



APPROVED: August 26, 2008

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

**MINUTES**

Commissioners present: C. Jeffery Evans, Marian Anderson, Jodi Nelson, Blanca Ruckert, Jodi Nelson, Rick Hammel, Jr.

Commissioners absent: Delia Guillen, Anna Anderson

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

Others present: Mayor Dan Bedore, Dick Owen, Judy Byers, Grace Gantt

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

Business from the Public

Jeffery said that Anna Anderson has resigned due to her schedule. Anna was Councilor Johnson's appointment. [Anna's resignation will be presented to the City Council on Wednesday, August 13, 2008, for acceptance.]

Dick Owen said that people can't visibly recognize mental illness. He has twin sons who both suffer from mental illness. Dick discussed an arrest of one of his sons. Following the arrest, his son stayed at Helping Hands for a period of time; and they helped him get on his feet. He appreciates what Helping Hands has done to help his son. Dick says that the court system and police department are not following proper procedures. He feels the police don't have the training to handle citizens with mental illness, and he would like the HRC to look into the problem. Jeffery said that the Commission doesn't investigate individual incidents. Jeffery asked Wes if this would be more appropriate for the Council. Wes said that he, along with the Council, has spoken to Mr. Owen on multiple occasions. Commissioner Blanca Ruckert said that if there are multiple incidents regarding the handling of people with mental illness, the HRC can talk to the Police Chief to find out what type of mental health training the police staff is receiving.

Dick said that the Neighborhood Watch program in his neighborhood does a citizen's patrol. He feels that it is wrong for them to be patrolling the neighborhood. Blanca suggested he call the Community Resources Unit within the police department so they can provide information regarding training the Neighborhood Watch group receives and it will be a way to mediate between him and the Neighborhood Watch group.

Judy Byers said that she has concerns about the treatment of people with mental illness. The community needs to be sensitive to people with mental illness. Blanca asked what types of services Helping Hands provides. Grace Gantt said that they provide the following: classrooms, showers, laundry, mental health service (from Linn County), nurses, and a dental van visits four times a year. Some of the classes they offer include: Introduction to GED, computer training classes, job research, resume preparation, retaining housing, and how to integrate into the community. Grace said that most clients at Helping Hands have mental illness.

Blanca suggested Helping Hands come back with a report with suggestions for improving the treatment of mentally ill. Grace said there is a need for transitional housing for people. Grace said that the City and the County don't offer assistance to Helping Hands. Grace said that she is concerned with fines that Helping Hands clients receive and she knew of someone who received a \$6,500 fine for crossing the railroad tracks in the wrong area. Jeffery suggested they stay for the mental health topic on the agenda.

### Martin Luther King Day 2009

Jeffery asked if the group wanted to have a Martin Luther King event in 2009. Commissioner Jodi Nelson said that she would like to do something again. Last year was a great starting point, and it is a way to get people thinking about peace and justice. Jodi would like to help plan the event again, and Wes said he would help. Commissioner Marian Anderson said she will do whatever she can to help.

### Mental Health

Jeffery said that the police and fire staff may not have all the necessary training they need when it comes to handling people with mental illness. Marilyn said that Frank Moore of Linn County Mental Health and Barbara Thayer would be attending September's meeting. Marian said that she agrees with the folks here tonight and that the police need more training to better handle people with mental illness. Dick said that the police and judges have a bad reputation in the City, and it needs to be corrected. Wes clarified that the event involving Mr. Owen's son occurred three years ago. It was discussed then with the Acting Police Chief, and the police officers received specialized training regarding mental illness. Jeffery asked Dick if there are any current issues outside of the event from three years ago. Dick said no. Jeffery said that steps have been taken to correct the problem. Blanca agreed and said that the group can do more if there are a number of current complaints; then, it would be appropriate to work on correcting the issue. Jeffery asked the other commissioners if they have enough information regarding the police and response to the mentally ill and if this is something to follow up with Chief Boyd. Jodi said that there are some parallel pieces to this and she doesn't have enough information about this issue. She doesn't feel comfortable making a recommendation about this particular issue and would like to gather some information and bring it back to the next meeting. Jodi said that she has information about a group that works with police departments to help them better handle people with mental illness. Jeffery said that the HRC can get involved with the public awareness side of this. Blanca said that she envisions an event where the HRC partners with other agencies already working with mental illness issues. Rick said that the HRC needs to educate the public so they have a better understanding. Marilyn said that National Mental Illness month is in October. Marian suggested creating brochures. Jeffery asked the group if planning an event for October is possible. Jodi suggested creating and displaying boards highlighting mental illness facts for the public to view. It would be an easy project to do because the boards could be put on easels in City Hall, and it would get people talking. Blanca and Jodi will work with Marilyn on this project.

### City Staff Recruitment

Jeffery said that this item was listed because there are a couple of commissioners who think more could be done to improve city staff diversity. Jodi said that there are going to be many retirements within the next five years. Jodi said that young professionals aren't reading newspapers; they are using the Internet to find jobs and to see if an organization will be a good fit for them. Jodi said that applicants need to be able to find job openings quickly when searching a Web site. It is important to reach out to minorities and young professionals. Wes said that we have a great Webmaster, Matt Harrington, who strives to keep the Web site up-to-date. Marilyn said that when it comes to staff diversity, we are right in line except for the Hispanic population and women. Jeffery said that we may closely mirror the demographics now, but what about in the future? Wes said that most positions will have a fair amount of turnover because fewer people are staying in one position for 30 years. David Shaw, Human Resources Director, is constantly analyzing our workforce and striving to match it. Wes welcomes suggestions and ideas for recruiting minorities and young professionals. Rick said that he is impressed with the diversity within the City. Jeffery asked if we want to take this any further.

Wes said that David Shaw and Matt Harrington could attend a future meeting to give more details about diversity and the Web site. Jodi said that she knows someone who could work with Matt to make the site more accessible to people with visual problems. Marilyn will arrange to have David and Matt come to the October meeting.

### Racial Profiling

Jeffery said that his intent was to discuss this as a prelude to having the Police Chief come talk in August. There is a perception that profiling is occurring; and, therefore, we need to address it. Jeffery asked if there are specific incidents to show when profiling has occurred. Is there anything we want to do to address the issue, maybe sponsor a town hall? Wes said that it would be helpful to find a solution to change the perception some people may have. Jeffery said that the Police Chief is willing to participate in changing the perception. Jeffery feels that the HRC needs to take the lead with this issue. Jeffery said that one possible problem the HRC may face when planning an event could be people being afraid to attend because of their immigration status. Wes said that he believes the majority of the Latino community is here legally and the perception of the police may be culturally engrained. Jodi said that it would be best to follow the lead of Delia because she is connected with the Latino community. Jeffery said that this has potential for great results or great disaster depending on how it is approached. This topic will be continued at next month's meeting.

### Universal Design and Accessibility

Marilyn said that it is thoughtful of Jeffery to continue to put the accessibility issue on the bottom of the agenda, but it should be addressed. Marilyn suggested that it be discussed at the November meeting. Jeffery said that November would be good.

### BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

Jeffery mentioned that the Commission will be presenting the annual report at the January City Council meeting and for the group to be thinking about it.

### NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, August 26, 2008, 7:00 p.m., in the Willamette Room.

### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Signature on file*

Diana Eilers  
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewed by,

*Signature on file*

Wes Hare  
City Manager