



APPROVED: January 28, 2014

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (HRC)

City Hall, Willamette Room

Tuesday, November 26, 2013

MINUTES

Commissioners present: Kim Whitley, Tina Dodge Vera, Javier Cervantes, Nancy Greenman, Jay Sluiter, Michael Thomson, and Rob Duncan

Commissioners absent: None

Staff present: Wes Hare, City Manager; Marilyn Smith, Management Assistant/Public Information Officer

Others present: Frank Moore, Linn County Mental Health Director; Clifford Hartman, Linn County Mental Health Program Manager; Tony Howell, Linn County Alcohol & Drug Treatment Program Manager; Cristie Lynch, Samaritan Health Marketing & Communications Manager; Tara Dixson, McKinney-Vento Liaison and Office Manager at GAPS; Monica Lorence, Jackson Street Youth Shelter Outreach Manager for Linn County; and Andrea Myhre, Jackson Street Youth Shelter Grants Writer

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kim Whitley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 22, 2013, joint meeting with HAC and October 22, 2013

Gina Burrese noted that the joint meeting minutes needed to include that Javier Cervantes had passed out a presentation guide prior to his slide presentation on the visit to Cornelius.

MOTION: Nancy Greenman made a motion to approve both sets of minutes as amended; Jay Sluiter seconded. Approved 7-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

Mental Health Month – May 2014

Whitley opened the conversation stating that the HRC desires to know how they can best support Linn County in their plans for Mental Health Month. Frank Moore expressed his appreciation for the support. He stated that it has been the Health Department's goal to utilize the Mental Illness Awareness Week and Mental Health Month to promote the normalcy of mental illness in our community populations. He passed out a sheet describing Linn County's campaign for mental health literacy (see agenda file). Many are not aware of the difference between the two terms of mental illness and mental health. Moore said that the more people in the community that are aware of mental health, the better off we will be. Moore explained that the Mental Health Advisory Board met earlier today and apologized that they did not have a chance to prepare a plan to present for tonight's HRC meeting. As they make plans, they will update the HRC. He said that he envisions focusing on two groups to bring about community awareness: children and senior citizens. Moore related that May 2-8, 2014, is Children's Mental Health Week and May 15 – 21 is Older Americans' Mental Health Week. He said that he feels both groups get ignored. Moore shared that depression screenings were conducted for children through the school district. He said that, although it was met with some controversy, it was successful.

Moore encouraged the group to begin making contacts within the groups they serve and to brainstorm different organizations they could connect with to help spread the word and bring awareness. He mentioned utilizing personal interest stories through the *Albany Democrat-Herald* to help publicize the event. Moore related that senior citizens often miss out because they are not always using the same services as the rest of the population. He said that it would be good to go to the places senior citizens frequent and talk with them. Moore also suggested seeking out other services that fit with wellness to spread the word.

Cristie Lynch expressed that she is excited about the new year's mental health literacy campaigns because they have the potential to be far reaching and deep with all the hands that are involved to make it happen. Tony Howell is helping to coordinate project teams with volunteers for outreach. She said that right now they are at the research phase. They want to connect with the people they are trying to reach and ask them their perceptions of mental health and mental illness. This research would help develop the message and the campaign. They will be wrapping up the research by the end of this month and will have more to share in January.

Howell added that part of the campaign is to focus on schools and student effort. Linn County Alcohol and Drug Prevention Program is providing technical support to a student group that in the past has been active in alcohol and drug prevention where they developed messages for their peers at key times during the year. Now, this student group is interested in taking on mental illness prevention as well. They are looking into providing training for this. It's about starting awareness at a young age to reduce the stigma of mental illness. Howell introduced a grant proposal submitted last week in partnership with Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties for mental health promotion and mental illness prevention. The grant will provide for a needs assessment and developing of a strategic plan. It will help fill the "promoting mental health and preventing mental illness" gap. It is hopeful a media campaign will be included. The grant would start in January. Howell said that the idea is not to just have a big blast a couple times a year, but to use these events as kickoffs to ongoing efforts as a community. The Mental Health Month event is a good excuse to get more media coverage, but we need to keep the community engaged throughout the year.

