APPROVED: September 22, 2015

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (HRC)

City Hall, Willamette Room
Tuesday, July 28, 2015
MINUTES

Commissioners present:	Kim Whitley (arrived at 7:16 p.m.), Javier Cervantes, Chris Equinoa, Graham Kislingbury, Denise Hughes-Tafen
Commissioners absent:	Tina Dodge Vera (excused), Jay Sluiter (excused)
Staff present:	Wes Hare, City Manager
Others present:	None

INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMISSION MEMBER: Denise Hughes-Tafen

Javier Cervantes welcomed Denise Hughes-Tafen to the group, and each member introduced themselves. Hughes-Tafen shared that she lives in North Albany and has lived in Albany for the last five years. She works as an Inclusion Specialist at LBCC.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Javier Cervantes called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 26, 2015

MOTION: Graham Kislingbury made a motion to approve the minutes; Cervantes seconded. Approved 4-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

None.

Participation at the following events:

River Rhythms Concerts on July 30 & August 6

Chris Equinoa volunteered to serve as a greeter for the July 30 and August 6 concerts.

Graham Kislingbury said that he enjoyed passing the basket at the last concert and volunteered to do so at the two remaining concerts. He noted that the concerts are run well, but he was concerned about the process how the volunteers return the baskets of money. An individual woman, just inside the Senior Center doors, collected the baskets of money. Since the concerts can bring in quite a bit of cash, Kislingbury considered this a security risk. He suggested having one of the police officers patrolling the event stand guard while the money is being collected. Equinoa agreed that a review of the process would be a good idea. Kislingbury went on to say that the concerts are a hit for both the bands who play here and the residents who come to listen. He said that he has heard people say they desire to live in Albany because of the concerts. Hare expressed that the City Council is committed to making Albany a welcoming place to live.

Javier Cervantes volunteered to serve as a greeter for the July 30 concert.

Northwest Art & Air Festival [August 21-23]

None of the members present are available to volunteer. Cervantes will send an e-mail to absent members, Jay Sluiter and Tina Dodge Vera to inquire if they would be available. Hare suggested displaying HRC literature on table if no one can attend.

Festival Latino [September 20, 11:00 a.m.-6:00p.m., Monteith Riverpark]

Cervantes asked the group if they wanted to host a table or volunteer. Equinoa said that he planned on attending the event. Kislingbury tentatively agreed to attend. Cervantes indicated that he will be at the event.

Upcoming Events

National Night Out

City staff passed out a National Night Out (NNO) participation list from the Community Policing Department (*see agenda file*). Hare explained that one of the main purposes of the event is to expose residents to the City's emergency response personnel. He shared how the HRC has participated in the past and how one year they hosted an event to connect with a neighborhood in the Hackleman District. The Commission went to a lot of work for a relatively small turnout, though. Since then, members have paired off to visit different neighborhood events. Kislingbury wondered if the neighborhood where the woman's house was vandalized with a Swastika symbol was participating.

Cervantes recalled the group discussing the possibility of hosting an event at Sunrise Park. He asked Hare if the Park was ready. Hare answered that it was still in progress. Cervantes suggested the group host an event there next summer. The group agreed. Cervantes requested that it be added to the calendar. Whitley suggested having the P&R Department come talk at HRC's May 2016 meeting and that the Commission makes connections with neighbors beforehand to ensure good attendance. Equinoa relayed that Sunrise School could be a resource since they have already established good connections within the neighborhood. Kislingbury proposed that the event include water balloons to draw the children. Cervantes suggested having soccer nets available. It's been Hughes-Tafen observation that the P&R Department has had a good turnout with their Wednesday at the Park events.

Cervantes communicated that he plans on attending at least one NNO neighborhood event and challenged the group to review the participation list and choose an event to attend. He requested those visiting an event to come to the next meeting prepared to give a verbal report on their experience.

Date for joint meeting with Hispanic Advisory Council *(Tuesday, October 27 @ 3:00 p.m.; HRC meeting @ 4:00 p.m.)*

The group agreed to hold the meeting on October 27; Equinoa will not be able to attend.

Mental Illness Awareness week *[October 4-10]*

Cervantes requested that City staff invite representatives from Linn County Mental Health to come speak at the next meeting. Whitley expressed that she would like to invite someone from the County jail system to learn how they respond to those with mental illness. Hare relayed that the Linn County Sheriff would be a good contact since he is in charge of the jail. Equinoa expressed that it would be good to have a conversation with first responders and ask how the HRC could be of support. Whitley remarked that she would like to know how first responders are resilient in their response to the mentally ill and the way they deal with post trauma. She volunteered to draft an e-mail inviting the Linn County Sheriff to the next meeting and will forward the e-mail to Hare to extend as an invitation to the Sheriff.

Debriefs

Community Forum - Educational Equity for Latino Families, Thursday, June 4

Cervantes and Equinoa attended the forum. Cervantes expressed his desire for the presenters to come and do a mini presentation for the group. It was noted that the statistics from the Educational Equity for Latino Families Project were mainly obtained from the Corvallis area, but they plan on doing something similar here in Albany. Hughes-Tafen said that it was her understanding that the project for Albany was already underway. Cervantes encouraged the group to attend the next forum. He will report back to the group when he finds out that date. Equinoa shared that the training was very relevant and the number of agencies in attendance was admirable. He was very impressed with the presenters and Tina Dodge Vera's involvement in making it happen.

