



Community Relations Commission

CITY OF GOSHEN

202 South Fifth Street, Suite I • Goshen, IN 46528-3714

Community Relations Commission City of Goshen, Indiana Annual Report --- 2021

Submitted by Edwin Groff, CRC Secretary/Treasurer

Mission

The CRC serves Goshen by developing programs and policies that aim for a city without racism or discrimination of any kind, and building capacity for creative problem solving, resiliency, understanding, and compassion among the diverse people in our community.

Principles

- Honor the dignity of each person and each person's rights
- Listen to the diverse voices of the community
- Cultivate constructive communication and engagement
- Value honesty, truthfulness, and integrity
- Promote a community that is safe for all
- Acknowledge and accept the challenge of change—that it may have both positive and negative consequences
- Promote the acceptance of differences
- Promote equality and freedom from discrimination

Origin and Background

Created in 2004 with the passage of Ordinance 4201, and amended in 2006 by Ordinance 4339 and again in 2009 by Ordinance 4526, the Goshen Community Relations Commission (CRC) is a group of 9 volunteer residents appointed by the City Council and the Mayor. Commissioners work closely with the Community Relations Director to serve the city of Goshen by recommending activities and policies in keeping with its mission to foster a city without racism or discrimination of any kind.

CRC Commissioners during 2021

- Don Brown (Chair January – July) (resigned August)
- Cathy Cripe (Vice Chair January – July, Chair August – December)
- Michelle Fanfair-Steury (Vice Chair – July – December)
- Judith Davis (Secretary January – September) (resigned September)
- AJ Delgadillo (Treasurer January- March) (resigned as Commissioner when appointed Community Relations Director effective March 8)
- Edwin Groff (Treasurer April-December)
- Mislenny Guzman Moreno (Youth Adviser January – June)
- Steve Bermudez (Youth Adviser September – December)
- Malik Cato
- Glenn Null
- Sreekala Rajagopalan
- Yolo Lopez DeMarco (resigned January)
- Megan Eichorn, City Council Liaison (non-voting) (March – December)

CRC Activity in 2021

The CRC's activities in 2021 were curtailed by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Large public events that the CRC had previously instigated, like the Community Conversations and Taste of Goshen, were not possible due to public health constraints. While large meetings were not possible, regular CRC meetings were able to continue in a hybrid model and the CRC was able to successfully achieve a number of its projects.

The 2004 Ordinance constituting the CRC included a paid director as a part of its vision. In 2021 this part of the ordinance was finally realized when AJ Delgadillo was hired as Community Relations Director (CRD). To accommodate operations with a new structure, the Mayor, CRD, and Community Relations Commissioners wrote a new commissioner job description.

Sundown Town Resolution and Marker

In 2013-14, Goshen residents Dan Shenk and Lee Roy Berry Jr. began sharing their research on the history of Goshen as a Sundown Town. As described by author James Loewen, Sundown Towns, distributed throughout America, predominantly in the north, were almost exclusively white towns where it was an unspoken rule that blacks could not live there. Shenk and Berry presented their research to several organizations in Goshen and with the support of then Mayor Allan Kauffman, in March 2015, a resolution was unanimously passed by the City Council, "acknowledging the racially exclusionary past of Goshen, Indiana, as a sundown town."

Though efforts to create a physical, historical marker for the city of Goshen began in 2019, this process proceeded in 2021. The CRC, which had unanimously voted in support of the resolution in 2015, provided a variety of forums to consider the merits of placing a marker. Presentations to the CRC, by Shenk, Berry and Kauffman were made in March and June of 2021. Members of the CRC suggested the value in soliciting more public input on creating the marker and the actual text. A subcommittee was formed and a survey was created. Ultimately, 608 responses were received. On Sept. 30, 2021, an open public forum was also held, attended by 40-50 people from Goshen, with comments recorded. AJ Delgadillo wrote an in-depth analysis of the collected data. Based on the perspective informed by the data, and individual consideration of the merits and concerns that had been presented and discussed throughout the year, the CRC voted 5-1 to recommend to Mayor Stutzman and the City Council that a physical marker acknowledging the history of Goshen as a Sundown Town be placed at a location in Goshen yet to be determined.

Two documents are on file: The final version of the marker text, which includes a current statement from Mayor Jeremy Stutzman, and the written analysis of the survey by AJ Delgadillo.

Elkhart County Juneteenth Celebration

Chair Don Brown initiated CRC involvement in the third annual Elkhart County Juneteenth remembrance and celebration held at the Canaan Baptist Church in Elkhart IN, on June 19, 2021. Six Commissioners attended the event, staffing a booth that both provided information about the CRC and solicited input regarding the Sundown Town marker. For this occasion, the CRC designed and produced a refrigerator magnet with the CRC logo and the tag line: "Promoting equality, diversity and a community that is safe for all." The CRC also made a small contribution in support of activities for children at the event.

Commissioner's Retreat

On Saturday, September 25 from 1-5 Commissioners and Director met at Schrock Pavilion. The first part of the retreat consisted of a workshop facilitated by AJ Delgadillo, the second in a series of Cultural Competency trainings that Mr. Delgadillo is developing for application in a variety of contexts for city residents and leaders. The second part of the retreat was dedicated to strategic planning. Between the retreat and the following regular meeting the CRC completed a SWOT process (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), culminating in a document that prioritizes strategic goals for 2022. This will serve as an important working document in the year ahead.

Neighborhood Association

The CRC is committed to cultivating ongoing relationships with the various Neighborhood Associations throughout Goshen. This year, Glenn Null and AJ Delgadillo attended a gathering of the West Side Neighborhood Association in March. Cathy Cripe and Edwin Groff attended a combined meeting of the Chamberlain and East Goshen Neighborhood Associations in Oct. On both occasions, Commissioners were able both to learn of neighborhood priorities and share information and goals of the CRC. The CRC recognizes the importance of sustained relationships with these associations as a means of remaining better informed of community needs and building a strong network in support of CRC activities.

Middle and High School Essay Contest

At the November monthly meeting of the CRC, Chair Cathy Cripe initiated the idea of holding a city wide essay contest for Middle and High School students, addressing values and strategies for effective communication within our community. The prompt and guidelines for the contest are still in discussion. The CRC looks forward to implementing this in 2022.

Looking Ahead

2022 will begin with AJ Delgadillo in his Mayoral staff position as fulltime Director of the CRC. The CRC anticipates gaining several new members to fill resignations and term retirements. As part of the CRC's strategic planning, CRC will continue exploring opportunities to re-invigorate Community Conversations in forums suited to pandemic restrictions. The CRC is also interested in partnering with the Arts and Culture Committee of Goshen in initiating events for the City of Goshen. The CRC will continue to strengthen its network of connections through Neighborhood Associations, partnerships with Goshen businesses and educational communities.