



APPROVED: May 28, 2013

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (HRC)

City Hall, Willamette Room

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

MINUTES

Commissioners present: Michael Thomson, Jay Sluiter, Kim Whitley, and Javier Cervantes

Commissioners absent: Nancy Greenman (excused), Tina Dodge Vera (excused), Leonor Rodriguez (excused)

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

Others present: Mayor Sharon Konopa

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kim Whitley called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 26, 2013

MOTION: Michael Thomson made a motion to approve the minutes; Javier Cervantes seconded. Approved 4-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

Whitley welcomed Wes Hare back from his trip and asked if he would like to share some highlights from his journey. Hare was in Kabul, Afghanistan, working for the International City-County Management Association to help facilitate training sessions on such things as performance measurement. Hare said that they worked on creating an electronic time keeping system and implementing a system that is similar to our Dashboard here at the City. He said that he enjoyed working with the people of Afghanistan and that the country is making progress. Hare shared that, even though signs of unrest exist such as barbed wire fencing and guards carrying automatic weapons everywhere, he did not feel unsafe. Hare said that it was a good trip but he is glad to be home.

Mayor Sharon Konopa: proposal for HRC to take on

Mayor Sharon Konopa shared that she had been impressed with the Martin Luther King, Jr., event held at the Library in March. She revealed that she would like to see more events like this one that bring a positive light to the City. The Mayor said that she was inspired by a conversation she had with Nancy Greenman, Sharon Gisler, and a teacher while attending the MLK event. They discussed an event a few years back where this same teacher had encouraged students to draw pictures of what they would like to see in Albany. The children came up with some fun, creative drawings. A selection of those drawings were chosen and highlighted at a City Council meeting. It had received favorable feedback. The Mayor said that she would like to see a similar event take place annually. She thought that it would work well with slightly older children, such as fourth or fifth graders, who would be mature enough to be thoughtful of the process. If the HRC took on the event, they could narrow down the drawings that would be showcased at the City Council meeting and present the finalists with a certificate of accomplishment. The Mayor said that it could be a very rewarding experience for families, especially since our Council meetings are broadcast on TV.

The Mayor also proposed that the Commission expand on the Human Relations Award program. She said that, since the City has so many hard-working volunteers that go unacknowledged, she would like to see more people highlighted in the program. The Mayor suggested having three finalists included at the City Council award presentation. The HRC could showcase three deserving nominees during the presentation, with two of them receiving a certificate and one receiving the actual award. She would also like to have an award presented to a nonprofit organization. The Mayor said that Albany has some awesome organizations that work countless hours without ever being acknowledged. The only other opportunity for an area organization to be recognized is through the Chamber of Commerce but that leaves out many organizations that are not Chamber members.

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Jay Sluiter suggested having a Citizen of the Month award. He said that having that type of award in his high school produced positive results. It would spur on pride in our community. Sluiter also suggested having the youth artwork showcased at the Northwest Art & Air Festival.

The Mayor explained that she proposed these ideas to this group because she felt the group is in a better position to facilitate this type of event than the City Council, where it could become political. She added that the proposals were only a suggestion and that she would not be offended if the group decided not to take them on.

Whitley asked the group if they thought they might be supportive of the concept of the proposal and they could discuss details later. The group responded that they were. Whitley expressed that the proposal sounded like a good fit for the group since it goes along with what they have done before.

The Mayor thanked the group for their time and expressed appreciation for all their hard work they do.

Whitley requested that the proposals be added to the agenda as an ongoing discussion.

Thomson remarked that the award program does not receive a lot of nominations which could make the Mayor's proposal hard to implement. He said that maybe the group needs to rethink the idea of not placing nominations themselves, so they have more nominees involved in the process. Thomson can think of several individuals or organizations that he would nominate.

Hosting a booth at River Rhythms concerts

Whitley shared that last year when the group showed up to volunteer there had been some confusion as to where the group was to meet and what their assignments were. She suggested that the P&R Department be invited to their next meeting to give direction to the group on how they could be most helpful. The group agreed and requested City staff to send the invitation.

Whitley asked the group if any of them could commit to volunteering at the first concert on Thursday, July 4. Thomson and Whitley will both be available. Cervantes said that he had other plans and, regretfully, could not attend the event. Whitley offered that if the July 4 concert did not work for the group, they could discuss volunteering at one of the other Thursday night concerts. Marilyn Smith commented that the July 4 concert would be the busiest and the one where P&R would need the most help.

UPDATES

HEART to Heart Resource Fair (Thursday, May 16)

Whitley passed out a draft of the HRC Survey Questions on Resources created by Greenman for the group's review (see agenda file). Whitley thanked Smith for providing the agency names for the list. Smith said Greenman had asked her if it was appropriate for the HRC to list the agencies, since most will be participating in the Fair as well, and Smith said she told Greenman the agencies would appreciate the feedback. Cervantes asked if they could add LBCC to the list. Smith agreed to do that and went on to say that, although LBCC had participated in the last fair, she had not heard back from them in regards to this year's event. Cervantes said that he would provide Smith with a contact from LBCC with whom she could discuss participation.

Whitley expressed that she thought the survey document was a little hard to read and asked if increasing the font size would help. Smith suggested changing the orientation of the document from a portrait view to a landscape view so the chart could be spread out, allowing the column titles to be viewed without hyphens. The group liked that idea. Sluiter suggested that a comment section be added to the bottom of the document and that they implement a numbering system for the surveys as they are returned.

The group approved of the survey with the suggestions implemented. Whitley asked if City staff could make the changes and print out copies for the event. Smith volunteered to do so and said she would bring 150 copies with her to the event. Whitley asked for Smith to bring the HRC banner as well.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

NONE

Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC)

Cervantes reported that HAC is having a meeting next Tuesday where they will discuss the effects of the cutbacks on the English as a Second Language Program. He said the news of the cutbacks have caused a lot of anxiety among the Hispanic community. They want to be able to engage with the vital programs within their community.

Discussion followed about any effects the City would feel in regards to cutbacks in federal funding. Hare explained that the City does not receive a lot in federal funds, so we should not experience any major effect.

Calendar of Events: 2013

Whitley reminded the group of the City Council meeting tomorrow night where the HRC's annual report will be submitted. She said the report was sent to the Linn and Benton County Commissioners and that favorable feedback was received from one of the Benton County Commissioners.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

In regards to Albany being a welcoming place, Hare reported that two representatives from New Zealand have come to work with the City for two weeks. Jennie McFarlane and Stephanie Rose are here to learn how our city government functions and to share with us how their governing system operates. He said that it is invaluable to have an outsider's view for what the City could do better. Whitley asked if there would be a report that the group could review at a future meeting. Hare responded that he doesn't know what type of format they will use to report their findings but, whatever they provide, Hare will share with the group.

Cervantes informed the group that he will be co-facilitating diversity training on Thursday to the Police Department. Cervantes said that the Police Department contacted him and requested the training. Whitley requested that a debriefing of the event be added to the next agenda.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, May 28, 2013, 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Whitley adjourned the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Gina Burrese
Administrative Assistant

Reviewed by,

Signature on file

Wes Hare
City Manager