



Human Relations Commission

FEBRUARY 8, 2022

Commission Reinvigoration – January 2021

- Village-wide board and commission review took place in late fall of 2020. At the time, the dormant Human Relations Commission received public interest in being reinvigorated
- As part of reinvigoration, I researched similar boards and commissions in neighboring communities. Municipalities within the North Shore were the primary focus, although several communities' commissions and practices across the region influenced Wilmette's HRC.
- As part of reinvigoration process, I met with a staff member of Northern Illinois University's Division of Academic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. We reviewed the Commission's goals and mission statement to ensure they were in line with best practices.

Commission Information

- Membership
 - The HRC is made up of nine commissioners, two commissioner positions are student positions, though they have full voting and participation rights on the commission.
 - Current commissioners are diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability status, and religious affiliation.
- HRC Reinvigoration Initial Task:
 - Conduct community engagement initiatives and community discussions on racism, social equity and community building to identify the needs of Wilmette and create a proposed two-year work plan. The work plan may then be presented to the Village Board Administration Committee for review and discussion.
- Mission Statement
 - To foster and promote an inclusive community where all feel safe and welcome.

Commission Information Continued

- Goals

- To promote the well-being of all members of the community
- To increase diversity in the community
- To support all segments of the population including, but not limited to, youth, seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities, black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ), all persons regardless of their religious beliefs, and low-income groups
- To support, address and make recommendations concerning emerging community needs;
- To serve as an advocate, educator, communicator, and a point of contact for all segments of the population in the community
- To promote justice and equity in the community
- To encourage and facilitate solutions to social issues in the community
- To plan or support community events and programs that bring together and support diverse members of the community
- To provide recommendations to the Village Board on matters pertaining to community welfare
- To develop ways of anticipating, preparing for and relieving community tensions arising from intergroup conflict

Commission Work Plan

- Over the past 6 months, the main work of the Commission was to finalize its work plan, the plan includes sections pertaining to:
 - Heritage Celebrations and Forums
 - Community Outreach
 - Community Surveying
 - Metrics
- Initial discussions of the work plan took place at our July 19, 2021 HRC meeting. The work plan was approved by the HRC at their last meeting on January 18, 2022.
- The plan will next be presented to the Administration Committee of the Village Board. Following review of the Administration Committee, the plan will go to the full Village Board of Trustees who will determine plan adoption.

Work Plan – Celebrations and Forums

- Heritage Celebrations and Forums
 - Heritage celebrations align with nationally recognized heritage/history months. Current recognized celebration months include Black History Month (February), Women's History Month (March), Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May), LGBTQ+ Pride Month (June), Hispanic Heritage Month (September/October), Disability Employment Awareness Month (October), and Indigenous American Heritage Month (November).
 - Heritage month programming aims to celebrate contributions of these various groups as well as educate Wilmette's general citizenry.
 - Programming for each heritage month varies, programming is determined by the HRC.
 - Celebrations will utilize platforms for each of the celebration months, the Village's intent is to use a platform tool in each of the celebration months, platforms are as follows:
 - Awareness – Proclamations, Signage, Social Media
 - Education – Podcast, Reading List, Lectures/Panels
 - Social – Food, Festivals
 - Cultural – Art, Music
 - Business – Patronage

Work Plan – Community Outreach

- The goals of this work plan section is to use the Village’s current channels of communication to include HRC updates, initiatives, and content so that we are the voice of diversity, equity, and inclusion in Wilmette.
- Below are highlighted communication methods and examples that the HRC can utilize in promoting its work and efforts to the community:
 - Social media and virtual content: Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, Wilmette.com, Press Releases.
 - Uses: Highlight important events, communicate important update, share relevant content, re-share other organizations content.
 - Email and Direct Mail: E-news, the Communicator, New Resident Welcome Packet.
 - Uses: Detailed messages around our mission, purpose, and outcomes. Highlight partnerships and communicate the context of HRC programming.
 - In-Person: Listening Sessions, Meetings, Forums, Celebration Events.
 - Uses: Getting direct feedback from the community, relationship building, and delivering meaningful messages.
 - Other: Local Businesses and Realtors
 - Uses: General education on the Village’s DEI efforts.

Work Plan – Community Survey

- The development and administration of a community wide survey is intended to gauge community feelings and attitudes on the diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts of the Village.
- The survey is intended to develop a baseline so that the HRC can evaluate the effectiveness of programs or efforts of the Commission.
- Village staff are currently exploring a partnership with Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies to develop and disseminate a community survey. NIU will develop questions in conjunction with commissioners of the HRC and other Village staff members.
- Currently assumed that survey questions will pertain to the following points of interest:
 - Demographic information
 - Rating community attitudes
 - Areas of improvement within Wilmette
 - Events or recognition efforts of the community

Work Plan - Metrics

- The development and measuring of community metrics is intended to evaluate and measure the successes and areas of improvement for the Human Relations Commission.
- HRC will develop metrics that will measure the efforts of the Commission in several key areas including program and event participation, community attitudes, and public engagement efforts.
- The Commission will develop the metrics during the first and second quarters of 2022. As part of the metric development, the timing of measurement will also be determined. Metrics may include the following items:
 - Demographic information
 - Change in Black History Month Student Contest participation
 - Number of residents participating in engagement sessions
 - Number of events hosted by the HRC

Other Potential HRC Programming

- Wilmette is in the process of drafting an updated Comprehensive Plan, as part of the process, our consultants host “Wilmette Talk” forums. Wilmette Talk #2 will have a DEI focus and is planned for this spring.
 - The Initial concept of this event is a panel discussion at a local high school. The event would include a display of submissions from the Black History Month Student Contest, though forum details are still being finalized.
- Discussions of a community event that would be hosted jointly by the HRC and our Village’s Housing Commission. The event would have a focus on housing and real estate, with the proposed idea of bringing in local realtors to provide insight on Wilmette’s housing market and the needs of various community groups.
- Our Village is looking into the implementation of a minority-business owner assistance program. When program options are further explored and evaluated, the HRC will help determine program eligibility and administration.
- The HRC utilizes working groups to approach programming design and implementation. Current working groups include the Black History Month and Women’s History Month working groups. These groups will help draft and finalize relevant event programming.