

# Kitsap County Council for Human Rights MINUTES

Tuesday, June 20, 2023, 6:30-8 PM Meeting on Zoom only

<https://ucdenver.zoom.us/j/98061670342> Meeting ID: 980 6167 0342 By phone 253-215-8782

The **Mission of the Kitsap County Council for Human Rights** is twofold:

1. To advise county government and Kitsap County community on issues related to discrimination, violence and harassment based on race or national origin, religion, age, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or economic status, and
2. To promote equitable treatment of all people and reduce prejudice through education, resource referrals, and advocacy.

	Name	Position*		Name	Position*
P	Dionne Deschenne, <i>Chair</i>	D1 – P1	P	Elizabeth Holmes	D3 – P1
P	Erin Lanum, <i>Secretary</i>	D1 – P2		Vacant	D3 – P2
P	Judy Friesem	D1 – P3	E	Cris Amburgey	D3 – P3
U	Melisa Wight	D1 – P4	P	Kirsten Dahlquist	D3 – P4
P	Christina Barone	D2 – P1	P	Augustine Lujan	At-large
E	Rochelle Karlsen	D2 – P2	E	Bob Ellis	At-large
P	Jim Manlove	D2 – P3	P	Nicola D'Anella	At-large
	Vacant	D2 – P4	E	Rebecca Pirtle	County Admin.

**\*Note on Positions:** Commissioner for District 1 Christine Rolfes; District 2 Charlotte Garrido; District 3 Katie Walters.

**Attendance:** P – present T – present by technology E – absent excused U – absent unexcused

- 1) **Called to Order @ 6:33pm**
- 2) **Approved Agenda** – Judy motioned, Chris seconded, passed unanimously
- 3) **Group Agreements** – Decided to not read tonight.
- 4) **Centering moment – Provided by Melisa** – Not present, so discussed who might next month.  
**Who will provide at July meeting?** Reach out to Dionne if you'd like to. Dionne will check with Melisa to see if she would like to.
- 5) **Approval of Minutes from previous meeting – May 16, 2023** – Nicola motioned, Jim seconded, passed unanimously.
- 6) **New Member introductions** – No new members present
- 7) **Guest introductions, comments, or announcements (three minutes each)** – No guests present
- 8) **Old Business**
  - o **Committee Reports** – Communications Committee did not meet in June. Elizabeth, the Chair, re-emphasized the newly updated brochures and taking them to events. Augie pointed out that the Commissioners listed in brochures is now stale due to recent changes. Those will be amended. Events Committee and discussion of recent events ensued. Augie is the new Chair of the Events Committee and reported on tabling at Juneteenth Celebration on Saturday, June 17<sup>th</sup> (see below Event Reports).
  - o **Event Reports** – Augie, Melisa, and Jim attended Juneteenth event in Bremerton and said there were more folks there this year than last year, with visitors to the KCCHR table signing up on our email list and asking questions. Chairman Forsman of the Suquamish Tribe also visited the table and was discussing the issues within NKSD. It was suggested that the Chair contact Chairman Forsman to discuss. Dionne will reach out to Chairman Forsman to follow up on the expressed concerns. On another note, it was shared that the League of Women Voters was very pleased to partner with KCCHR for the last forum and looks forward to more collaborations in the future.

- **Kitsap group collaborations** – Dionne will resend the link to the list of Kitsap area organizations and the list of upcoming events offered by these organizations.
- **Event List and upcoming events** – The Events Committee is meeting tomorrow, June 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00pm and will discuss the upcoming Kitsap Pride Celebration, happening on Saturday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Tabling duties run from 2:00pm to approximately 7:00pm. A sign-up sheet will be sent out to the full council with the Event Committee meeting minutes so councilors can sign up to help cover the table. The more the merrier.
- **Update on NKSD** – Augie reported that the teacher’s union voted 98% no confidence in the Superintendent of North Kitsap School District, and 99% no confidence in the North Kitsap School Board this past week. The Classifieds Union are meeting this week and may issue a similar vote. We will all wait to see what occurs between that outcome and the active investigation that WA OSPI is conducting within NKSD. Community members were present to protest the recent renewal of the Superintendent’s contract. This Council will vote on forming an ad hoc committee to best stay tuned on the evolving subject but are unsure on KCCHR next steps at this moment, considering where things stand with the situation.
- **Succession planning – 2024 officers, form Nominating Committee** – If a councilor has interest in nominating themselves for one of the officer positions for the 2024 year, please feel free to approach Dionne, Erin, or Rebecca. We are currently without a Vice Chair, and Dionne and Erin’s terms will be ending at the end of December. This means all officer positions will need to be filled. There was discussion of forming the Nominating Committee in the near future to manage nominations. Jim expressed his desire to be on that committee and was appointed. Dionne will email the full council to find a second member.

## 9) New Business

- **Reports from community – school districts (Central and North), attacks on Kitsap Strong, DCD, Valley Nursery in Poulsbo** – Recently, Mothers for Liberty group members made and handed out shirts with blatant anti-LGBTQIA+ messages on them at Klahowya Secondary School in Central Kitsap, on school grounds. The school principal dispersed email response stating that their actions were protected by the First Amendment and that Legal must be involved. The ACLU is apparently involved as well. This incident is further fragmenting the community and resulting in children and families feeling unsafe. This issue was reported by three community members to two Council members.