Whitley commented that it is great to hear so much is going on. Tina Dodge Vera mentioned that, when comparing Linn and Benton Counties in mental health prevention, Linn takes the lead. She commended the guests. Greenman asked how the HRC could be involved. Moore replied that he and the others could come back in January when they have a better sense of what is needed to get things up and running. He explained that one year they did a series of posters; and if they decide to do that again, they would appreciate help with that.

Whitley asked when the Health Department will be in their new building. Moore answered that they are supposed to move in January. Whitley shared that City Hall is having an open house next week and suggested that the Mental Health Department hold an open house for their new building during Mental Health Month. The group liked the idea. Cervantes asked that, if there were to be an open house, does the Department have materials available in various languages. Moore replied that they have before and they have staff that could help with that now. Dodge Vera interjected that it would be especially nice to provide the bilingual materials for the youth. Whitley asked what would attract the population to that kind of event. Cervantes replied that they would need quality marketing where they promoted the services available for the emerging populations. Word of mouth would be a key factor in attracting the population. Moore asked if Dodge Vera and Cervantes could distribute the bilingual materials if they were created. Both agreed. Cervantes suggested having the faith-based organizations help spread the word. Dodge Vera asked where the Mental Health Department's new building is located. Moore answered that it is off Waverly Drive east of Seventh Avenue. Greenman asked if the new location was better accessible to the public. Moore responded that it was, but he can already tell that there will be problems with parking, which is the case most anywhere. Their vision is to be able to provide clients with vouchers for public transportation.

Whitley thanked the guests from the Health Department for coming and expressed the group's desire for them to return in a couple of months.

Statistics/demographics of the student homeless in Albany's school system

Tara Dixon and Monica Lorence introduced themselves. Lorence brought along a staff member, Andrea Myhre, who she introduced as the shelter's grant writer. Dixon passed out brochures regarding the McKinney-Vento law, articles from the *Albany Democrat-Herald* reporting statistics of homelessness in Oregon, and a synopsis of homeless counts from GAPS (see agenda file). Dixon defined who is eligible to receive help through the law. She explained that, in addition to helping the homeless, the law helps those in transition situations, such as living in a motel or doubling up with family or friends due to financial hardship. It does not include those in foster care. Dixon described how stressful it can be on a student when they do not have adequate housing.

Dodge Vera asked if the students being helped by the program were self-reported. Dixon answered that most are referred. The program works to keep students in the same school throughout the year regardless of where they have to live. Participants are assigned an identification number that allows the program to track how they are doing with educational testing. Dixon expressed her desire to boost help from the community to mentor these students. They desperately need help with homework and other school-related tasks.

After reviewing the reported data, the group asked Dixon some questions. Dodge Vera asked if the grant funds were dispersed equally among the schools. Dixon explained that some schools are better at identifying the need, so they will have more students receiving help. Whitley noted that the data showed that those in doubled-up housing had dropped but those in serious risk situations had grown. Dodge Vera asked if there were any family shelters available. Dixon answered that there was nothing specifically designated for families. Lorence interjected that the Helping Hands Shelter can take families on a very limited basis. Dodge Vera inquired if needy students can participate in after-school activities. Dixon replied that it can be challenging for students to focus on everyday needs let alone additional activities. If a student does have a desire to participate, the program works to get the fees waived and provide transportation.

Greenman asked if we do a good job of keeping children in school. Dixon responded that she felt we did. She acknowledged that there is a lot of help from community partners such as Soroptimist, Red Canoe Credit Union, and Walmart. Soroptimist helps by providing clothing and such for those in need. Dixon reported that there is a big need, though, for quarters so students can do their laundry. Red Canoe implements an annual school supply drive, and Walmart donates school supplies. The schools provide free breakfast and lunch to those in need, and teachers help from their own resources. It was noted that for students to take advantage of free food from other organizations they need to present identification and many of the needy students do not have ID. It can take weeks to obtain a birth certificate. Without ID, it is also difficult to receive medical care. Lorence reported that the Jackson Street Youth Shelter helps youth get ID cards and start accounts.

