



HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION & HISPANIC ADVISORY COUNCIL
City Hall, Municipal Court Room
Tuesday, October 22, 2013
3:00 p.m.

APPROVED: 11/26/2013



MINUTES

Human Relations Commissioners present: Kim Whitley, Nancy Greenman, Tina Dodge Vera, and Javier Cervantes

Human Relations Commissioners absent: Michael Thomson (excused), Jay Sluiter (excused), and Rob Duncan (excused)

Hispanic Advisory Councilors present: Mary Mayfield, Tammy Skubinna, Heather Medina Saucedo, Aaron Clingerman, Javier Cervantes; and Tina Dodge Vera

Hispanic Advisory Councilors absent: Leonor Rodriguez

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

Others present: None

CALL TO ORDER

Human Relations Commission (HRC) Chair Kim Whitley called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Introductions

Whitley welcomed the Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC) to this joint meeting with the HRC, announcing that it was the third year for the two groups to meet together. The HAC and HRC members introduced themselves.

Human Relations Award

Whitley informed the group that Michael Thomson was the one overseeing the implementation of the award but he was absent. She announced that this would be the third year for the award. Whitley related that it was the HRC's desire for the HAC to be aware of this opportunity so that they can help spread the word to the Hispanic community. Whitley described the new process for the award, in that there are now two categories that receive an award: an individual and a nonprofit organization. Greenman informed the group that the applications could be obtained on-line through the City of Albany's website. The applications are available in both English and Spanish.

Greenman urged the group to be thinking of nominations and suggested nominating a key person involved in putting on the Festival Latino event. Tammy Skubinna approved of the suggestion, saying that she would want to nominate Dodge Vera for all the work that she does. Greenman commended the nomination but explained that since Dodge Vera is part of the HRC, she would have to be excluded as a nominee. Skubinna asked when the deadline was for submitting the applications. Greenman responded that the last day to turn them in was November 29. She read the criteria for a nomination, and Dodge Vera shared the names of the last two award winners. Skubinna was pleased to learn that organizations could be nominated as well.

Visit to Cornelius – Centro Cultural (PowerPoint Presentation)

Javier Cervantes, Nancy Greenman, and Tina Dodge Vera visited the center yesterday. Whitley stated the purpose of the visit in that the group wanted to learn why and how this center became successful and to gather inspiration that would stimulate thought for something similar in Albany. The group is interested in discovering where other communities are with their support services. Cervantes explained that Cornelius' center is an exemplary model to study. Despite their small population, they are hugely diverse. Cervantes once lived there and has family that still does, so he stays apprised of the center's progress. The center is a nonprofit organization that receives funding through various avenues such as the county, in-kind partnerships, and individuals. Cervantes passed out a presentation guide (see agenda file) and presented a slide show from the visit:

- Slides 1 and 2: pictures of the progression of the Center's building.
- Slide 3: mission statement. Centro Cultural promotes education and economic development, increases cultural consciousness, responds to community needs and celebrates understanding among the diverse groups of their community. The Center does not want to be seen as just a place for Hispanics. The visiting members met with the staff of four, and Greenman explained that the staff was a team whose members were knowledgeable in everything to do with the center and its mission. She described the center as welcoming and inclusive, where no question is unwelcome. Cervantes pointed out that one of their objectives is to promote civic participation and responsibility. There is so much for a staff of four to accomplish that it could be overwhelming, but Cervantes said, from the staff's demeanor, you would never know it.
- Slide 4: office hours. The center is closed for staff meetings from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Fridays.
- Slide 5: community bulletin board. Greenman was impressed with the wide range of information that is displayed bilingually and accessible to everyone.
- Slide 6: free book area.
- Slide 7: artwork. Cervantes explained that the Latino background is diverse and the center's Latino art showcases that diversity.
- Slide 8: fellowship hall. The space is open with a large kitchen area to accommodate large groups. The community can rent out the space which gives the Center a way to generate revenue. Cervantes noted that it was built in the 1980s and is in need of an update. This kitchen has served a number of people and organizations such as senior citizens and the homeless.
- Slides 9 and 10: drop-in child care. Cervantes said that it was his understanding that individuals visiting the Virginia Garcia Wellness Clinic across the street can use the Center for short-term childcare. Greenman reported that it is licensed for six hours or less and does not need to have a full childcare provider license. The center offers childcare for all their programs and has a full-time staff person for this purpose. The visiting members were impressed with the area and recognized that it meets a critical need for single parents. Greenman explained the philosophy of charging a nominal fee so that individuals invest in the service. Children's artwork decorates the walls, giving children, along with the adults, ownership of the building.
- Slide 11: library bond and Virginia Garcia Wellness Clinic. Cervantes explained about the creative ideas for funding the rebuilding of the library. The plans include senior living space above the library. Greenman stated that the money leveraged for the senior housing will help them afford the rest of the building project. An added bonus would be that seniors living there could volunteer at the library. The Wellness Clinic is central to the main street corridor that is so well-traveled. Cervantes pointed out that over 35,000 cars drive through during the week and this presents a wonderful economic development opportunity. People coming for the town's resources shop at the businesses. Cervantes emphasized that Cornelius is a destination because it is unique. Tina Dodge Vera noted that in our area people go to Corvallis because of the lack of resources in Albany. People want to be efficient with their day and will shop where they access the needed resources. Dodge Vera expressed her appreciation of Cornelius' planning that allows for a multigenerational community. She relayed that, in addition to the senior living space being planned for the top floor of the library, the bottom floor will house the YMCA.
- Slide 12: educational wing. As the group viewed the slide, Skubinna asked where the center's instructors come from. Cervantes responded that they are volunteers who include retired people. The center has a strong relationship with both Pacific University and Lewis and Clark College.
- Slide 13: costs. Greenman noted earlier and it was reiterated that if you have people pay for something there will be better participation.
- Slide 14: rental space for mobile clinics and the center's board room.

