

Human Relations Commission Task Force

Recommendations- August 2020

Task Force Members (Mayoral appointments):

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Staff:

- Jessica Rogers (City Attorney's Office)
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Introduction

The HRC Task Force was charged by the Mayor in August of 2019 with examining the former HRC and making recommendations for the future of this entity to serve our city. In response to this request, the Task Force recommends continuing the HRC in a new format. Formerly, the HRC primarily dealt with fielding complaints and had a role of examination and enforcement of consequences. This 'judicial' model was not working due to low community response. The Task Force has a strong desire to address race relations in Rapid City in a way that is inclusive, not punitive, and without duplicating work already being done.

Understanding a 'complaint process' is still an important role of this Commission, the Task Force is putting forward a different means of being responsive to community voices and is recommending an approach that is both reactive to citizen needs and proactive to support inclusivity, equity, and becoming a community resource. Therefore this plan addresses both the importance of addressing complaints in a meaningful way and the need to build community. Over the course of this Task Force's work, it became apparent that there is already a group in Rapid City (MOA, Mniluzahan Okolakiciyapi Ambassadors) doing some, not all, of the work the Task Force is interested in. With the group's goal to not duplicate efforts, the idea to merge these two organizations (HRC and MOA) into a public-private partnership, to both continue the work already begun by MOA and to implement the new recommendations for the new HRC. From the very start of MOA's work to bridge cultures between Native and non-Native people in the Black Hills region, we have stood together, on equal footing, to find understanding amidst a complex and storied history, discover commonalities within our differences, set a positive and productive tone for hard conversations, and celebrate who we are as a culturally rich community. That is why MOA is a good fit.

This plan intends to create an inclusive alliance that promotes and ensures civil discourse, human rights, and resource development in Rapid City. Together, through education and

engagement, we hope to nurture a community culture that values equity, respect, and understanding. Now, more than ever, all voices need to be heard.

HRC Functions:

A. Community Building

This work, unique in our community, would focus on relationship building with growth through systemic leadership. We are trying to build a community that bridges cultures, educates ourselves and others, advocates, and models respectful behavior (BEAM). The new HRC group would champion an inclusive society where everyone takes responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights; where everyone is valued and treated with equal dignity and respect; and where everyone's human rights are a lived reality.

The goal of the group's community outreach would be to...

- Establish itself as a valid bridge between the citizens, businesses and the local government, to steer people in need to existing resources, and to gather information on where education or mediation services are needed in Rapid City.
- Provide information, education and messaging to the public on discrimination and related topics and provide a forum for civil discourse and conversation to foster learning, understanding, and problem solving.
- Provide opportunities for collaboration and connection and conversation on a regular basis to foster relationship building.
- Offer education on discrimination and related issues to area business, as part of an effort to reduce discrimination.
- Publicly support, recognize and herald people and institutions within our community who are examples of positive change, who are actively taking steps against discrimination, and who are promoting equal representation of minority groups in leadership positions.
- Gather information about existing local resources for citizens and compile a list of local resources and corresponding contact information, to be stored and maintained in a resource bank.
- Leverage social media and other communications that celebrate the Commission and keep the region informed on the many good things happening with this group and other collaborative efforts.
- Create and publish a quarterly e-newsletter.
- Create an 'advisory council' comprised of groups in our community with contributing missions and actions to collaborate, advise, and create resources. In order to keep the group connected with other community organizations, the Task Force recommends creating an Advisory Council made up of representatives of local organizations, such as the Care Campus, One Heart, RCCC, etc. The Council would meet quarterly to discuss community needs the individual members are seeing and to help guide the group's outreach efforts. This is another

way the HRC would become a bridge between the citizens, businesses, and our local government.

B. The “Complaint Process”

The purpose of the merged MOA/new HRC would be to form a community alliance designed to be a neutral forum where all parties involved in a dispute could come and be heard. The goal of such discussions would be to acknowledge each side’s story, to diffuse existing tensions, and to seek solutions to benefit the entire community.

How could this process work? This is a projection of how this could look:
(see also attached flow chart)

- The Task Force is unanimous in the opinion that there is no use for the new HRC to serve as an adjudicator of discrimination complaints. There are existing processes in place at both the state and federal level, both of which have broader powers and trained staff to handle these sensitive legal issues. However, the Task Force recognizes the need to address concerns from the community in a meaningful way.
- When Commissioners become aware of a possible act of discrimination against a Rapid City citizen, they would reach out to the alleged offender and try to get them to agree to discuss the issue, to see if a peaceful resolution could be reached. One member would be assigned to help a complainant through the process, from start to finish.
- The preferred method of handling complaints would be to mediate (to invite both sides to come together and speak freely, and see if an amicable resolution can be reached). The Task Force imagines the mediation services as including traditional mediation, less formal open discussions, and other methods of conflict resolution, such as the Cultural Impact Panel recently developed by MOA and the City Attorney’s Office. The common thread among all these methods would be a focus on restorative justice.
- If a complaint cannot be resolved through mediation, the Commissioners would refer the complainant to the appropriate state and/or federal agency. However, because the complaint process can be confusing and intimidating, Commissioners would serve as case managers for citizens. First, they would be available to actually help file the complaint (done online). They would also be available as a second point of contact with the agency. If the complainant had questions throughout the process, the group would find answers and provide support.
- This role would be particularly important in issues involving the City or Rapid City Area Schools. While this group could not enforce solutions against either agency, it could provide a safe, neutral venue for citizens to discuss discrimination and for the agencies to respond. This is part of the Task Force’s goal of creating a bridge between the local government and our citizens.