Other community issues brought to councilors by community members include what is happening with Kitsap Strong, the organization in Kitsap that is likely doing the most diversity, equity, and inclusion work and yet are being subjected to attacks and efforts by individuals within local organizations attempting to shut them down. There do appear to be efforts to limit their reach, constrain them, or perhaps entirely dismantle their organization. The Council discussed the importance of bringing this to the Commissioner’s awareness, if it is not already, so that they might choose to more firmly step forward in support of DEI work within Kitsap and specifically in support of Kitsap Strong. These reports are not coming from Kitsap Strong, but from others who partner with them and are witnessing the attacks on them. Dionne did reach out to Kitsap Strong’s leadership team for information but was advised they are unable to provide any comment at this time as they are going through a transition.

Other reports have come in from area residents who report they are treated poorly by the County’s Department of Community Development (DCD). DCD has reportedly addressed related issues in the past by putting some staff through mediation training a few years ago in an attempt to improve interactions. There has been confirmation from within DCD regarding confusion amongst DCD staff, including leadership, due to the ambiguity of the policies, difficulty converting these to the new permit portal, and occasional disparities in guidance provided and statements made to permit applicants from one DCD staff member to another. Many reports specifically involve those attempting to obtain permits who may not have means to hire an attorney or permit specialist, which relates to human rights in terms of classism and the unfair treatment of those who lack means who are attempting to establish housing for themselves and their families. How can this Council help to address this within the scope of our mission? Perhaps this could be part of the ad hoc committee’s work, if that is formed. The Council currently has two realtors, a commercial developer, an architect, and an equity and sustainability professional who can serve in this capacity.

The County Commissioners have oversight of DCD and we have previously been asked to report such matters to them. The most recent report came from a retired resident who reported that they purchased a parcel with permits, therefore paying a high premium for the parcel. After the sale, the seller reportedly went to DCD and withdrew the permits, secured a refund, then left the State. The buyer determined that it would be cheaper to regain the permits than to pursue legal action against the seller but reports that when working with DCD they were told those permits could not be issued and never should have been issued in the first place. The buyer, an attorney, found this particularly alarming since the seller reportedly stated to them (buyer) that they (seller) had a friend who worked within DCD who helped the seller with the initial permit issuance, which the buyer/reporter feels gives the impression of partial treatment. It was noted that DCD has been working to improve their systems, has had immense staff turnover in recent years, and, like many, is still working without full staffing while simultaneously processing the immense backlog of COVID-delayed plans and permits.

There were also reports regarding the letter that the owner of Valley Nursery sent to the city of Poulsbo wherein he expressed upset at the perceived insistence that business owners fly pride flags “and then what Black Lives Matter flags? Tribal flags?” (may not be verbatim of article). This has come shortly after someone hung signs in the middle of the night on businesses in downtown Poulsbo who chose to hang pride flags. These signs said the sign-hanger would not be supporting them anymore for doing so. The Council observes a correlation between the rise of outwardly spoken anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiments and/or attacks locally and the rise in these kinds of occurrences, messages, and proposed or passed legislation on the national level.

- **Linda Gabriel Awards for 2023** – Since the Council is not hosting an annual conference this year, where the Linda Gabriel Awards are presented, there was discussion of why/when/how to proceed with the awards this year. It was considered that the awards be presented at our fall forum and the content of the forum will lend itself nicely to the purpose of the awards. The council will likely put out a press release asking for nomination sometime in August and complete the process in time for presentation at the fall forum (likely held in October).
- **Co-host a forum with the NAACP** – The Kitsap NAACP was going to host a town hall in Poulsbo surrounding the ongoing NKSD issues, but that was cancelled. The NAACP’s goal for this event is to educate the community on what to do when issues of hate, prejudice, and racism occur and how to proceed, as an individual and as a community, and how to prevent polarization that can be unproductive to the resolution. They want to partner with an organization like KCCHR to host a forum on this topic and we are interested. The Events Committee will discuss this further at their meeting tomorrow.
- **Ad Hoc Committees** – The Chairperson motioned to form an ad hoc committee to better address the NKSD issues since they are complex and likely to be ongoing for a while longer. Nicola seconded, and the motion passed with unanimous support. Dionne, Augie and Jim will be on that ad hoc committee and it will be called the *NKSD Latiné Community Ad Hoc Committee*. The Chairperson motioned to establish an ad hoc committee for Community Planning and Development issues, to look more deeply at planning proposals and issues pertaining to community development and to advise County Government on these matters as they relate to human rights. Jim seconded and the motion passed with unanimous support. This will be called the *Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Ad Hoc Committee*.

10) **Next meeting: July 18, 2023 at 6:30 PM at Eagle’s Nest and via Zoom**

11) **Adjourned @ 7:35pm**

12) **Called back to order @ 7:38pm to vote in a Vice Chair.** Elizabeth moved to nominate Augie as the Vice Chair of the KCCHR. Jim seconded and the motion passed with unanimous support. **The council re-adjourned at 7:39pm.**