APPROVED: February 26, 2013

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (HRC)
City Hall, Municipal Court Room
Tuesday, November 27, 2012

MINUTES

Commissioners present:	Linda Hart, Nancy Greenman, Michael Thomson, Tina Dodge Vera, Kim Whitley, and Javier Cervantes (arrived at 7:05 p.m.)
Commissioners absent:	Leonor Rodriguez (unexcused)
Staff present:	Wes Hare, City Manager; Marilyn Smith, Management Assistant/Public Information Officer; Katie Nooshazar, Recreation Programs Manager; Lynne Jamison, Event & Program Coordinator; Rose Lacey, Recreation Programs Specialist; Maya Hlavova, Intern
Others present:	None

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kim Whitley called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 30, 2012, joint meeting with Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC)

MOTION: Nancy Greenman made a motion to approve the minutes; Linda Hart seconded. Approved 6-0.

October 30, 2012

MOTION: Nancy Greenman made a motion to approve the minutes; Linda Hart seconded. Approved 6-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

Census discussion/discussion of City-produced bilingual materials

Wes Hare passed out a Quick Facts document from the US Census Bureau to the group. The first two pages of the document were handed out at the HRC/HAC combined meeting on October 30, 2012. Included in the document were American Community Surveys 5-Year Estimates for Albany and Oregon. Hare pointed out the section that showed the statistics for households where English is not spoken. He said that, depending on one's point of view, the amount is relatively small. Kim Whitley noted the statistics of Other Race as being the next largest amount after White. Discussion ensued about the different racial statistics.

Nancy Greenman said that we want to have an understanding of who lives here and to specifically make people feel welcome. Hare said that the City has tried to make strides in that direction within the constraints we face. He also said that we need to analyze where we can improve and where we can get the greatest return for our investment of resources. Greenman said that she appreciates what has been done and the continuing efforts to improve.

Tina Dodge Vera said that she will continue to advocate for programs that are more inclusive for the wider community. She shared how she advocated for a more inclusive reading program at the library and the positive outcome that came about because of that. Hare added how he had received an e-mail from a Linn County outreach worker that expressed her appreciation for the Hispanic programs at the Library.

Greenman said that when we include the whole community the rewards far outweigh the costs. Whitley pointed out, that as taxpayers, the Hispanic community has a right to programs that meet their needs. Hare said that, just as Dodge Vera recognized the need for the more inclusive reading program at the library, individuals should speak up when they recognize something that would truly be beneficial to the Hispanic community. He went on to say how translating the HRC's award form into Spanish was a simple fix. City employee Jorge Salinas quickly translated the form, having it ready by the very next day. It begins to become more of an issue when you get into bigger items such as the Development Code.

Whitley asked if it would be appropriate as a Commission to recommend that all public events or announcements be translated into Spanish. Hare responded that depending how broadly one wanted to translate, what that consists of, and considering there can be four to five meetings a week that could be a very big job. Linda Hart pointed out that not all events originate from the City but from such organizations as the Albany Downtown Association. Hare stated that we could end up spending a lot of time and money to publish agendas for meetings that no one will ever look at. He would rather see the City addressing problems where interaction would be of the most benefit. Greenman suggested that the Commission take on the role of asking the Hispanic community what their practical needs are.

Dodge Vera said that if there was targeted outreach to the Hispanic community regarding public meetings, there would be more Hispanic involvement, in turn creating a greater need for the translation of agendas such as the one concerning the South Albany Area Plan. She expressed that it is good that these conversations are happening and her hope is to get lot of diversity to the table.

Dodge Vera said that she would like to see all Commission applications translated to Spanish because, even when a Hispanic has English as their second language, they don't always understand what a form written in English is asking for. Marilyn Smith explained that that would be a decision for the City Council. Dodge Vera said that she would like to make that recommendation to the Council. Hart agreed and asked how quickly it could get on the Council agenda. Smith said that they could attend any Council meeting under Business from the Public or that they could be formally added to the agenda with the next meeting being on Wednesday, December 5, 2012. Hart and Dodge Vera volunteered to attend that meeting to make the recommendation. The group approved.

Greenman noted that another translation consideration should be the notices in the newspaper about the board and commission openings.

Discussion with Parks & Recreation about inclusive events and advertising in Spanish

Dodge Vera, as part of the HAC, had met with Parks & Recreation (P&R) to share her research about the Latino population and to discuss possibilities of advertising P&R events in Spanish and having more inclusive events. She said that they had a good discussion and that P&R was receptive to the information she shared. Dodge Vera learned about what P&R is providing for the Hispanic community especially in the way of family programs and about the limitations they face. She said that it was her impression that P&R does not feel providing printed information in Spanish was beneficial.

Katie Nooshazar explained that their department doesn't see it as not being beneficial; they just don't see it as the most effective way considering their limited resources and time. She shared how one of their past P&R Commission members, who was connected to the Hispanic community, was adamant that providing translated materials was not as effective as word-of-mouth. Nooshazar went on to explain that P&R has very finite resources. They provide fee-based services where they have to determine all the costs involved and divide that cost among the minimum amount of participants. If you have to add in additional cost for translating, the fee can become prohibitive. Nooshazar expounded on the department's current efforts that reach out to the Hispanic community. She shared a long list of programs which included Mexican cooking classes, Spanish/English discussion groups, and their participation in Festival Latino. Nooshazar said that P&R has even made provisions for one of their native Spanish-speaking employees to be available at the Senior Center to assist Hispanics in filling out forms and to speak at schools about their programs. They also provide water safety information packets in Spanish.

Nooshazar told about the diversity of the River Rhythms program. She said that at least one concert of the season is devoted to a world beat selection and that it has always been the very lowest in attendance. Nooshazar explained that the sponsors want to reach the largest audience they can. P&R tries to keep a balance between being diverse and keeping the sponsors happy.

