



APPROVED: May 27, 2008

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
City Hall Willamette Room
Tuesday, April 22, 2008
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Commissioners present: Blanca Ruckert, Jodi Nelson, Delia Guillen

Commissioners absent: C. Jeffery Evans, Anna Anderson, Rick Hammel, Jr., Marian Anderson

Staff present: Dan Bedore, Mayor; Wes Hare, City Manager; Marilyn Smith, Management Assistant/Public Information Officer; Ed Gallagher, Library Director; Ed Hodney, Parks & Recreation Director; Katie Nooshazar, Recreation Programs Manager; Joy Gilliland, Recreation Coordinator

Others present: None.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Ruckert called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 26, 2008

A motion could not be made due to the lack of a quorum.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

None.

Discussion of How the Public Perceives the Mentally Ill

Mayor Dan Bedore attended a meeting regarding a home for mentally ill people on Del Rio Avenue SE. It was originally going to be a group home for forensic patients, but the use has been changed to a group home for semi-independent mentally ill people. Dan said that he noticed a lack of tolerance of mentally ill people and thought that it was driven by fear and ignorance. Mentally ill people are being discriminated against because of their mental illness. He would like to see if the HRC would undertake a public educational process to eliminate the stigma that goes along with mental illness and to help educate citizens with preconceptions of people with mental illness. Dan suggested contacting advocacy groups to gather educational materials and for ideas. DHS or National Alliance for Mentally Ill may be some good resources to check out. Jodi said that she has a display outlining the history of mental illness in Oregon which was created for mental illness awareness month at OSU, and she suggested displaying them in City Hall. She went on to say that the display traces the history of mental illness, where we are today, and how we got where we are. Dan wondered if it could also be displayed at Heritage Mall where more people

will see it. Jodi said that the stigma is huge and very few people talk about mental illness. Wes said that untreated mental illness is a danger because people are not receiving treatment and help. It is important to get the information out to the public to let them know the difference. Jodi said that she also has a display that lists famous people who have mental illnesses. Blanca suggested having discussions during the lunch hour to address the issue. Marilyn said that National Mental Illness Awareness month is in October. Delia said that her church had events in October regarding mental illness. Jodi said that they had a three-part series last year at OSU which included video presentations. Jodi described the videos. Jodi said that they also had Dr. David Hart, who is a Corvallis psychiatrist, speak about his mental illness and the challenges he has faced. Blanca said that a subcommittee could be formed to plan the October event. Jodi said that she will send the group some links on mental illness. Blanca said that the Oxford houses are also being discussed throughout the community and thought the HRC group may want to tackle that issue. Jodi thinks Oxford houses are an issue because they are not being spread out within the community. Oxford houses tend to be big houses with many bedrooms so more people can occupy them. Dan thinks the problem is the tenants of Oxford houses not being good neighbors.

Department Director Feedback about Diversity Issues

Ed Gallagher handed out a document highlighting services and programs offered at the Library. The Library serves around 1,200 people a day. He encourages HRC members to direct people to the Library as it is an information clearinghouse. If the HRC has any suggestions as to what types of programs could be offered, please send them to Ed. Jodi asked what Spanish text items are most in demand. Ed said that there are around 2,000 Spanish publications and that movies and software are in the highest demand followed by nonfiction, children's books, and fiction. Dan asked if there is demand for texts in other languages. Ed said no. Delia said that she knows a lot of kids and families who don't know about the Library or how to obtain a library card. GAPS has a migrant summer program for Spanish speaking children, and they could benefit from the Library. The Library has a bilingual story time. Blanca asked how bilingual story time was started. Ed said that it was because Doris Hicks, a Library employee, had suggested it; and she is bilingual and a master puppeteer. Blanca said that she doesn't think part of the population knows about the services the Library provides and suggested creating brochures to reach this population.

Ed Hodney said that Parks and Recreations has venues for people to recreate in; facilitates opportunities for recreational, educational, and cultural programs; provides a wide variety of special events; and plans new parks. There are parks in virtually every part of the city of Albany. The staff is constantly working to connect with citizens to help them utilize the programs and attend the various events. Events are inclusive so that any person can participate. Katie discussed the various programs and classes offered and how they strive to make them inclusive and some classes are adapted. Ed said that Parks & Recreation works with a variety of partnerships including the YMCA, the Boys & Girls Club, GAPS, etc., to engage a wider scope of the community. The three areas are non-English speakers, individuals with physical disabilities, and individuals with mental illness. Not all of the parks are accessible because many are old and outdated, and there haven't been any resources to bring them up-to-date for accessibility. Jodi asked for examples regarding accessibility issues at the parks. Ed said that parking is an issue; some picnic tables aren't accessible, some playgrounds aren't accessible to children with disabilities, and restrooms aren't accessible. In the next five years, 17 playgrounds will be replaced and will be ADA compliant.

Request for Financial Support for Festival Latinos

Joy said that the third annual Festival Latinos is being planned. Joy applied for a grant from the Linn County Cultural Commission and received \$400, which is half of what Parks & Recreation has received the two previous years. Joy understands that the HRC doesn't have a budget, but wanted to check to see if any HRC members have suggestions for other avenues to get funds. The event is on September 15, 2008, and will be at Monteith Riverpark. Last year, there were over 2,000 people in attendance. Joy said it is more than a one-day event as it brings different cultures together. Wes suggested checking with the

Albany Visitor's Association. Marilyn suggested contacting the Albany Chamber of Commerce to get a list of the minority-owned businesses.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

None.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Tuesday, May 27, 2008, 7:00 p.m., in the Willamette Room.

ADJOURNMENT –

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file.

Diana Eilers
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewed by,

Signature on file.

Wes Hare
City Manager