



**COMMUNITY
RELATIONS
COMMISSION**

CITY OF GOSHEN

Community Relations Commission City of Goshen, Indiana Annual Report – 2018 Submitted by Evan Miller, CRC Chair

Mission

To foster a climate of positive community relationships and non-discrimination in which all Goshen citizens enjoy equal opportunity for education, employment, access to public conveniences, accommodations and real property.

Origin and Background

The Community Relations Commission (CRC) was created by Ordinance 4201, “An Ordinance Creating the Goshen Community Relations Commission and Prescribing the Powers and Duties of the Commission,” adopted by the Common Council on April 13, 2004. Goshen was the 23rd Indiana city to establish a human/community relations commission. Mayor Allan Kauffman convened the first meeting on August 17, 2004.

CRC Principles

- Respect for each other and respect for each other’s rights
- Open communication and engagement
- Honesty
- A safe community
- Acceptance that change has positive and negative consequences
- Tolerance of differences
- Support for equality and freedom from discrimination

CRC Commissioners during 2018

Lizzy Diaz, Chair (January through July), Vice Chair (July through December)
Evan Miller, Treasurer (January through July), Chair (July through December)
Ed Ahlersmeyer, Vice Chair (Resigned in April)
Sreekala Rajagopalan
David Araujo
Jose Rocha
Glenn Null, Treasure (July through December)
Michele Fanfair-Steury

CRC Activity in 2018

Reaction and Restructuring: 2018 was a year of turmoil and restructuring. At the December, 2017 meeting, a commissioner shared a blog post with the CRC. Several community

members, in learning of the content of this post, felt that it was promoting views about race that were contrary to the mission of the CRC. At the April, 2017 meeting, dozens of community members voiced their concerns, and the following week the commissioner resigned, leaving a vacancy in the role of Vice Chair.

In June, CRC Chair Lizzy Diaz indicated her desire to step down from the role as commission chair. In July, Evan Miller was elected Chair, Lizzy Diaz was elected Vice Chair, and Glenn Null was elected Treasurer..

City Council Liaison: With the resignation of the Vice Chair, the commission had an opening, to be filled by appointment of City Council. The City Council chose to leave the position vacant and declined to appoint one of their own as a member of the CRC. The Mayor, acting in consultation with City Council, appointed Councilwoman King as Liaison to the CRC. The Liaison is an advisory and support role, and does not have voting rights on the CRC.

Refinement of Purpose: With the help of consultant Philip Thomas, leaders from the CRC (Evan Miller and Lizzy Diaz) and City Council (Brett Weddell and Julia King) met with the mayor to explore the cause of the underlying tensions that caused the disruption in the first half of the year. The group concluded that a key issue was ambiguities in the founding ordinance. The founding ordinance empowered the CRC to receive complaints of discrimination, and adjudicate resolutions to those complaints. The CRC, as a voluntary citizen's group, is not qualified to address discrimination complaints. The CRC adopted a resolution that requested that the city find other means to address complaints of discrimination so that the CRC can focus on positive community building.

Visitor Policy: In September, the commission adopted a Visitor Policy that outlines the process the CRC will follow to welcome guests, gather input from them, and respond to their input. A copy of the policy is attached.

Job Description: The CRC developed and adopted a job description for its members, and shared this job description with City Council and the Mayor. The job description describes the activity level of the commission, as well as desired skills and personal attributes. A copy of the job description is attached.

Taste of Goshen: May First Friday: In May the Commission held its' annual Taste of Goshen during which almost two thousand people enjoyed food offerings from cultures represented in Goshen's population. These included Palestinian, Korean, Mexican, El Salvadoran, Colombian, Ukrainian, Puerto Rican and Indonesian.

Other items of note: The CRC provided small grants for the Farmer's Market Salsa Festival, Encuentro in the Alley (an event emphasizing Latino art), and The Multicultural Festival, an event supported in part by La Casa and held in the summer of 2018.

Upcoming Initiatives

Community Conversations: In late 2018, the CRC was approached by staff of Goshen Community Schools. They were interested in co-hosting with the city, a series of community

conversations. The CRC and GCS plans to pilot a community conversation in spring, 2019. If they are successful, we plan to hold more in the fall of 2019.

Diversity Events: The CRC is continuing with its expanded role with Downtown Goshen, Inc. for First Friday events this coming May. The May event is branded as ‘Taste of Goshen’ after the CRC’s annual event. In addition to our usual tent featuring a variety of ethnic foods, we are sponsoring musical performances, as well as sharing the newly minted Vision with the community.

Continuation of Community Project Support from CRC: In the past the CRC has made monies available for community projects or initiatives particularly where those projects interact with our Mission, Vision, and Principles.

Goshen Vision 2025: While we develop methods of publicizing the Vision in the community, we are also working to prioritize elements of the Vision that most directly intersect with our Mission and Strategic plan.

(Attachments: Visitor Policy, Job Description)