



APPROVED: January 20, 2015

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (HRC)

City Hall, Municipal Court Room

Tuesday, November 25, 2014

MINUTES

Commissioners present: Kim Whitley, Jay Sluiter, Nancy Greenman, Tina Dodge Vera, Javier Cervantes, Debbie Berg

Commissioners absent: Chris Equinoa (excused)

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

Others present: Jasper Smith, Martin Luther King Commission Chair and Program Manager for Benton County Developmental Disabilities Program; Peter Goodman; Zoe Kellett; Sue Goodman; Franz Schneider; Denise Hughes-Tafen

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kim Whitley called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 28, 2014, joint meeting with HAC

October 28, 2014

MOTION: Jay Sluiter made a motion to approve both sets of minutes; Nancy Greenman seconded. Approved 6-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

A representative of CARE and the Corvallis Raging Grannies read a statement that spoke of evil prevailing when good citizens do nothing. The statement was to register their strong desire to move our history forward and to create a welcoming atmosphere in our towns. After the statement, the group sang a song they put together relating their message to the tune of "Home on the Range." A line from the song stated that they desire to be a state where all people relate.

Racist literature distributed on Veterans' Day

Because of the interest of the public in attendance, Whitley, with the group's approval, moved this agenda item before the others. She invited those of the public to speak. Zoe Kellett, a citizen of Albany and a member of the group CARE, explained their group's origin and why they had come. She revealed that CARE stands for Community Action for Racial Equality and explained that the group formed after Professor Walidah Imarisha's presentation regarding racism because of their desire to be part of a welcoming community. Kellett read a resolution (*see agenda file*) the group drafted and expressed their hope that the HRC would bring it before the City Council.

Sue Goodman read a statement saying that they recognize there is an issue and that they support the desire of people to make a fair and open environment.

Franz Schneider said he came to express indignation over the racist literature. He read a letter revealing his history of witnessing racism against his Jewish neighbors in Germany. One neighborhood family had the means to move to America; but of the 44 Jewish neighbors that stayed in the community, none survived. Schneider stated that he was personally insulted by the way the *Albany Democrat-Herald* has treated this affair.

Denise Hughes-Tafen said that she and her husband are both immigrants who moved to Albany four years ago as a place to build their future. She expressed her concern over the effect this "hate" circulation could have on her children. She said that she wants her children to feel a part of community. The racist literature evokes certain memories from her homeland and frightens her. She stated that Albany should be a place where everyone feels safe and welcome.

Javier Cervantes personally thanked the guests for coming and giving their voice and sharing creatively through song. He said that he felt the visitors expressed eloquently what he has been feeling the last couple weeks. Cervantes showed the HRC one of the flyers.

Greenman stated that CARE's draft of a resolution is a wonderful beginning. She asked them if they had thought what they would like to see or do beyond the resolution they presented. Sue Goodman replied that CARE meets regularly and that this issue of racist literature has them moving a little faster on their ideas. She said the resolution is just a start. Greenman directed the visitors to review the HRC's agenda for the evening to get a feel of what the Commission is working on. She asked if CARE had other ideas. Sue Goodman remarked that she sees the Commission as a very strong ally and replied that CARE has other ideas that the HRC could help with. She said that there are a lot of opportunities and support within the community and invited the HRC to come hear about their plans at one of their meetings.

Sluiter urged the members of CARE to take the resolution they proposed before the City Council themselves. He said that it was proper for them to involve the HRC but feels it would be more effective for the Council to hear from and be accountable to CARE themselves. Sluiter explained that CARE has a right to have their voice heard directly by the City Council. He said that their voice and attendance at tonight's meeting has impressed the Commission. Greenman suggested having both CARE and the HRC present the resolution. Sluiter agreed, stating that CARE could express their thoughts directly to the Council with the Commission's support. He added that the Veterans' Day Parade was an especially bad place for this issue to happen and that it did not show the feeling of the community.