Hughes-Tafen agreed with Equinoa, but at the same time, was disappointed that the participants seemed to be from agencies that are already heavily involved; it did not appear that other agencies felt a need to become involved. Equinoa replied that it seems like we are preaching to the choir; many agencies tend to think this type of thing doesn't apply to them. He added that more schools should have been in attendance. Hughes-Tafen remarked that schools are supposed to serve everyone. Cervantes said that when he finds out the date for the next training, they should post an invitation on the website and share with strategic partners to obtain more involvement.

Juneteenth: The 150th Celebration of Freedom, Saturday, June 20, Corvallis

It was reported that a historical drama performed by a woman in regards to her ancestors' slavery was very powerful. Hughes-Tafen mentioned that Senator Sarah Gelser attended and was interacting with participants.

River Rhythms' concert, Thursday, July 2

Kislingbury reported that he attended the concert and volunteered as a Basket Passer. He said his experience was positive. His only concern was the process used to turn in the baskets of money and how it lacked adequate security in relation to the amount of money being dealt with.

<u>August 25 HRC Meeting: Do you want to cancel</u>?

Since Kislingbury, Whitley, and Cervantes will all be unavailable for the August meeting, the group agreed to cancel the August meeting and meet again at the regularly scheduled time in September.

<u>Updates</u>

Other volunteer opportunities

Whitley reported that she was unable to connect with Police Lieutenant Casey Dorland regarding the possibility of hosting the next Coffee with a Cop at Yule's Bakery. Whitley will pass on her e-mail request to Hare who offered to contact Dorland himself.

Cervantes announced that the Jackson Street Youth Shelter was hosting a grand opening celebration on Thursday August 6, 2015, from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. Kislingbury commented that not many people realize that the shelter is there and the service it provides, even the businesses close by. He explained that the organization is considering a name change that will better reflect who they are and what they do. Representative Andy Olson will be speaking at the event.

Hispanic Advisory Committee (HAC)

Cervantes reported that there was no meeting this month.

Calendar of Events: 2015

Whitley suggested the group start planning for next year's Human Relations Award event. Cervantes requested that it be added to the next agenda.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

Kislingbury brought up the story from the *Gazette Times* regarding South Albany High School's mascot and the history of it. He said that the article was well done. Kislingbury shared that in the past, as part of the staff of the *Albany Democrat Herald*, he saw where articles suggesting the removal of the mascot received a lot of backlash but believes the issue is worth discussion. Rather than completely getting rid of the Rebel mascot, Kislingbury noted that it could be changed to reflect a rebel of a different time frame and the change could be implemented in phases to reduce financial hardship. Cervantes replied that there is a precedent for this sort of thing now with the recent rulings over Indian mascots where the figure was removed but the name of Warriors remained. Hare commented that the news article gave a good perspective and revealed that there was no evil intent when the mascot was chosen. Over the years, following community discussions, changes have been made to address the concerns over the mascot. The Confederate flag was removed from the school's symbol. Hughes-Tafen interjected that comments on Facebook regarding the article showed that people are angry that the topic is being discussed. They want to keep the symbol.

Equinoa stated that his experience as the principal at South Albany High School (SAHS) led him to believe that the students don't see their mascot connected with the Rebels of the civil war, but with rebels in general, a young generation doing things their own way. Equinoa said that SAHS has one of the best leadership groups, and he hates to see them get branded as racists. He added that it would cost the school thousands of dollars to change the mascot. Equinoa expressed that he realizes they need to be prepared to hold discussions, to be conscious and sensitive, but noted that in all the years he held the office of principal, he only had one set of parents come talk to him with concern over the symbol. Cervantes responded that there are still things that marry the high school to the southern tradition: grey uniforms, the name of Southern Bells for the dance team, and the Confederate symbolism on their school paper.

Equinoa suggested extending an invitation to the current principal for an upcoming meeting. The group agreed. Cervantes requested inviting the principal to the October meeting.

Hare gave an update on the situation where the Hispanic families were suddenly and unfairly evicted from their apartments. It appears it was not a case of prejudice against Hispanics because another Hispanic family has moved in. The apartment complex owners seem to be taking advantage of those who are unfamiliar with their rights as renters. The one family has been turned over to collections for payment of renovations that were only needed due to normal wear and tear of eight plus years living in the same apartment. Hare said that the City is trying to help but has no authority over the situation. Planner II Anne Catlin contacted the apartment complex's owners but did not make any head way with them. Legal Aid cannot help because the family already left the apartment. Hare plans on calling the Housing Authority to discuss how these types of situations are falling through the cracks. He shared his and HAC member Leonor Rodriguez's frustration that no government agency is able to step up in this situation.

Whitley questioned whether this could put a black mark on the family that would keep them from renting somewhere else. Cervantes said that this should be attacked as an unethical business practice and the situation made public. Kislingbury explained that *Albany Democrat Herald* reporter Jennifer Moody tried to interview the family, but they were too afraid to talk. Hughes-Tafen suggested consulting other cities regarding agencies that could give aid. Hare shared that Catlin (City Planner) is an officer on the board of Albany Partnership for Housing and Community Development. The agencies that Catlin, Rodriguez, and he went to were unable to help. Cervantes thanked Hare for the update and asked that he keep the Commission posted on any future updates.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

September 22, 2015

ADJOURNMENT

Cervantes adjourned the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Gina Burrese
Administrative Assistant

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Holly Roten
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewed by,

Signature on file

Wes Hare
City Manager