



APPROVED: May 27, 2008

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
City Hall Willamette Room
Tuesday, February 26, 2008
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Commissioners present: C. Jeffery Evans, Jodi Nelson, Delia Guillen, Anna Anderson, Rick Hammel, Jr.

Commissioners absent: Marian Anderson, Blanca Ruckert

Staff present: Wes Hare, City Manager; Marilyn Smith, Management Assistant/Public Information Officer; Ed Boyd, Police Chief; Kevin Kreitman, Fire Chief; Wanda Omdahl, Deputy Fire Marshal II

Others present: None.

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 18, 2007

MOTION: Hammel moved to approve with one correction; Nelson seconded. Approved 5-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

None.

Department Director Feedback about Diversity Issues

City Manager Wes Hare introduced Police Chief Ed Boyd, Fire Chief Kevin Kreitman, and Deputy Fire Marshall II Wanda Omdahl.

Police Chief Boyd said that he worked for the City of Salem and they have a Human Rights Commission and he was the liaison from the Police Department. He said the biggest challenge is for the department to reflect the city that is being served. The department works to recruit the highest qualified person and try to reach out to as many segments of the population as possible. It is harder to recruit minority applicants because they are in high demand. Bilingual employees play an important role as serving as a translator when needed. The Police Department has seven bilingual employees, and five of those employees are fluent in the Spanish language. There are other resources including the AT&T Language Line. A current need is for employees who know sign language. Most documents are produced in English and Spanish and also some are in Russian and German. Hammel asked if any training is offered to employees. Boyd said that training is available for employees who request it. There is a three to five percent pay incentive for employees that are bilingual. Guillen asked if there are any bicultural employees working for the Police Department. Boyd said

that basic officer training includes cultural training to help handle cultural issues. Also, periodic cultural diversity training is available to employees. Evans asked how people from other countries are educated on our laws and rules. Boyd said the department works to bridge the communication gap and they will provide educational trainings for other cultures if it is needed. Hare mentioned to the Commission that they can do a ride along with the Police Department. This is a great way to learn more about what is happening in the community. Boyd encouraged the Commissioners to do a ride along. Nelson asked if Police Officers receive training to handle citizens that have mental health issues and if our police force has been accused of profiling. Boyd said staff recently had a full day of training to learn how to handle citizens with mental illness. Mental health training is completed during basic academy, and the Police Department works with Linn County Mental Health to help people get the services they need. Boyd said there has been one profiling complaint in the last two years, and it was found to be unsubstantiated. Hare said when he has done ride alongs, he asks officers if they notice any certain races they come in contact with more and they have said no.

Guillen asked if they have broken down crimes by different races. Boyd said no, but they could do that if the Commissioners would like that. Guillen said there is profiling done to the Latino population, but they don't speak out. Boyd said people are stopped when there is a violation and most violations happen at night. In the middle of the night, people may be contacted by a police officer because it is odd to be out and about during that time. He expects all of the police officers to do this. Nelson asked if there is anything the Commission can do to be helpful to the Police Department. Boyd said he wants to develop a partnership with the Commission. Hare said that out of this meeting we may want to come up with some type of event to have folks get together to have a mutual understanding of one another. Nelson said some citizens may feel they have been treated a certain way, and whether or not it's true in fact, it is true to them.

Fire Chief Kreitman said applicants applying for firefighter/EMT positions need to be paramedic certified. There are three bilingual employees in the Fire Department (FD). There is a Hispanic language medical service line they utilize, and there are resources available at Albany General Hospital. Language and cultural diversity training is available to employees. There is a large homeless population that is being served. Public education is provided to address issues early. EMTs have a language medical handbook that they carry. The FD strives for excellent customer service for the entire population. All people need to be treated with respect and equality. All FD employees have a card they carry regarding customer service. AFCAF was developed to help people in need. Most forms are available in English and Spanish. Evans asked if they get calls from people on life sustaining machines during outages and in general. Kreitman said they are pretty rare; and if they do get a call, it is because a person is worried that their oxygen tank is getting low.

Omdahl said that the at-risk population includes low-income families, elderly, and children. Omdahl gave examples of how they have served Latino families. Children in these families often see a presentation at school and tell their parents about what is offered. The children also help translate for their families. The FD works with people who have physical and mental impairments to make sure they are in a safe environment. The FD will install strobe light fire alarms for people with hearing impairments. Evans asked if there has been resistance with landlords and the installation of the strobe fire alarms. Omdahl said that there hasn't been much resistance from landlords. Evans said there are tax credits available for these types of installations. The FD visits elderly people to test and change batteries in fire alarms. Children attending Head Start received 19 helmets for all of the kids. Kreitman said the main focus isn't on ethnicity, but instead working to make sure all citizens in the community have a safe living environment. Omdahl said they collaborate with other agencies to provide services and to get the word out about the resources available. Guillen said she worries about the Latino citizens because most Latinos don't know that they need fire alarms. Omdahl said the Latino population has been participating in the child safety seat check clinics. Ninety percent of seats are not put in properly, and it is great to see so many people coming to get the seats checked. Kreitman said safety camp is held twice a year for children and many of the kids come back and want to be camp counselors. Guillen said her fourth grader enjoys the presentations at school and has been making home safety escape plans every year since the first grade. Hare said there is diversity training for all

supervisors on Thursday, February 28. Evans said he would like to help with disability training for City employees if needed. Hare said he would pass that information on to David Shaw, Human Resources Director. Nelson said she likes the new sirens of the Fire Engines.

Continued Discussion Regarding Community Survey

No new information.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

The Commissioners decided to cancel the meeting in March due to spring break.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, 7:00 p.m., in the Willamette Room.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file.

Diana Eilers
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewed by,

Signature on file.

Wes Hare
City Manager