Lorence handed out copies of the Jackson Street Youth Shelter's annual report which included an insert with the rundown of the different programs and services provided through the shelter (see agenda file). Lorence displayed a poster board showing the shelter's goals. One of the goals was to have an overnight shelter in Albany. Lorence reported that they just opened a transitional living program in Corvallis. Tutoring and mentoring programs are provided at the shelter. It is a place where youth can come in for a respite. The staff can help mediate between the youth and their families.

Cervantes asked Lorence to describe the shelter's relationship with Albany's Police Department. Lorence responded that they haven't, as yet, made a big connection with the Department. The shelter is connected with the community through the HEART program. She explained that the shelter's policy is "no staff to youth touching." The site is sober and weapon free. Lorence noted that, when needs have arisen at the Corvallis shelter, Corvallis law enforcement has responded quickly. Cervantes asked how their relationship is with the youth. Lorence replied that the police officers do visit and have had good communication that has turned negative thoughts into positive ones.

Dixon commented that she appreciated the transitional program through the Jackson Street Shelter because, as she sees it, an 18-year-old is not ready for adult shelters. She commended the program for directing the students to put away a portion of their funding that eventually will go back to them. It helps them learn to save. The program strives to serve a wide range of youth.

Andrea Myhre asked the group if they knew of any available grants the Shelter could utilize. Cervantes mentioned block grants, and Myhre said she was aware of those. Whitley thanked Dixon and Lorence for sharing and wished them well.

UPDATES

Human Relations Award

Michael Thomson reported that only one application for each category had been received. Smith noted that one more had come in for an individual. She recounted that the deadline is Friday, November 29, but City Hall is closed both Thursday and Friday. An application can be postmarked for Friday, received later, and still be considered. Due to the limited response, Thomson concluded that they should present one award for each category instead of the three that the Mayor had suggested. The group agreed.

January 2014 event: Martin Luther King, Jr., event

Cervantes explained that they plan on doing a reading of MLK's "I Have a Dream" here at City Hall in the covered plaza area or on the steps of the Courthouse. The event would take place on MLK's birthday, January 15. Greenman noted that the 15th falls on a Wednesday. She expressed that it would have been nice to coordinate the event with a Council meeting but noted that they meet on the 8th and 22nd, the Wednesdays before and after the event. Cervantes responded that they could still invite the Councilors to attend the event. Cervantes stated that they had not yet nailed down a time for the event. Whitley asked Hare and Smith what would be a good time in regards to City Hall's activities. Hare responded that there would be a better chance of an audience during the lunch hour from noon to 1:00 p.m. Smith noted that people paying their water bills and court fines come and go throughout the day. Cervantes asked if Hare and Smith could encourage City staff to participate in the event. Hare responded that they can announce the event to the staff on the City's intranet. He suggested getting Linn County involved and private sectors such as the nearby banks. Cervantes said it would be nice to have someone that is good with graphics to create a poster to advertise the event.

Greenman commended Cervantes on his leadership for last year's event. She stated that Cervantes did an impressive job of herding the volunteers to keep the reading going in a continuous stream.

Cervantes said that the subcommittee will finalize the plan and update the group virtually. Rob Duncan and Dodge Vera volunteered to be a part of the subcommittee. Smith will help anyway she can.

Essay activities – 4th and/or 5th graders

Meeting was adjourned before this was discussed.

Other volunteer opportunities

None.

Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC)

No update at this time.

Calendar of Events: 2013 and 2014

None.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

None.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, January 28, 2013

ADJOURNMENT

Whitley adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on File

Gina Burrese
Administrative Assistant

Reviewed by,

Signature on File

Wes Hare
City Manager