NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
City Hall Willamette Room
Tuesday, February 24, 2009
7:00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
   - January 27, 2009. [Pages 1-4]

   Action:_____

4. SCHEDULED BUSINESS

   a. Albany Peace Seekers. (Sharon Gisler)
   Action:_____

   b. Business from the Public

   c. Commission response to community incidents. [Verbal] (Jim Delapoer/Marilyn Smith)
   Action:_____

5. BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

6. NEXT MEETING DATE: *Tuesday, March 24, 2009*

7. ADJOURNMENT

City of Albany Web site: www.cityofalbany.net

The location of the meeting/hearing is accessible to the disabled. If you need special accommodations to attend or participate, please notify the Human Resources Department in advance by calling (541) 917-7500.

APPROVED: _____

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
City Hall Willamette Room
Tuesday, January 27, 2009
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Commissioners present:	Jeffery Evans, Blanca Ruckert, Marian Anderson, Jodi Nelson, Nancy Greenman, Margaret Martinez, Kim Whitley (arrived at 7:10 p.m.)
Commissioners absent:	None
Staff present:	Marilyn Smith, Management Assistant/Public Information Officer; Melanie Adams, Building Official; Lisa Bennett, Disability Access Coordinator
Others present:	None

CALL TO ORDER

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

WELCOME NEW COMMISSION MEMBERS

New members Nancy Greenman and Margaret Martinez were introduced.

ELECTION OF CHAIR

MOTION: Commissioner Nelson moved to elect Jeffery Evans to the position of Chair; Commissioner Anderson seconded. Approved 5-1; Evans abstained.

ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

MOTION: Nelson moved to elect Blanca Ruckert to the position of Vice Chair; Anderson seconded. Approved 5-1; Ruckert abstained.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 28, 2008

MOTION: Nelson had one addition to the Mental Health Working Group Progress Report; "GAPS superintendent Delapoer and 40 GAPS employees will host Szabo in an afternoon session to offer insights and discuss middle and high school mental health education and stigma." Anderson moved to approve with the addition; Whitley seconded. Approved 6-1; Greenman abstained.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

Marilyn Smith discussed the letter (attached) from Sharon Gisler and said that the City Manager suggested we have the next meeting at the Mexican Restaurant in Tangent to show our support. Nelson asked about what type of support is Wes suggesting. Smith said that she thought it would just be the presence of the Commission to show that we support the restaurant. Evans said that he doesn't know much about what is going on with this subject and that the restaurant is outside of Albany; so it may look like we are interfering with another city's issue.

Ruckert discussed the incidents that happened in Tangent. Ruckert thinks that it is a great idea to hold a meeting at the restaurant. Evans asked if we could have a meeting in another jurisdiction. Smith was unsure, but she will check on it. Greenman asked if it would have to be public. Smith said yes. Evans wondered about accessibility into the restaurant. Martinez thinks there are other incidents that have happened at this restaurant. Ruckert said that she would like to do this but wondered if it would work logistically. Evans said that he would prefer to defer a decision on this until we find out the logistics of the restaurant. Greenman said that what she thinks the letter is stating is that Albany should be proactive and make sure everyone feels welcome in our community. Nelson said that her bottom line in deciding to have a meeting at the restaurant is if it's accessible. Evans asked Greenman if Tangent City Council has been approached by the Albany Peace Seekers. Greenman said that she didn't think so. Anderson wondered if the restaurant has a private meeting room. Evans recommended that we invite Sharon to our next meeting to discuss what things we might do in our community to address her concerns.

MOTION: Whitley made the motion to invite Sharon to the next meeting; Anderson seconded. Approved 6-1 with Ruckert voting no. Ruckert said that her concern is that this is putting the issue off another month, and the issue will get hazy. Martinez said that she agrees with Ruckert and that the incident happened in early December. Nelson said that she would like to have more information from Sharon and that she is torn because she wants to show support, but it may pull us away from what we are working on now. Greenman wanted to clarify that she thinks the letter has to do with what we can do in Albany.