Nooshazar shared that Dodge Vera and the P&R staff discussed other opportunities to reach out to the Hispanic community. This led them to contact the Corvallis P&R to learn what they do. A lot of the things that Corvallis is involved in have been generated out of the Benton County Health Department where they can receive grants. Corvallis does the Sports for Youth, which has been a great opening to working with families. The Boys and Girls Club of Albany does the Sports for Youth in our area, so P&R doesn't have that same avenue for access to families. Nooshazar shared other ideas that came from the conversation with Dodge Vera. They are thinking about having the P&R scholarship forms available through the Department of Human Services, which would reach out to the low-income families as well as Hispanics. The Welcome Center at LBCC is being considered as an intake point for Hispanics wanting to register for a class. They are also looking into having visuals of Hispanic people on the P&R advertising banners. They can add these visuals as the banners need replacing. Rose Lacey from P&R will be creating flyers for the Children's Performing Art Series with Hispanic translation on the back. Also, P&R will be distributing a Spanish spring/summer outreach flyer at the schools. Nooshazar told about utilizing the Foster Grandparents Program for at-risk youth which includes Hispanics.

Nooshazar said that their department is open to suggestions and that they are anxious to extend a welcome to the Hispanic community within their budget constraints. Whitley expressed her appreciation for all the positive ideas Nooshazar shared.

Nooshazar stated that the P&R front counter clerks, in the past, have taken a Spanish class to offer basic help. She added that the department's job recruitment applications state that they are seeking a native Spanish speaker. Cervantes asked where that's stated on the application. Nooshazar explained that it is located in the "preferred knowledge" area.

Cervantes stressed the importance of utilizing the Welcome Center and helping it to be even more welcoming and reflective of the growing community.

Dodge Vera asked about radio advertising. Nooshazar said that it has not been very successful or financially feasible. She explained that all advertising is done through sponsorships. Without sponsorship, any advertising cost would have to be added to the class fee. Cervantes asked about bus advertising. Nooshazar said that it is not financially feasible either. She explained that they do advertise through the *MOM* magazine and similar resources. Nooshazar said that they are open to any suggestions.

On behalf of the Commission, Whitley thanked Nooshazar and her team for coming to the meeting and sharing their ideas.

Martin Luther King, Jr. event

Cervantes reported that LBCC is planning a public reading of the "Letter from Birmingham Jail." He requested the members of the Commission to volunteer to read portions of the letter. The event will be happening on January 15, 2012, at noon in Calapooia Center's common area. Cervantes said that they also might include a PowerPoint showing the letter as it is being read. He suggested that next year the same reading be done at City Hall. Cervantes felt that the reading could be a creative, low cost way of honoring diversity. He went on to say that the plans for this year also include having a reception afterwards with cake and possibly a choir. He thinks that the event would get a lot of exposure because of all the activity that occurs around the Calapooia Center.

Greenman suggested having a speaker to explain the circumstances behind the letter. Cervantes said that it is a challenge to find volunteer speakers. Hare suggested Larry Roper, Vice Provost for Student Affairs at OSU, as a possible speaker. Cervantes said that he would ask him.

Whitley and Hare said that they would come and read a portion of the letter. Hare thought that the Mayor might be interested in reading a portion as well. Whitley suggested inviting the whole Council. The group agreed. Whitley requested that Marilyn Smith send an invite to the City Council, on behalf of Commission, to read portions of the letter at the event.

Discussion of ideas for field trips and the purpose for the trips

Whitely requested that this topic be deferred to the next agenda. The group agreed.

DEBRIEFS

Joint meeting with Hispanic Advisory Council (October 30)

No debrief at this time.

Annual Summit on Homelessness

Smith reported that the event had very good participation with about 65 people in attendance, including students from West Albany High School.

There was discussion about new homeless camps popping up in the area and it being partially attributed to the homeless shelter changing their rules. Whitley commented on the need of housing for teenagers and women with children. She said that this is an issue that needs to be addressed if Albany is to be a welcoming place. Greenman agreed and said that it can be difficult for women with no children to obtain housing since priority is given to those with children. Smith shared that people at the summit had good suggestions for such needs.

Greenman noted that policy in America has changed about providing affordable housing. Hare reminded the group how Albany is now an "entitlement community" which can receive special grants. He said that Mayor Sharon Konopa has been an amazing leader in finding solutions to the homeless problem and that she has been researching where to spend the funds our community receives as an "entitlement community."

UPDATES

Human Relations Award

Smith reported that two nominations have been received so far. Michael Thomson said that he has Aurora Glass lined up to make the award when needed.

2012 HRC Annual Report

Greenman reported that she has finished a draft of the report on events up till now. She will send it out to the group in January after adding the events between now and the end of the year.

City Hall Open House – Monday, December 3; 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Whitley reminded the group of the Open House. Hare explained that the Open House is a way to say thank you and to make the community aware of the different boards and commissions available and the work they do. Smith asked the group how they wanted to present their Commission at the event. The group decided that they would like to have a table with their banner to help bring attention to their group. Whitley said that they can have their surveys on the table. Greenman asked if the table would make them too stationary. Cervantes responded that some of the group can filter through the hall as others staff the table. Smith said that application forms for the boards, commissions, and committees would be passed out at the event.

Other volunteer opportunities

None.

Hispanic Advisory Council
None.

Calendar of Events: 2012 & 2013

The group will be participating in the reading of the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in observation of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on January 15, 2012, at LBCC in the Calapooia Center.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

None.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, January 22, 2013, 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Whitley adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Gina Burrese
Administrative Assistant

Reviewed by,

Signature on file

Wes Hare
City Manager