HRC Structure

A. Governance/Leadership (reporting to the Mayor, the City Council and the Advisory Council)

- A nine member commission (appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Council/ with approximately 50% of the members as active MOAs) with bylaws and operational structure (to be developed). The Commissioners will be active participants in both the community building and complaint process functions of the plan. Specific plans and direction (including by-laws and ordinance revision) will commence when the Commissioners are named.
- Finding the right members will be crucial to the new group's success. The Task Force strongly believes the selection process should include an in-person interview, both to ensure that the applicant understands the duties and time commitment involved in serving as Commissioner and to ensure that the applicant is a good fit, with the right positive attitude. The Task Force recommends a slightly larger group, with nine Commissioners, representing the diverse population of Rapid City. Ideally, the racial, religious, and gender distribution would match that of our City.
- In order to fairly represent the merging of MOA with the new HRC, the initial Commission should be composed of 4-5 existing MOA members, with the remaining members to be appointed by the Mayor.
- Commissioners will all undergo training on existing state and federal complaint processes, some of which may be provided by the City Attorney's Office.
- A dedicated employee (Executive Director hired as 1 FTE)
- It is important to the Task Force that the group be accountable to both the City government and the citizens. It recommends a quarterly report to City Council which would also be actively publicized. The report would include a summary of all outreach activities, any reports of discrimination, mediation held, and any recognitions of people and institutions doing 'good' in our community.

B. Public – Private Partnership

The Task Force is recommending a funding commitment from the City, to partially support the work of the new HRC/MOA, including the recommended staff position (Executive Director), to be matched by private and/or grant funds. After the initial "Pilot" (TBD) period, the Task Force would like to see 50/50 City/private funding for the

staff position, with private funds covering operating costs. Additionally, the group would like the City to commit to “housing” the group, with office space for the staff position, plus available group meeting space, telephone/internet access, etc. Attached as Addendum A is a draft budget proposal for the first year. The City would take over management of MOA/HRC funds.

Request to City:

Space- We are asking the City of Rapid City provide a space and support for the Commission/MOA and it's staff, along with meeting space for the full Commission.

Employee- We are asking that the City of Rapid City consider the funding of a full time Executive Director for 2021, with the goal of a shared funding support going forward between the City and private funding.

MOA funding responsibilities- MOA will seek both private and grant funds to continue the work of improving race relations, along with the newly formed HRC, and to cover operating expenses during the first year. All funds raised shall be managed by the City.

Examples include:

Seeking funds from private entities (donors, foundations, businesses and other funders to support events, convenings, championing events, as well as strategic development and evaluation).

Seeking funds to support the development of a plan with inclusive goals and key measures in alignment with the City’s comprehensive plan and to create data driven decision making and future planning.

ADDENDUM A

The following expected expenses are a baseline to create a sustainable organization to serve our Community. The new partnership will act as a catalyst for future grant writing and creative approaches that would support the mission and support the expense budget.

EXPENSES (one year)		Notes
<u>Staffing Expenses</u>		NO CITY EXPENSES FOR 2020
Staff position-Director- full time (\$55,000/ year)	\$60,000 - \$80,000	The primary responsibility of the Director is to act as a networking catalyst, encourager, partnership broker, community builder, convener and champion for the people interested in continuing to build and celebrate the defined mission and vision. The administrative duties include financial and budget management, project management, fundraising as well as responsibility to and communication with the Commissioners, Advisory Council, and City Council.
Mentoring for new director	\$5000	Mentor will provide intensive support to transfer not only the duties of the director, but to co-create the new role of a full time director. It is critical to share the networking and philosophy that has driven MOA (and other organizations) in its growth, but also to provide a bridge to assist the new director to find their own leadership path with the support of experience. The goal will be to support the new partnership to become an even better resource and ‘connector’ for our community. Regularly planned meetings and shared experiences will commence upon the time of the new hire and continue for 6 months or as designated by the Commissioners. *Privately funded.
Operating expenses	\$13,000	*Privately funded through 2021
Office Space	0	City provides rent-free space for operations.

Supplies and marketing	\$3000	Operations and marketing dollars to support basic needs, such as printing, website hosting, office supplies, postage etc.
Events, sponsorships and convenings (10,000/year)	\$10,000	This funding would support events to convene stakeholders and continued collaborative events to support and expand the work of the new partnership. This would include cohort convenings, support to ‘champion’ events in our community and other programmatic work..
<u>TOTAL:</u>	\$85,800- 100,500	
<u>TOTAL 2020:</u>	\$13,000- 18,000	*FULLY FUNDED THROUGH PRIVATE/GRANT FUNDS

INCOME		Notes
GRANT from the South Dakota Community Foundation	\$10,000	Restricted funds (to be used for the Rapid City Indian School Lands Project) held within the Black Hills Area Community Foundation (fiscal sponsor for MOA) to fulfill the goals and objectives as written in the grant. These funds would support part of the sponsorship or project funds as noted in the expense budget.
Remaining MOA Funds	\$1000- \$2000	These are funds remaining from previous grants. These funds would be transferred to the new fund site upon agreement.