

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (HRC)

City Hall, Willamette Room

Tuesday, January 28, 2014

MINUTES



Commissioners present: Kim Whitley, Tina Dodge Vera, Javier Cervantes, Nancy Greenman, Jay Sluiter, and Chris Equinoa

Commissioners absent: Rob Duncan (unexcused)

Staff present: Diana Eilers, Administrative Assistant I

Others present: Tonja Everest and Lisa Shogren, Greater Albany Public School District; Tony Howell, Linn County Mental Health

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kim Whitley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMISSION MEMBER

Chris Equinoa introduced himself and said he recently retired from the Greater Albany Public School District. He said his last position with the District was Principal of Central Elementary School. He stated that he is excited to participate and give back to the community. Each commissioner gave a brief introduction, and all welcomed Equinoa to the HRC.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 26, 2013

**MOTION:** Jay Sluiter made a motion to approve the minutes; Javier Cervantes seconded. Approved 6-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

None.

Prekindergarten outreach and readiness

Tonja Everest talked about the need for pre-kindergarten learning opportunities and where some of those programs are offered. She said there is a need for young children to have access to healthcare and good nutrition in this community. At the beginning of kindergarten, children are lacking in play, social, and emotional skills. They also have difficulty controlling their impulses, delaying gratification, and being able to plan.

Lisa Shogren said there is a statewide kindergarten assessment. The assessment is used to provide parents, caregivers, teachers, and communities with information about what children need to be successful. She said the goal is to open the door to talk to one another and address children's needs before entering kindergarten. She said there are literacy and mathematics components included on the assessment. She wanted to be clear that the assessment is not used to determine if a child should enter kindergarten.

Everest said implementing the state assessment is one thing being done in the community. She said, at the beginning of the school year, each incoming kindergartener has a one-on-one assessment with their teacher. She said some school schools have implemented full-day kindergarten. She said districtwide full-day kindergarten will begin in 2015/2016. Many schools offer a summer lunch program, and lunch is provided for babies through high school kids. She said some schools also open their libraries to students in the summer. Nancy Greenman asked if kindergarteners can have breakfast at school. Everest said they can if they are morning kindergarteners.

Everest said there are a series of upcoming classes for children ages 3-6 years old. Brochures for the class are in both English and Spanish, and translation will be available during the class as well. Equinoa asked if the program has been publicized. Everest said it hasn't been widely publicized. Cervantes said it is necessary to think about how to get the message out to individuals who are living below the poverty line. Everest said that is one of the biggest challenges because it is hard to reach out to people who aren't accessing resources within the community. She said kindergarten readiness brochures are given to local doctors' offices and hospitals. It is also given to all children's parents who attend kindergarten orientation. Tina Dodge Vera said WIC should also receive the brochures. She suggested whittling the information in the brochure down to 3-5 key bullet points to make it more reader friendly.

Shogren said closing the achievement gap is important to the community. She said early academic success is a predictor of later success. Children need to be read to, talked to, and listened to. She said a child needs to hear one thousand stories before they are able to read. The single most important thing parents can do is read to their children. Everest said there are many resources available in the community. She would like to see the community take part in the Imagination Library. Click here to follow the link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWUAkeI2MD0>. She said children ages 0-5 in the program receive a book in the mail once each month.

Equinoa said poverty is the key link to children having access to learning resources. He said kids need to be read to, have a full stomach, and be cared for. He said some children are coming to school unprepared. He said the community needs to think about how this can be addressed and work together to solve the problem. Once a child is behind, it is extremely difficult for them to catch up.

Sluiter said that it comes down to what parents are doing to help their children. He said it is often left up to the schools and communities to bring the opportunities to the children and by then, the children are often already behind. Equinoa said the cycle has to be broken. Cervantes said what we are talking about is cultural traits. He said if individuals don't have access to what the cultural norms are; it is difficult to meet the expectations.

Whitley discussed how County Care Organizations (CCOs) will be integrating with the Early Learning Hub. She said this will allow for an access point for all types of services for children. She said the biggest roadblock for this collaboration is funding; however, there is an underlying expectation that the business community will provide the resources.

Everest recommended the book *NurtureShock* to the group. She said it is a great resource for parents and individuals who work with children. The group thanked Everest and Shogren for coming to the meeting and sharing their information.

#### Mental Health Month (MHM) – May 2014

Whitley said the HRC wants to be helpful in supporting MHM. Tony Howell, Linn County Mental Health, said the Mental Health Advisory Board provides activities during MHM. There are several mental health literacy projects in the works. He said there will be a focus on children during this year's MHM. He said Linn County Students Taking Action Not Drinking (S.T.A.N.D.) meets to create and provide messages for the community and their peers. The group is working on mental health awareness posters for teens as part of MHM.

Greenman asked if there is a proclamation for MHM. Howell believes he can locate a proclamation. Whitley said that a proclamation could be read by the Mayor and then a presentation could be made recognizing local youth who are helping their peers. Equinoa suggested contacting the high school counselors to find out which student groups are involved with peer mediation. The HRC would like to have the students make a presentation regarding MHM at the February 2014 HRC meeting. Howell said he would check to see if any students can attend the next meeting. *[At the request of Tony Howell and approved by Whitley, this item has been postponed to the March or April HRC meeting.]*

The group thanked Howell for the information.

#### Draft 2013 HRC Annual Report

Greenman asked everyone to review the Report, and then it can be considered for approval at next week's meeting.

January 28, 2014

## DEBRIEFS

### January 15, 2014, event: Martin Luther King, Jr., event

Whitley said the event was great. She said the most exciting piece for her was the hearing the different people reading Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, speech. Cervantes suggested having a more formal closing at the end of the event. He said it would be good to have a small reception of some sort in the lobby of City Hall. Greenman said the event went well and it received good coverage from the *Albany Democrat-Herald*. She said it would be nice to have people talk about what the speech means to them. Whitley thanked staff for having everything well prepared for the event.

### 2013 Human Relations Awards

Greenman, Whitley, and Michael Thomson presented the Human Relations Awards at the January 22, 2014, City Council meeting. Greenman said the presentation went smoothly and thanked staff for doing a wonderful job preparing the certificates and awards. She said it was the first time in 37 years that Christmas Storybook Land has been recognized for their contributions to the community. She said Thomson shared some thoughts with her about improvements for next year's awards. She asked that this item be continued in February for further discussion.

## UPDATES

### Essay activities – 4<sup>th</sup> and/or 5<sup>th</sup> graders

Discussion postponed.

### Other volunteer opportunities

Discussion postponed.

### Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC)

Dodge Vera mentioned that there is an OSU graduate student who is working on a project which compares the similarities of Latino immigration and Roman immigration.

### Calendar of Events: 2014

Discussion postponed.

## BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

Javier said there is a Unity Celebration at Linn-Benton Community College on February 26 at 4:00 p.m. The event will take place in the Diversity Achievement Center located on the second floor of the Forum. He asked staff to send the invitation to the Mayor and City Councilors.

Whitley noted that Equinoa needs a nametag.

## NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

*Signature on file.*

Diana Eilers  
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewed by,

*Signature on file.*

Wes Hare  
City Manager