In conclusion, it was noted that the center holds a database with participants' skill sets. Businesses or private parties can call the center to get referrals.

Dodge Vera referred back to the Center's community bulletin board and contrasted it to our community that does not have a central place to post events such as Festival Latino. Greenman added that there is a desk across from the board where a staff person is available to answer questions. Cervantes recounted that the center is an internet hotspot.

Whitley commented on Cornelius having 50 years of cultural support. Cervantes summarized how the center was founded back in 1972 by 14 immigrant families who identified needs and presented them to the county. Through their advocating, they were able to purchase a house. The process began back in the 1960s.

Greenman reported that Cornelius' City Hall has a desk that is staffed with someone that is bilingual. Dodge Vera said that a community could start off with just staffing someone two days a week and build up from there.

Discussion with Hispanic Advisory Council

The discussion continued from the presentation and how it fit the respective missions and focus of the two groups. Skubinna related the founding of Cornelius' Cultural Center to that of the Corvallis Multicultural Literacy Center. One person, with a 20-year background in literacy, gathered together like-minded people and made the center a reality. Skubinna shared that the Literacy Center is partnering with a nonprofit organization to host classes that teach English to Spanish speakers in rural areas such as Monroe and Philomath. The nonprofit, Strengthening Rural Families, just hired a part-time Latino outreach person. They did not use additional funds for this but reallocated other funds. Skubinna recounted an e-mail Dodge Vera had sent regarding Latino leaders across the United States. Dodge Vera explained that it is beneficial to the City to reach out to the Latino community and get them engaged civically through leadership classes because they are part of the voting contingent. Skubinna commented that it would be beneficial to target the Hispanic high school students for the Chamber of Commerce's youth leadership classes to get them connected along with the adult leadership program. It would take advantage of a program already in place. The HAC presented the Chamber with ideas to connect the Latino community but met with some resistance in that it could require additional funding. Skubinna suggested that the HRC make a push for it as a City Commission.

Cervantes presented an opportunity for the City to acquire critical information. He said that he knows of an OSU graduate student who is looking for an internship around the idea of assessing needs through focus groups. The HAC or the HRC hasn't been able to do a focused effort to hear from the community on how we can better connect to the growing population. Greenman asked if Albany has ever done such a thing. Wes Hare answered that our area has a lot of different organizations that do pieces of needs assessment but nothing that utilizes focus groups for gathering the demographics. He said that he has not seen the kind of advocating in Albany as that done in Cornelius by the 14 families that founded the Cultural Center. We have this group that is recognizing needs, but there isn't anyone coming to these meetings or City Council meetings saying that we need to do more. Cervantes said that, instead of speculating what the needs are, it would be nice to have definitive answers that the OSU student, Rebecca, could provide through her specialized training. Hare stated that the City does accommodate internships. He said to have Rebecca give him a call. Dodge Vera volunteered to act as a preceptor for Rebecca. The group liked the idea of gathering information from focus groups. Surveys are a quick way to gather information, but focus groups would obtain richer information. Greenman expressed that it would be a good way for the minority's voice to be heard. It was the group's desire to make a formal recommendation for the City to supervise an internship for OSU student Rebecca to support the HRC with assessing community needs through focus groups with Tina Dodge Vera as her preceptor and for Rebecca to give a report on her findings to the Commission.

Cervantes made a motion for the recommendation; Greenman seconded. Approved 4-0. The HAC gave their strong support.

Business from the Public

None.

October 22, 2013

ADJOURNMENT

Whitley adjourned the meeting at 4:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Gina Burrese
Administrative Assistant

Reviewed by,

Signature on file

Wes Hare
City Manager