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CITY OF BELOIT EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION *Elects New Chairperson*

February 28, 2017 - At the Beloit Equal Opportunities Commission meeting on Wednesday, February 15, 2017 a new chairperson was elected by the Commission. The previous chairperson had resigned last November after posting what many considered to be a racist comment on Facebook. This was the first meeting of the EOC since that resignation. Steve Howland was elected as the new chairperson and during the meeting he and the rest of the Commissioners affirmed their intent to ACTIVELY pursue the Commission's "purpose," which is: "The Commission has been created to improve the quality of life by the elimination of racism in the Beloit community. The purpose of the commission is to take action, study, analyze and recommend solutions with respect to the major social, economic and cultural problems that affect people residing or working within the City, including discrimination in housing, education, employment and public accommodations and facilities..."

Howland has served on the EOC for the past three years and also serves on the Rock County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, as well as being involved with several groups working on mental health issues. Previously he served on the Rock County Board of Supervisors and the Ad Hoc Diversity Committee for the Board of Education. The Commission intends to create channels of communication and networking with various communities, organizations and entities that reside or work in Beloit; and to collaborate with current efforts by the City Manager, the City Council and other appropriate city departments to address issues of discrimination.

Howland in a written statement said, "Beloit is a great place to live. Having lived in church provided parsonages most of my career, my wife and I chose Beloit when we bought a home here eleven years ago in anticipation of retirement. I am a retired United Methodist pastor who served churches in the Chicago area from the mid 1970's until I retired in 2011. We were attracted to Beloit by the diversity of the community and the wonderful people we met here. There is a richness of culture and opportunity in Beloit that is outstanding. However, not everyone experiences the benefits of that richness. Disparities exist from the cradle to the grave in infant mortality, in health care, in education, in jobs, in housing, in the criminal justice system, in income levels, in accumulated wealth, in life expectancy. It is the duty of the EOC to expose and address any underlying discriminatory issues or problems be they conscious or unconscious, deliberate or unintended. One of the great opportunities that Beloit offers is the opportunity to make a difference by becoming involved. When we see past the differences, when we are not blinded by resentment, when the other person stops being a problem and is viewed as a possibility to learn, grow and see life from a new perspective, quality of life is enhanced. The EOC will have made a difference if we improve the quality of life for all those who reside and work in Beloit."

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