



HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (HRC)

City Hall, Municipal Court Room

Tuesday, February 24, 2015

MINUTES

Commissioners present: Kim Whitley, Graham Kislingbury, Tina Dodge Vera, Javier Cervantes; Jay Sluiter

Commissioners absent: Debbie Berg (excused), Chris Equinoa (excused)

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

Others present: Members of CARE: Peter Goodman, Catherine Miller, Sue Goodman, Carmen Moody

CALL TO ORDER

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

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

MOTION: Jay Sluiter made a motion to postpone the elections until more board members were present; Graham Kislingbury seconded. Approved 5-0.

Whitley requested that the commission members think about whether they would like to serve as either Chair or Vice Chair or who they would like to nominate. Sluiter commented that Whitley was doing a good job and should continue. Whitley responded that she would not be opposed to that.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 27, 2015

MOTION: Kislingbury made a motion to approve the minutes; Javier Cervantes seconded. Approved 5-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

Whitley recognized the community members in attendance and invited them to share their business. Sue Goodman announced that she and the others were there as CARE committee members to support Carmen Moody, who was a recent victim of a racist graffiti incident. They came to communicate that they are hoping to find a way that these types of incidents don't happen again. Goodman expressed that she and her fellow committee members were very upset when they heard the news of something like this happening in their community. Kislingbury remarked that he, too, was upset by the news. He went to visit Moody and learned that, not only had Moody's residence been marred by racist graffiti, but a dead mouse had been thrown on her porch.

Cervantes asked the CARE members what they would like to see the Commission do. Goodman conveyed that they were curious about the police investigation and how it was being handled. They want to know if the incident was gang-related. Goodman specified that CARE seeks help getting the word out that this is a welcoming and inclusive community. CARE contacted the neighborhood school principal and the *Albany Democrat Herald* to bring awareness regarding the incident and elicit help in correcting it.

Cervantes directed a question to Moody, asking her feeling of security within the neighborhood. Moody replied that she felt secure until this incident. Cervantes apologized to Moody for not being aware of this incident until he saw it on the HRC agenda. He expressed that he would like to see the Commission be proactive, organized, and mobile in their efforts to be visible to community members who feel unwelcome. Cervantes indicated that the Commission should be communicating to each other when they hear of such incidents. Kislingbury explained that he heard of the incident on Friday and visited Moody as a representative of the Commission. He also called the Albany Police Department (APD) to see if they were on top of the situation. On Monday, he communicated with Management Assistant/Public Information Officer Marilyn Smith that he would like to see this on the next meeting agenda.

Whitley recalled from the Community Policing presentation that the department has procedures that involve the collaboration of the community in handling situations like these. Hare commented that he could take a look at the police report to see how they were handling it. He stressed that the APD places a lot of focus on tagging this type of activity and would not treat it as a minor incident. Sue Goodman suggested that this incident be upgraded to a hate crime. Hare said that the prosecutor determines that designation. Catherine Miller shared that she recalls an incident several years ago where a racist group intended to promote their cause with a march through Albany. Miller explained that citizens banded together in protest and stopped the march from happening. Peter Goodman said that CARE has been proactive in this incident by working with Lafayette School to use this incident as an opportunity to have students learn what racist incidents are about and their effect on the community.

Moody expressed her appreciation to Kislingbury, Sue Goodman, and Peter Goodman for reaching out to her in this crisis. She described the negative effect this has had on her and her daughters. Moody's family was the minority when they moved here and, even though people had been really nice, they now feel very vulnerable. She sees the dead mouse as a warning to her that she should have kept quiet about the incident, but it makes her aware of the possibility of other incidents that victims were too fearful report. Cervantes sympathized as a fellow minority and expressed his concern for the unrepresented populations who most likely suffer in silence. He pointed out the need for the City to be vigilant against these types of incidents, so this sort of behavior doesn't escalate. Cervantes sincerely apologized to Moody for the actions of what he described as a few misguided people.

Whitley thanked Moody and others for attending the meeting and sharing their thoughts. Moody informed the group that she is bilingual and would be happy to be of service to the Commission with her translation skills.

Report from 2014 Human Relations Award Subcommittee

Since Kislingbury expressed that he might need to leave the meeting early, Whitley moved the report as the next agenda item. And given that both subcommittee members were absent, Whitley reported on their behalf. Whitley shared the subcommittee's recommendations for both categories. She noted that there will be a future discussion about changing the "nonprofit" category for next year's award to include other businesses.

MOTION: Kislingbury moved that HRC present an award to the Linn Benton Hispanic Advisory Committee and a runner-up certificate to the Albany Historic Carousel and Museum for the "nonprofit" category; Sluiter seconded. Approved 3-0 (Berg and Equinoa had recommended these as winners of the award and their votes were counted by proxy.). Cervantes and Dodge Vera abstained from voting due to a conflict of interest.

MOTION: Cervantes moved that the HRC present the award to Jim Lawrence for the "Individual" category; Kislingbury seconded. Approved 5-0.

Sluiter expressed his appreciation for the subcommittee's work. Whitley asked City staff if the Mayor would be having lunch with the award recipients, and Hare answered that, if asked, he is sure she would enjoy doing that. Whitley said that they need to make sure Equinoa and Berg are available to present the award at the March 11, 2015, City Council meeting. She encouraged the group to extend their support by attending the meeting.

