

February 26, 2019
Human Service Ad Hoc Committee Meeting
Minutes

Manager Fieldman called the meeting to order at 7:00. He stated that roll call was taken at the door.

Members Present

Aycock
Campbell
Lohrmann
Marshall
Nagy
Wan
Williams

Members Absent

None

Guests Present

Mayor Tully
Commissioner Earl
Commissioner Walus
Commissioner Waldack

Manager Fieldman stated that the meeting will follow the posted meeting agenda and the schedule shown on the whiteboard. Fieldman introduced Mayor Tully to welcome the HSAHC to their first meeting.

Mayor Tully welcomed the HSAHC members to their first meeting. He thanked the members for serving on this Committee. It has taken the Village Council some time to address the issue of the role of the HSC. Starting the HSC is a priority of the Village. He stated that the community is very reliant on the Village Boards and Commission. The Village Council is appreciative of the efforts of the Boards and Commissions. He thanked them again for their commitment to the Village. The 2019-21 Village Council will receive and consider their report.

Commissioner Walus also welcomed the HSAHC members to their first meeting. She stated that she appreciated their time and efforts.

Commissioner Waldack welcomed the members and noted that the Council appreciates their volunteerism.

Commissioner Earl thanked each member for their community service and commitment to the Village. The Council looks forward to what this committee brings to them.

Mayor Tully and Commissioner Walus left the meeting at 7:05. Commissioners Earl and Waldack left the meeting shortly thereafter.

Manager Fieldman asked each member of the HSAHC to introduce themselves by stating their name, saying a little bit about themselves and stating why they are interested in serving on this committee. Each member introduced themselves accordingly.

Manager Fieldman provided background information about the Village's Boards and Commissions. He stated that Boards and Commissions play an integral role in the Village by:

- Assisting the Village Council in making policy
- Providing opportunities for public dialogue
- Creating a public record of policy discussions
- Making recommendations to the Village Council

Fieldman further stated that the Village has 15 Boards and Commissions in addition to the HSAHC. Many of them respond to petitions submitted to them. Some boards, including the Environmental Concerns Commission and the Human Service Commission act as advisory boards and may generate items for discussion and consideration that are not in response to petitions or referrals from the Village Council. He stated that the Village sometimes creates ad hoc committees to complete specific projects or tasks.

Fieldman summarized the existing duties and responsibilities of the Human Service Commission as found in the Village Code. He noted that the HSC was created in 1977 and met on a regular basis until 2011. The HSC became inactive at that time. The staff liaison to the HSC and Counseling Services were eliminated by the Village in 2010 due to budgetary issues brought on by the Great Recession.

Fieldman explained that the purpose of the HSAHC is to help the Village Council determine the roles and responsibilities for a reconstituted HSC.

Fieldman stated that the HSAHC deliverables include:

- A written report to the Village Council
- Meeting minutes
- Recommendations related to the questions posed to the HSAHC by the Village Council.

Fieldman summarized the meeting schedule for the HSAHC:

- February 26
- March 26

- April 23
- May 28

Members of the HSAHC discussed the two questions presented to them by the Village Council.

- What role an appointed HSC shall serve in the Village?
- What can and should an appointed HSC do to assist the Village Council in promoting the function and mission of the Village on an on-going basis?

Ms. Aycock stated that the HSC should have a permanent, on-going role and should focus on mental health issues and services. She noted that many mental health services are available for free in the community. The Village should support the residents in seeking out these services. She stated that the HSC should also focus on diversity issues and should create a sense of inclusiveness, which is currently lacking in the community. She noted that the LGBTQ community is not well supported in Downers Grove, noting that many residents do not feel comfortable. She said that the HSC should work to change and improve the community in these areas.

Ms. Wan said that the HSC should review the demographics of the Village (age, language, ethnicity, sexual orientation, homelessness) and let the data drive the areas that the HSC should focus on. She noted that tracking and analyzing the changes in the data over time would be informative. Ms. Wan asked what the Village is doing to support the homeless and was concerned about the Library (a warming center) closing during the recent extreme cold weather. She stated that the HSC should identify gaps in the services to the homeless and work to address these gaps, noting that the communication to the homeless population could be improved.