Evans said that he is concerned the HRC may get into the habit of responding to specific incidents. Evans said that one of his philosophies is rather than the HRC being an originator of ideas, the community should be the originator of ideas that we can help with. The reason behind inviting Sharon is to learn what ideas she has to help with this issue. Whitley said that having a statement would be good and shows the community that the City's not tolerant to these types of issues. Greenman said that in this case, Tangent responded very well to what happened and that we could send a letter supporting Tangent's actions. Evans asked if we need to have a small committee to write letters thanking people or to issue a statement in support of something. Ruckert said that it would be good to respond to positive and negative incidents, but thinks the group will need to get the okay from City staff before issuing a statement. Smith will bring information regarding this to the next meeting.

Progress Report on Mental Health Working Group

Whitley said that she was working on what we can do in the community to raise awareness of mental illness. Some of her research was looking into programs offered by NAMI. There isn't an *In Their Own Voice Program* here, but there is a regional chapter. There are two individuals who have been under the care of the PSRB who would be able to talk about their experiences. Whitley needs to get back to them if we would like for them to meet with us. Nelson asked if there is a way that we could talk to these individuals to see what kind of story they would have and if it is something we would want to present to the community. Whitley asked what the timing is on this. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and Suicide Awareness Week also falls in May. Evans asked if this is something we could get going by May. Whitley will see about having one or both of the speakers talk to us at a future meeting.

Nelson said that Ross Szabo will be at OSU on February 9 and will be talking about Mental Health with younger people. If you have a chance, come and listen. He was diagnosed with bipolar illness at the age of 17 and spends his time now talking to younger people about mental illness issues. GAPS is having training on how to handle children with possible mental illness, but this is for staff only. Smith asked if the newspaper was invited to attend. Nelson said that she was unsure.

Creation of Annual Report Subcommittee

Evans said that he is creating a draft and that he would like a subcommittee to meet and review the draft. Martinez and Nelson said that they were both willing to help with the review.

City Transition Plan for The Americans with Disabilities Act

Evans said that currently there are efforts by the City to become ADA compliant. Evans said that he has been pushing this because of the efforts to spend federal money on infrastructure. The movement will seek to give money only to communities with ADA transition plans. Lisa Bennett works in the Building Division as a Disability Access Coordinator. Evans said that he thinks we need ten more people doing what she is doing to get us into compliance. Evans said that the question is if the HRC should be guiding the City in its effort to become compliant or should another advisory board handle this. Discussion followed. Evans said that we need to find a way to breakdown the resistance within the departments. Melanie Adams said that Bennett has been working with other departments so that everyone can get on-board with this issue.

Evans said that the problem comes down to money and not having enough of it. How do we make choices on how we prioritize? How do we make the public aware that this needs to be done? Adams said that the program is very small, and we have the full support of the City Manager. We are committed to communicating with the disabled community, but there are only two people working on this. Bennett is working on some public announcement documents, and she has done a survey of City bus stops. Adams said that they would love to do more, but it is something that needs to be accomplished on a staff level and that the creation of a board wouldn't be appropriate.

Greenman asked if the form public input should follow is what is being discussed and how to get both elected representatives and the community on the same page and understand that disability access is important. Evans said that he suggested a disability advisory board but was told by staff that the HRC should be able to handle these issues. Evans asked the HRC commissioners if this is something the Commission wants to take on. Adams said that building political will is not something staff can be doing; their job is implementing the plan. Bennett said that we plan to put something on the City Web site to allow citizens to make comments. Bennett said that there are many ways to reach out to the community and that they will continue to do that. Evans said that he doesn't doubt that Adams and Bennett are committed to what they are doing, but more needs to be done.

Whitley said that she doesn't have a problem supporting and advocating the transition plan, but she doesn't necessarily agree with creating a disability advisory board as it may tie up staff getting their work done. Greenman said that an advisory board can be a lot of work, but they can also be helpful because they are working to make the community better. Greenman said that we don't have the capacity and knowledge to do this kind of job, but we can support getting the ADA message out to the community. Nelson said that she can see this commission being a sponsor of a public forum to provide information regarding the transition plan. Adams said that from her prospective, what would be helpful from this commission is support in the form of sponsoring forums, inviting speakers, and guest discussions.

Ruckert would like to be kept apprised with how we can be helpful to Adams and Bennett in their efforts with the transition plan.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

None.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, February 24, 2009, 7:00 p.m., in the Willamette Room.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Eilers
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewed by,

Wes Hare
City Manager