



HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Community Services Consortium
250 Broadalbin Street SW
Two Rivers Market, 2nd Floor
Job Corps Room
Thursday, April 28, 2011
3:30 p.m.

MINUTES

Commissioners present: Nancy Greenman, Julie Jones, Kim Whitley, Margaret Martinez, Tina Dodge Vera, Linda Hart (arrived at 3:50 p.m.)

Commissioners absent: Michael Thomson (excused)

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

Others present: Debbie Little, Community Services Consortium Employment Specialist, Vawna Shepherd, Ora Mowdy, Shawn Smith, Westen Hoover, Ramos Pacheco, Andy Phillips, Jamie Lavery

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kim Whitley called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 22, 2011

MOTION: Julie Jones made a motion to approve the minutes; Nancy Greenman seconded. Approved 5-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

Discussion with Community Services Consortium Youth Workers

Greenman discussed the Human Relations Commission (HRC) mission and how the group works to accomplish the mission. She said that the HRC wanted to meet with youth in the community.

Whitley said that we are here to listen to what the youth have to say about living in Albany. City Manager Wes Hare discussed the formation of the HRC. He said that the idea behind the HRC is to make Albany a welcoming place to all people.

Whitley asked, "How is living in Albany for you? Is it a welcoming place to live and what could make it more welcoming?"

Vawna said that she likes living in Albany. She said that she hasn't lived in Albany for a long time, but that it is much better compared to where she used to live in Reno, Nevada.

Ora said that she likes living in Albany and has lived here for most of her life.

Shawn said that he likes living in Albany, and he has lived here for all of his life. He said that he doesn't like the druggies and tweakers (a person using methamphetamines) that live in Albany.

Westen said that he likes living in Albany but wishes the bus route started earlier in the morning.

Andy said that he likes Albany and that he came from San Diego where there were a lot of gangs and violence. He said that he would like to see more activities available for older youth to do.

Jamie said that he likes Albany and, for the most part, it is a good community. He said that he agrees with Westen about the drug users. He would also like to see more activities for the youth.

Ora said that the homeless people on First Avenue can be a problem because they come into the fenced area of her home and take the cans that she has set aside for recycling.

Shawn said that there is also an issue with homeless people at Bowman and Eades Parks.

Hare asked, "What has your experience been with the police?"

Shawn said that he has had a couple of run-ins with the police and that there has only been one who has been disrespectful. He said that otherwise they have all been cool.

Ora said that she has only had one conflict with the police. She said that she was hanging out with the wrong people but hadn't done anything wrong and the officer said that she wasn't being a good parent and had made assumptions about her.

Westen said that there are some really good police officers on the force and some that are not so good.

Greenman asked if any of the youth have been to a meeting to talk to police staff. They all responded that they have not been to any such meeting. Hare said that the school resource officer program is a good way for youth to feel comfortable about talking to a police officer if they need help.

Whitley asked, "How easy is it to get around if you don't have a car?"

Ora said that it is hard to get around Albany if you don't have a vehicle. She said that the bus routes are hard to use because the times and availability are limited. She said that the buses will get you pretty close to where you need to go. She said that it would be nice if the morning routes were expanded to include more stops.

Shawn said that he would like to see more bus stops available.

Margaret Martinez asked how often the bus system stops at LBCC. Julie Jones said that it makes stops hourly at LBCC but thinks that it doesn't start until 10:00 a.m. Hare said that this is good feedback regarding the transit system.

Greenman asked if the youth feel safe using the bus. They all agreed that the buses are safe.

Employment Specialist Debbie Little said that they have a student in the Scrael Hill area and that there are no bus stops in that area.

Whitley asked if Hare could update the group regarding the progress of the bike path between Albany and Corvallis. Hare said that engineering has nearly been completed and that the first part of the path is being constructed in Corvallis.

Andy asked if there is a trail that goes all the way to the coast. Hare said that he is not aware of one.

Whitley asked, "Do you go to community events?"

Vawna said that she hasn't gone to any city events.

Ora said that she has been to River Rhythms.

Westen has been to River Rhythms and got to work there a couple of years ago. He said that the NW Art & Air Festival is pretty cool and that he was able to meet the Credence Clearwater band members. He said that he likes to be able to get out of the house.

Shawn said that he isn't a people person; so he doesn't really like to go to community events.

Andy said that he also likes RiverRhythms and the NW Art & Air Festival.

Whitley said that there are lots of activities happening in Albany and wondered if we are not advertising enough to reach the youth.