Ms. Williams said that the HSC should work to provide a sustainable, accessible system for serving and reaching out to the homeless and other underserved members of the community. She noted that communicating effectively with residents is of key importance.

Ms. Campbell noted that the elderly and homeless may not actively use social media or other online resources to receive information.

Ms. Aycock noted that she and others in the community have concerns about public schools. She stated that the issues which face School District 58 are different than those that School District 99 are facing. She is concerned about how District 58 responded to issues about the number of residents moving into the Highland School neighborhood so that their children could attend this award winning school. She stated that the District's response was not transparent.

Ms. Aycock discussed concerns about dual language program performance in the public schools.

Ms. Marshall stated that education is a key issue. She has questions about how the public schools are complying with recently enacted state laws about mental health services and programs.

Ms. Aycock stated that some residents who do not have children in the public schools may be moving out of the Village and may not want to pay increased taxes which support the schools.

Ms. Williams stated that the HSC should address issues related to the perceived differences between the north and south sides of the Village. She noted that the demographics of the Village differ on the north side from the south side. She said that some in the community do not understand the issue of race and do not want to discuss these issues and that these issues are taken into the schools. She stated that the HSC should host events celebrating diversity and that the Village should make facilities more readily available for members of the community and community groups.

Ms. Campbell said that Downers Grove should become a more welcoming community.

Ms. Williams stated that there is a lack of diversity in community leadership positions and that the experiences of the leaders do not reflect the experiences of many residents in the community.

Ms. Aycock said that there is a lack of diversity of religion in the community.

Ms. Lohrmann stated that she has concerns about north/south issues in the Village, noting that North High school has a different demographic makeup than that of South High School.

Ms. Williams said that she was concerned about the way School District 58 responded to her family's request to have her daughter attend Pierce Downer school when their new house was under construction across the street from the school.

Ms. Marshall said that the HSC should work to create an inclusive community which celebrates diversity as opposed to tolerating.

Ms. Aycock said she was concerned about the Village's response to the library board member's behavior a few years ago. She stated that the HSC should promote the discussions of race, especially in the schools.

Ms. Campbell said that the members of the HSAHC should use their professional skills and backgrounds to identify gaps and issues.

Ms. Nagy asked what the Village and HSC roles are in relationship to other governments. Manager Fieldman said that the Village does not control the other governments and the Village and HSC actions and discussions may influence the other governments.

Ms. Aycock asked if boards and commissions are provided with a budget. Manager Fieldman stated that the boards and commissions do not have a spending budget and that the Village budget provides funding for the services to be provided by the Village. The Village departments have budgets and resources.

Ms. Williams said that the HSC should promote diversity and should dedicate a staff person to help connect residents with social service providers.

Ms. Aycock asked about the roles, responsibilities, make-up and funding for the Downers Grove Economic Development Corporation. Manager Fieldman said the DGEDC is a not-for-profit entity supported financially by the Village (EDC receives 50% of the annual hotel tax revenue) and private contributions. The Board of Directors consists of business and government leaders. The President and CEO of the EDC is Michael Cassa.

Ms Aycock noted that the DGEDC may be a resource which could support the efforts of the HSC.

Ms. Wan said she had reviewed the excerpt of the Village's Long Range Plan and strategic goals. She noted that the LRP has a strong focus on budget and financial issues and does not include the issues being discussed at this meeting. Manager Fieldman said that the LRP is strongly rooted in financial planning and budget preparation. Ms. Wan asked how the Village Council will consider the HSAHC report and recommendations. Manager Fieldman explained that the report will be provided to the Village Council shortly after the new Council members are sworn in. The HSAHC report will be provided to the Council at the same time that the Council is working on the Long Range Plan.

Ms. Aycock stated that the HSAHC should identify the items that will appear on the agenda for the next meeting. Manager Fieldman said that Village staff will prepare and distribute a draft agenda based on a review of the notes from this meeting.

Members of the HSAHC asked for the following information to be provided prior to the next meeting:

- Summary of the issues considered by the HSC in the 2000's
- Village demographic information over the past several years

Some HSAHC members noted that the March 26 meeting will take place during the school's spring break and asked that the meeting be rescheduled.

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Wan. Second by Ms. Aycock. Voice vote carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 pm.