 2023 meeting. There was no "official" meeting in January, so there are no minutes to approve for January. Alex Chaparro communicated that since the January 2023 meeting, he hasn't yet reached out to the Park District regarding the Human Relations Commission participating in the Festival of Cultures, but he will. Maria recommended that Mike Charley share the last three meetings' minutes with the new members. Mike Charley responded that he would email both new members the minutes. Mike Charley showed on the projector screen how members can access the Human Relations meeting agenda and approved minutes on the Village's website.

**V. Chair's Report, Maria Monastero Bueno**

**A. Village Native Seal Discussion Updates:** Maria Monastero Bueno communicated that over the last couple of years the commission has been discussing the Village seal, which is a profile of a Native American man with a headdress and an arrow head. After several meetings and discussions with the Native American community it became apparent that the seal needed to be addressed and studied. A listening session was held on December 8, 2022 and members of the Native American communities invited. The leaders provided input and insight into the seal. Along with Ann Tennes and several other

Human Relations Commissioners that attended the listening session, a report has been drafted and submitted to Village Manager John Lockerby for his review. The report summarizes the outcome of the listening session, including ceasing use of the existing seal and creating a new seal. The idea was to use Native American artists to draft a new seal that incorporated specific themes. It was agreed the seal not be a human image, that it represented nature specific to Skokie and the seal incorporates the theme of our community in the past, present and future.

**VI. Block Party of the Year Applicant Review:** Mike Charley presented the top 7 block party of the year applicants via a Power Point presentation. The presentation included a summary of each block party and block party pictures submitted by the applicants. At the end of the presentation, the members voted on their top three block parties. The outcome was the following winners for the 2022 Block Party of the Year Awards: 8300 Block of Kolmar Ave (most votes), George and Park Avenues, 8000-8100 Blocks of Lowell Ave. The three block party winners will be recognized at a future Village Board meeting, receive an award certificate and have block party of the year plaques posted on their blocks. A letter congratulating each block party will be sent soon that will include an invite to a future board meeting to receive their award. Maria Monastero Bueno encouraged commission members to participate in the Village Board awards presentation when it's scheduled.

**VII. Committee Reports**

- A. Housing Committee: Block Party of the Year Awards:** See #VI above.
- B. Housing Committee: Block Party Forum:** Alex Chaparro shared that the Skokie Police Department has confirmed that they will join the Human Relations Commission at the block party forum. Maria Monastero Bueno communicated that the block party forum provides individuals information on how to run a successful block party. Maria Monastero Bueno communicated that in the past Human Relations members are encouraged to participate in each block party by visiting them and making an appearance. At the forum, the three winners from the previous year are invited to present their block parties and answer questions. The Village's block captain program is also promoted at this event. The idea is to hold this event on May 20 or 21, 2023 at the Festival of Cultures at Oakton Park. The event times for the Festival of Cultures are 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Another option, is offering a separate event at the Police Station, like in the past. Maria recommended producing a one-page flyer on the block party forum.

Maria Monastero Bueno communicated there are three sub-committees:

- The Housing Committee: Block Party of the Year, Block Party Forum, Fair Housing and Know your Neighbor. Members: Daphnee, Alex, Sheila, Marcos, Michelle, Ralph and Karen.

- Equity and Diversity Committee: SEED program, Stand Against Racism, Skokie United, Skokie Pride. Members: James, Sheila, David Donegan, Karen, Jonathan, Daphnee.
- Festival of Cultures Committee: Members: James, Anwar, Deborah, Swarupa, Krishna, Karen

Maria will reach out to two new commissioners to ask them which sub-committees they are interested in.

**C. Equity and Diversity Committee: Stand Against Racism Event/ “Until Justice Just Is”:**

Maria Monastero Bueno provided a little history/background on the event: YWCA, Nationwide program, held over a series of dates. Skokie will celebrate/participate on Tuesday April 25, 2023. Maria Monastero Bueno communicated that if commission members are available, we typically meet outside Village Hall at 10:00 a.m. that date and take the pledge.

Sheila Crumrine mentioned that she had reached out to Ella Whitehead from Oakton Community College to see if they would like to participate and/or if there anything Oakton is doing already. Sheila will be meeting with Ella next week.

Sheila also mentioned that she touched base with Cassie Schaeffer at the Park District to discuss the Skokie Pride event to start discussion on the Human Relations Commission setting up a table at the Skokie Pride event. This event is scheduled for Sunday June 18, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Oakton Park. Last year the commission hosted a table at the event and gave our rainbow flags.

Sheila communicated that Juneteenth is a relatively new federal holiday. Sheila mentioned she would speak to Ella Whitehead at Oakton College to see what they are doing with this. She’d also look to see what other Skokie institutions are doing for this event.

Sheila recommended/encouraged that the commission’s subgroups are more active between meetings to ensure that progress is made on planning for the different events. Maria reinforced that it is very helpful when commission members do follow-up between meetings to ensure objectives are accomplished. *\*Later in the meeting Ralph Ruebner recommended the meetings be held via Zoom.*

Jonathan Levin communicated that he is the current President of the local Rotary Club. Tomorrow’s meeting speaker is Kristen Drake, Economic Advancement Program Coordinator with the Evanston YWCA speaking tomorrow at the Giordano’s in Morton Grove. She may speak on “Until Justice Just Is”. Human Relations commissioners are invited to attend this meeting. He also invited commissioners to join the Rotary.

Sheila Crumrine motioned for the commission to approve its participation in the Skokie Pride event and budget for similar costs as last year's event. The commission voted to approve this.

Swarupa Pahan recommended that the Human Relations Commission get a booth at the Festival of Cultures and hand out information on the Block Party of the Year Awards. Maria Monastero Bueno communicated that this is an option, but a commissioner would have to coordinate this and commissioners would have to be willing to attend/participate in the event itself.

Alex Chaparro communicated that he will meet with the sub-committee to coordinate the Festival of Cultures event.

#### **VIII. Old/New Items of Business:**

- A. Onboarding Process: Sheila Crumrine recommended creating an onboarding process for new commission members, including creating a sub-committee and a training program for new commissioners.
- B. Sheila Crumrine communicated in the past there was discussion as to the fact that most commissioners are from the North side of Skokie. She recommended the Village have two meetings, one in the spring and one in the fall to provide Skokie residents with information on Skokie Boards and Commissions. Maria Monastero Bueno responded that in the past she recollects the Mayor's Office coordinating something like this as a welcome to new residents. Trustee Khem Khoeun communicated that she will follow-up with the Mayor's office on this.
- C. Maria Monastero Bueno communicated that Mike Charley and she will not be in attendance at the next meeting on March 27. Alex Chaparro and Sheila Crumrine will co-chair the next meeting and Melissa Versch, Village Social Worker will be the staff liaison.
- D. Ralph Ruebner shared with the commission that on February 25 white supremacists had planned to promote anti-Semitism as part of their 'day of hate'. He noted that the Jewish faith-based community was notified and aware of this and so were the Skokie Police. Fortunately, there were no instances of hate in Skokie on February 25.

#### **IX. Adjourn @ 7:57 p.m.**