



HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
City Hall, Willamette Room
Tuesday, September 27, 2011

MINUTES

- Commissioners present: Nancy Greenman, Julie Jones, Linda Hart, Margaret Martinez, Tina Dodge Vera, Michael Thomson (arrived at 7:05 p.m.)
- Commissioners absent: Kim Whitley (excused)
- Staff present: Wes Hare, City Manager; Marilyn Smith, Public Information Officer/Management Assistant
- Others present: Anna Benson, FSS Coordinator, Linn-Benton Housing Authority

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Nancy Greenman called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

July 26, 2011, Joint Meeting with HAC and Regular Meeting on July 26, 2011

MOTION: Linda Hart made a motion to approve both sets of minutes; Margaret Martinez seconded. Approved 6-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

Overview/Informational Discussion about the Linn-Benton Housing Authority (LBHA)

Greenman explained the HRC's goals. Anna Benson said that there are 2,400 families in Linn County who receive housing assistance. She said that LBHA offers people a variety of applications if they need assistance. Benson distributed information about which properties are managed by the LBHA. She said that the Section 8 voucher can be taken outside of the jurisdiction; someone from another community can also come to our community. She said that the wait is 2-3 years for Section 8.

Greenman asked what happens after someone applies for Section 8. Benson said that the applicant(s) must meet the income level and a criminal background check. Greenman asked what happens during the 2-3 year wait. Benson said that there is a big gap between being in a shelter and receiving funding for housing. She said that the LBHA offers financial literacy courses to homeless people. Linda Hart asked what the reason is for the long wait. Benson said that it is due to a lack of funding. She said that a tenant has to pay 30-40 percent of their income towards rent.

Greenman said that this is a really important piece for the HRC. She said that it is good to have an understanding of why a person is in the position that they are in. Benson mentioned the Partners Place apartments in Corvallis, which are managed by LBHA. She said that the program focuses on getting a homeless person into stable housing first and then on the services that person needs.

Benson said that LBHA offers a family self-sufficiency program. She said that up to 100 families can take part in this program. She said that families sign a five-year contract. She said that the program works to offer support and link

participants with community resources and it allows them to build an escrow savings account. Families are assessed at the beginning of the program and as they go along and their income increases, the amount the pay for rent also increases with the difference that LBHA would have paid for rent going into a savings account. There is no waiting list for this program.

Margaret Martinez said that she has a rental property in Salem and has had good dealings with the Salem Housing Authority. She said that she has had good and bad experiences with people using Section 8. Greenman said that it would be interesting to hear from people who are making these transitions and to get their point of view. Benson said that she thinks that would be very empowering for them. Benson said that she can send out a letter asking for volunteers to come and speak at an HRC meeting. Greenman asked if Benson could attend when these folks visit. Benson said that it wouldn't be a problem.

Marilyn Smith said that the Commission is invited to attend the Summit on Homelessness on Wednesday, November 2, here at City Hall. Greenman asked if anyone would be available to attend. Michael Thomson said that he might be available.

Human Relations Award

Greenman said that the draft application was included in the agenda packet. She asked what the timeline is for the application process. Thomson said that the application is supposed to be posted in October. Hart asked if the newspaper would write an article. Hare said that staff could write a news release with the application attached. Greenman asked if there were particular groups that we could send the application to. Hare suggested sending applications to the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Linn-Benton Community College, Hispanic Advisory Commission, Greater Albany School District, and Samaritan Albany General Hospital. Greenman asked if Smith could organize getting the application to those organizations. Smith said that she could do that. She suggested changing the release date and extending the deadline to make it easier as she will be out of the office until October 10. Greenman said that the dates could be October 15 to November 15. Smith said that the Albany Chamber of Commerce has a book that lists many of the organizations in it. Wes Hare said that he will go to the Chamber to get one of the books. Greenman said that the group will review the applications at a closed meeting. Hare said that a subcommittee would need to meet to do that because if there are more than three members in attendance, it is required to be a public meeting. Greenman said that a recommendation will be made at the HRC meeting on Tuesday, November 29. The subcommittee will consist of Thomson, Martinez, and Hart and they will meet between November 15 and November 29.

DEBRIEFS

Joint Meeting with Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC) (July 26)

Dodge Vera said that the HAC really enjoyed meeting with the HRC. She said that the HAC group really appreciated meeting with the HRC and how quick they are to help. Hare said that from that joint meeting, an internal diversity committee is being formed. Greenman said that she would love to talk with the diversity committee when they feel like they are ready to do so.

Smith said that the Google translate button has been added to all of the City web pages. Hare said that the best thing to do is anticipate issues instead of reacting to them.

National Neighborhood Night Out (August 2)

Hart said that she had six people attend her neighborhood event and a police officer stopped by during the event. She said that there were some good conversations among the neighbors. She found out that there are "dumpster divers" in her neighborhood and that it happens while she is at work. Hare said that he attended his neighborhood's event and that his neighborhood is made up of a diverse group of families.

HRC Booth at 2011 River Rhythms Concerts

Greenman said that the HRC staffed a booth at all River Rhythms. Hart said that having candy to give away was helpful. Greenman said that the common complaint is transportation. She said that there were 38 surveys returned at the last River Rhythms. She discussed the information gathered from the surveys.

2011 Festival Latino Event (September 17)

Dodge Vera said that it was wonderful that the HRC members were greeters at this year's Festival Latino event. She said that there was a great turnout. She said that it is great to have the City's support with this event and the HAC will continue to ask the City to take the lead with it. Greenman said that when a community is engaged, it creates more volunteerism.

UPDATES

Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC)

Dodge Vera said that they met with P&R. She said that it was a good meeting but a bit disappointing because P&R had to spend time defending themselves due to some questions that were sent out by an HAC member. She said that Albany P&R does a fantastic job to individually offer classes to certain groups but not necessarily as a whole publication. She said that one member of the HAC said that posting flyers out in the community is a very "white" thing to do. She said that she is glad a conversation was started.

Calendar of Events: 2011 and 2012

October – Invite members in the family self-sufficiency program to talk about their experiences.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

Julie Jones said that she went to a meeting with the Calapooia Parent Teacher Association and had a parent make a comment about the intersection of 24th and Geary. She said that the parent had contacted the City and that there was a discussion about getting the same type of crossing light that is at South Albany High School. Hare said that Ron Irish is the transportation engineer with the City. Hare said that speeds are controlled by the state speed board. The City can contact them and asked them to do a speed study. Smith said that often when the speed trailers are set out, it tends to be the neighbors that are speeding.

Greenman said that she won't be at next month's meeting.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, October 25, 2011, 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file.

Diana Eilers
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewed by,

Signature on file.

Wes Hare
City Manager