Hare said that there are many programs in Albany: Mondays at Monteith, library events, classes offered through Parks & Recreation including basketball and softball, programming through the Boys and Girls Club, the Albany Civic Theater, Movies by Moonlight, etc. Hare said that there is a community calendar on the City's website.

Whitley asked, "What would you like to see in the community?"

Jamie said that he would like to see a skating competition in Albany.

Andy agrees that a skating or biking event would be cool. He said that there is nothing done to promote bike events. Hare said that they are looking at a lot of different options including possibly building a bike park.

Greenman said that it is great to hear the different ideas about what youth are looking for in the community. She said that it is important to also think about all of the people living in Albany and how everyone can come together and decide how money should be spent.

Hare said that there is a pretty large group that is interested in a bike park. Hare said that there is a process that is followed and the problem is finding funding.

Whitley asked what would be in a bike park. Hare said that a bike park would have to be built to applicable safety standards. Hare said that he doesn't know exactly what is at Bryant Park, but he believes that some of the jumps are pretty dangerous. He said that the way a private park is operated is different than the way a public park operates.

Whitley asked, "Is there anything else that you would like to share?"

Jamie said that he noticed that the area around Main Street and Old Salem Road gets congested and asked what might be done about that intersection. Hare said that there is a plan to fix it with a roundabout.

Andy said that Fourth Avenue is rough. Hare said that we have a lot of rough streets in Albany. He said that Jackson Street is another one that is rough. Hare said that the streets that get fixed the quickest are the ones that have the most traffic.

Ora said that she is glad to see that a sidewalk is being put in by 7-11 on Geary Street.

Shawn said that there are not a lot of sidewalks by Calapooia Middle School. Hare said that there was a period of time when developers were allowed to build houses without putting in sidewalks. He said that sidewalks will be put in over a long period of time, but they are costly.

Andy said that he worked on the flowerbeds last year and wanted to know if the plants will be changed to perennials so that plants and flowers don't have to be purchased each year. Hare said that a number of perennials are planted, but annuals are also included to add color and beauty to the parks and city.

Jamie said that Queen Avenue by the train tracks is really bad and that the train often blocks the road for more than fifteen minutes. Hare said that crossing is rated as the worst in the state. He said that he is hopeful that there will be some improvement within a year at that crossing.

Andy said that he worked with the Urban Forester (Wayde Burrese) for a couple of years and that he enjoyed working with him.

Hare said that he is curious about the youth's opinion on racial issues in Albany. He asked if the youth sees conflicts between races. Westen said that he does see conflicts between Hispanics and Caucasians. He said that there are some gangs in his neighborhood and that they graffiti property. He said that the gangs in Albany are called the Norteños and the Insane Clown Posse (ICP).

Ora said that as more people move to Albany, more gangs come here. She doesn't like the gangs, and they have gotten worse in recent years.

Hare said that the police do see some gang activity here, but it is not a huge amount. Westen said that in the last two years it has gotten much worse especially around Sunrise Park. Andy said that it is on the rise, but that it is mostly kids in these gangs.

Shawn said that it becomes more of an issue in middle school when kids start getting jumped into gangs and that is when the segregation starts.

Greenman said that it is natural to feel safe within your own group; but she said that as we have more experiences with people of different backgrounds, we realize how much we are alike and how much we can appreciate one another's differences.

Dodge Vera said that she wants to breakdown the assumptions between races.

Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC)

Dodge Vera said that the HAC met in Corvallis at OSU. She said that there hasn't been a lot of action regarding the gang task force. She said that the kids from the first year of the dual immersion program in Corvallis are now freshmen and that they are have done well in the program. Dodge Vera said that this is the second year of the dual immersion program in Albany. She said that OSU staff talked about the different cultural clubs and that the cultural centers are being rebuilt at OSU.

2011 Calendar of Events

Greenman asked about the schedule for the Homeless Resource Fair. Smith said that it will be from 9:00-1:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 12, at the Boys & Girls Club. Whitley said that she can be there from 9:00-11:00 a.m. Greenman asked if there is a busy time. Smith said that there is usually a rush from 9:00-10:30 a.m. Greenman said that she will be there at 9:00 a.m. and will stay as long as she is needed. Dodge Vera said that she will be there from 11:00-1:00 p.m. Greenman asked if Dodge Vera could translate the survey into Spanish. Dodge Vera said that she could. Martinez said that she can help from 11:00-1:00 p.m.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

None.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, May 24, 2011, at 5:00 p.m.

Human Relations Commission

Page 5

April 28, 2011

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file.

Diana Eilers

Administrative Assistant I

Reviewed by,

Signature on file.

Wes Hare

City Manager