Update on Sunrise Park renovation project

Hare reported on behalf of Parks & Recreation Director Ed Hodney that the project has been delayed due to some wetlands issues. Hare said that the issues are being dealt with and shouldn't prevent the project from going forward. It will slow the process down, but it is hard to say by how long. Discussion followed on what constitutes a wetland designation. Tina Dodge Vera asked if the project plan could change, and Hare answered that it could.

Draft Limited English Proficiency Plan

Smith received feedback from a language service company that the plan's Language Identification Flashcards should include language options for people with limited hearing who may utilize sign language. These options will be researched, and Smith will come back with additional information. Smith passed around examples of the flashcards in both a poster and a wallet-size version. Whitley commented that the small type size on the pocket card was hard to read.

Draft 2014 HRC Annual Report

The group decided to add that they met in August for planning. Whitley requested that the report reflect the increased amount of public attendance by listing the CARE Committee not only in the description of November's meeting but also under the section titled "Visitors who attended an HRC meeting in 2014." The group then brainstormed on the wording for a conclusion to the report. Sluiter summarized that the Commission members feel good about their continuing efforts in promoting harmonious relations among the citizens of Albany through the recommendations they've made and the activities they've supported with the goal of maintaining respectful interactions within our community. He said that he feels the Commission has met that goal to the best of their ability and that their output is commendable considering the limited resources available. The group approved of Sluiter's summarization. Dodge Vera added that the Commission is still very much needed and valued and there is still a lot of work to do. Everyone agreed.

MOTION: Dodge Vera moved to approve the annual report with the additions of August's activities, CARE's attendance, and Sluiter's and Dodge Vera's statements as a conclusion; Cervantes seconded. Approved 5-0.

Whitley requested that staff implement the changes and include the final draft of the report at the March 24, 2015, HRC meeting for the members to sign.

Kislingbury excused himself from the meeting and noted that he had found something that was presented before the City Council nine years ago that he would like to read at the next meeting. Whitley said that he would be on the next agenda.

Graffiti incident of February 12

This agenda item was discussed under "Business from the Public." The group requested that the topic be included on the next agenda as "Outward Displays of Hate," so they can discuss possible solutions.

UPDATES

Other volunteer opportunities

Cervantes invited the group to LBCC's hosting of "The Black-Jew Dialogues" on March 4, 2015, at noon in the Forum lecture hall. This event is a social justice theatrical comedy that includes discussion around topics of inclusion, racial equity, and diversity. The event is free and open to the public.

The group was reminded that the HEART to Heart Resource Fair is coming up on May 14, 2015, as an opportunity to volunteer.

Cervantes informed the group of the LBCC One Vibe Diversity Day event on May 13, 2015, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the LBCC courtyard. Whitley requested that this event be put on the next agenda for discussion on whether or not they want to host a table there.

Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC)

Cervantes reported that the Council met at the Corvallis Chamber of Commerce. He relayed that the organization seemed interested in the idea of acquiring an internship to conduct a survey on the economic impact of minority businesses. Hare communicated that he received a chart from Labor Economist Will Summers regarding minority businesses and that Summers is scheduled to speak at the next HRC meeting. The group expressed their approval.

Cervantes updated the group that this year's Festival Latino will be held in Monteith Riverpark on September 20. He related that the HAC discussed appointing a new co-chair for Linn County's committee because Leonor Rodriguez has stepped down. The HAC is planning a meeting with the CARE Committee, but their next meeting on April 28 will focus on the area's law enforcement. They will include the District Attorneys' offices. The meeting will be held at the Sheriff's new satellite office building in Tangent.

Calendar of Events: 2015

Whitley reviewed the calendar with the group. She said that she would follow up with Linn County on plans for Mental Health Month in May. Sluiter asked if the Commission members would consider holding the HRC meetings earlier in the evening. Whitley requested that the question be put on the next agenda for all the members to give their input.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

Dodge Vera presented a concern to the group to seek their advice. She has been researching the challenges of low-income Spanish speaking families in the Sunrise District and discovered one of their challenges is dealing with smoke in public spaces. She shared that the City of Sweet Home conducted a survey among its residents that included questions regarding smoking in the city parks. She presented copies of the survey to Hare and Hodney and met with City Councilor Floyd Collins to discuss the matter. She learned from Collins that resident opinion is important to the Council before establishing smoke-free spaces. When the Sunrise Park plan is presented, the park could be designated as a smoke-free space, but City Council's decision would strive to reflect the resident's opinions. Dodge Vera asked the group for the best way to get the opinion of all Albany residents. She stressed that since the Cities of Portland and Lebanon have smoke-free spaces and the City of Sweet Home is talking about it, Albany should be doing something. Whitley relayed that the area's three counties have formed a Regional Healthy Communities Collaborative that has been awarded grants, and they are looking at a greater unified approach to tobacco cessation. Dodge Vera remarked that the collaborators have been supportive of establishing smoke-free events but, so far, not of all public spaces.

The *City Bridges* was suggested as a platform to conduct a survey, but Smith explained that it is hard to tell how many of its subscribers actually are Albany residents. Discussion followed about the large use of tobacco in Albany, the sensitivity of the issue, and the Commission's desire to see Albany's public spaces smoke-free. Cervantes said that he supported Whitley's idea of approaching the Regional Healthy Communities Collaborative as a venue for a survey. Smith said that she will think about other survey options.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Tuesday, March 24, 2015

ADJOURNMENT

Whitley adjourned the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Gina Burrese
Administrative Assistant

Reviewed by,

Signature on file

Wes Hare
City Manager