Tina Dodge Vera objected to using the word "citizen" in the resolution because it is exclusive. She suggested using a word like "resident." Peter Goodman said that the resolution CARE suggested was meant as a template for the HRC to modify and put their stamp on. Peter Goodman expressed that CARE would like the Commission to craft the resolution since the HRC has been at this kind of work for a long time. He said that CARE would attend the council meeting to show their support. Dodge Vera stated that she agreed with Sluiter that it would be more powerful for it to come from CARE themselves. Debbie Berg added that seeing and hearing from such a large group was very impactful to her and feels it would be the same for the Council. Discussion followed about how and when to work on the wording of the resolution. City Manager Wes Hare suggested bringing the resolution as it is before next week's city council meeting and the wording could be worked out at the meeting. Peter Goodman said it would be good to expedite the matter when the issue is still fresh in everyone's minds. The group agreed.

MOTION: Cervantes made a motion to support the resolution presented by CARE; Berg seconded. Approved 6-0.

Cervantes declared that he would like to see signage or literature handed out at next year's parade that makes an affirmative statement to show Albany as a diverse and welcoming place that does not want the type of "hate" message that went out at this year's event. He suggested that, since the City hosts the parade, they hand out copies of the Commission's charter that shows what they stand for. Cervantes recommended discussing this as a future agenda item. The group agreed, and Whitley requested that it be added to the next agenda.

Sluiter noted that, with the happenings in the country the last few days, there is a great deal of interest in resolving conflict both immediate and long-term over racism and bigotry and sees no problem with the Council supporting what CARE has presented.

Corvallis Martin Luther King Commission

Whitley introduced Jasper Smith of the Martin Luther King Commission for the City of Corvallis. She explained to the group that she had met with Jasper Smith previously and invited him to this meeting to discuss possible ways the two groups could collaborate. Jasper Smith stated that he came representing a sister commission to express solidarity and support for what the HRC is doing and to explore ways the groups could partner in making both communities more welcoming. He relayed that one of their commission's events is to sponsor an essay contest in January for high school students. This year's theme is centered on the anniversaries of historical acts that were passed: the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act and the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. They would like students to reflect on those whose civil rights still go unprotected and whether our laws are enough of a protection. Jasper Smith invited the HRC to attend the event where the essay contest winners will be honored and a speaker will

discuss the history of Martin Luther King Day and of Oregon in regards to civil rights. Future events will include hosting community forums and a showing of the documentary "*Harvested Empire*."

Jasper Smith explained that they recently had their charge rewritten and reevaluated. He read the charge with its three main goals:

- promote and encourage diverse people and communities in Corvallis
- pursue nonviolent solutions to economic and social injustices in Corvallis
- be a strong advocate in building a strong and diverse community among Corvallis residents

Greenman expressed her approval of the charge.

Jasper Smith expressed that commissions like theirs and the HRC can feel isolated from city government. Whitley suggested including HAC in the collaborations of the commissions. Jasper Smith said that he will keep the groups informed regarding upcoming events and asked that he be included on the e-mail distribution list for the HRC agendas. He relayed that it was good to see how much support the HRC has. Jasper Smith stayed for the next agenda item.

January 2015 event: Martin Luther King, Jr., event

Cervantes summarized the past two year's events for the public. Whitley asked what the group would want to do this year. Greenman commented that she really liked the reading of the *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. She said that many typically think of the *I Have a Dream* speech but feels the *Birmingham Jail Letter* is more powerful. Cervantes proposed Martin Luther King's last speech *I've Been to the Mountain Top*, noting that it is long but very powerful. Greenman replied that she liked the length of the *Birmingham Jail Letter* because it allowed a lot of people to be involved. She expressed appreciation to Cervantes for last year's reading.

The group decided to do another reading of one of Martin Luther King's speeches at City Hall on January 15, 2015. Cervantes will send out an e-mail with speech choices and the number of people that will be required to read the speech for the group to vote on. Whitley requested that Management Assistant/Public Information Officer Marilyn Smith check on the availability of City Hall for the event. Marilyn Smith suggested starting recruitment of readers through the City newsletter and website. Sluiter interjected that, if change is to take place, the younger generation needs to be involved in the reading. Cervantes said that they could invite the middle and high schools.

After the discussion ended, Whitley, along with the rest of the group, thanked Jasper Smith for his attendance.

Status of 2014 Human Relations Award nominations

Greenman explained the history of the award for the benefit of the visitors. Greenman noted that, so far, there is only one application submitted and that the nominating period closes next Monday. Sluiter reported that he received negative feedback from a citizen questioning the limiting criteria of who could be nominated. Marilyn Smith explained that the qualifications were determined so as not to duplicate or interfere with who the Chamber of Commerce wishes to honor through their awards. Hare noted that the HRC's guidelines have evolved. Whitley expressed that she understood the citizen's frustration but felt that the Commission has to honor what was presented for this year's award. She suggested changing the guidelines next year.

Greenman relayed that, with only one nomination so far, she feels this is the wrong time of year to sponsor the award. Whitley agreed that it is a busy time of year, especially for nonprofits. She suggested moving it to March. Greenman asked for Marilyn Smith's input. Marilyn Smith said that March can be busy for nonprofits and suggested February since it coincides with Oregon's birthday. Cervantes shared that February is when LBCC does a community presentation that the HRC might be able to collaborate with. Whitley suggested extending this year's nominating period. Greenman specified that it be extended beyond the first of the year. Sluiter voiced that if the deadline is extended, then the qualifications for nomination should be revised.

MOTION: Berg made a motion to extend the nomination period to January 30, 2015; Greenman seconded. Approved 6-0.

Draft Limited English Proficiency Plan

Hare, Marilyn Smith, and Information Technology Director Jorge Salinas worked on the plan. Hare explained that they reviewed templates from other cities. Salinas explained the results of a survey (*see agenda file*) he conducted to help them determine the type of plan needed. Dodge Vera asked if the survey was conducted internally. Salinas answered that it was, and detailed that 58 out of 400 employees returned the survey. Smith explained that many of the employees did not answer the survey because it did not apply to them as they do not have interaction with the public. The Public Works Department, which includes the utility billing counter, has the most public interaction. Salinas went over what responsibilities the City has according to the plan. He described the "I speak" Language Identification Card that will be distributed to employees. Greenman noted that the card will help only those that are literate.

Whitley and Cervantes expressed how they were impressed at how quickly the City put the plan together. Hare reiterated that they had borrowed a template. He explained that the plan was consistent with what the City was already doing. The City does more than the plan by such things as having incentive pay for additional languages spoken. Berg asked if there were incentives for those who go back to school to learn another language. Hare responded that there are education incentives available. Whitley asked where the process goes from here. Hare answered that the group can take time to review the plan before another meeting and then make a recommendation to the City Council. Hare encouraged the group to share this information with the HAC. The group is going to review the language plan and requested that discussion of the plan be added to next agenda.

Ballot Measure 88 discussion: outcome and how group could address positional fallout

Whitley suggested that, due to the lateness of the hour, the group postpone this discussion until the next agenda. Cervantes said that he would just like to say that he was disheartened that in Linn County 81percent voted against this ballot when the immigrant population has contributed so much to this community. Cervantes asked Hare and Marilyn Smith if it was possible to see how Albany voted. Smith answered that the County should have a precinct breakdown ready anytime. Whitley commented that she sees through the national discussions that people have been misinformed on the lives of individuals that are undocumented. She sees the Commission having a role in helping to educate the community. Cervantes said there needs to be some acknowledgement of what the immigrant population contributes economically. Greenman noted that most immigrants have legal status and citizens probably don't realize how many are legal. Cervantes said the language plan is a positive first step. He recommended doing a study to understand the business impact by immigrants. Cervantes expressed his appreciation to the immigrants who have populated our city and helped us qualify for grants. The group agreed that they would like to have a discussion regarding an immigrant impact study on the next agenda.

Additional feedback from Hispanic Advisory Council regarding accessibility and inclusion of City services and programs to the Albany Latino community

No discussion.

DEBRIEFS

Annual Summit on Homelessness (November 5)

No discussion.

UPDATES

Other volunteer opportunities

No discussion.

Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC)

No discussion.

Calendar of Events: 2014 & 2015

No discussion.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

Smith presented the group with their mission statement translated in Spanish. The group was grateful.

Cervantes thanked the visitors again for their input.

Greenman announced that her term ends in December and that she will not be reapplying. This is her last meeting. She is confident the Commission is strong enough to go forward without her. The group thanked Greenman for her service.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, January 20, 2014

ADJOURNMENT

Whitley adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Gina Burrese
Administrative Assistant

Reviewed by,

Signature on file

Wes Hare
City Manager