APPROVED: October 27, 2015

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (HRC)

City Hall, Willamette Room
Tuesday, September 22, 2015
MINUTES

Commissioners present: Kim Whitley (arrived at 7:02 p.m.), Javier Cervantes, Chris Equinoa, Graham Kislingbury, Denise Hughes-Tafen, Jay Sluiter, Tina Dodge Vera

Commissioners absent: None

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

Others present: Todd Noble, Linn County Mental Health Program Manager

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Javier Cervantes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

July 28, 2015

MOTION: Chris Equinoa made a motion to approve the minutes; Graham Kislingbury seconded. Approved 6-0 (Kim Whitley arrived after this.)

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

None.

Mental Illness Awareness Week (October 4-10, 2015)

Action: Proclamation for September 23 City Council meeting.

Linn County Mental Health Program Manager Todd Noble explained that they recognize the awareness week but stretch it out with events that occur a couple weeks later. During the week last year, board member and Meals on Wheels volunteer Wendy Hall distributed table tents listing myths and facts about mental illness. She took these tents, along with stickers and magnets, and handed them out with meals delivered to the elderly. They plan on doing that again this year as part of their endeavor to focus on the underserved geriatric population. Linn County Mental Health plans on participating in the Care Giver Celebration on November 2 and the Mid-Valley Stand Down for homeless veterans on November 12 at the River Center in Lebanon. The Mid-Valley Stand Down will help veterans while educating the community, and the Care Giver Celebration will offer support to caregivers while educating them as well. Noble added that Linn County Mental Health will be going out into the community with the table tents to inform and break down mental illness stigmas.

Equinoa asked if Linn County Mental Health will be reaching out to care homes in the community and whether services are provided to them. Noble answered that that is what the Care Givers Celebration is about: making their presence and resources known to those who run care homes. It all ties in with their focus on the underserved geriatric group.

Cervantes asked how the Commission could help. Equinoa suggested endorsing a proclamation in support of Mental Illness Awareness Week that could be read at a council meeting. He asked City staff if there was time to do that before the October 4 Awareness Week. Management Assistant/Public Information Officer Marilyn Smith said that it could be read at the next day's meeting and volunteered to write up the proclamation. The group agreed to the proclamation. They thanked Noble for coming to the meeting.

The conversation switched to the community meal at First Christian Church on October 6. Equinoa shared that he attended the meal last year. He said that they love the recognition, the volunteers are fantastic, and the church serves a tremendous number of meals, making it to be quite an event. Whitley and Denise Hughes-Tafen agreed to attend the meal. Cervantes reminded those attending to wear their name badges. Smith is ordering a name badge for Hughes-Tafen.

GAPS Centro de Bienvenida [Welcome Center]

Cervantes reported that the Center is still in operation and that there was a shifting of personnel. He asked if the group had any other concerns. Equinoa said that they had been worried about the budget cuts and how those cuts affected the operation of the Center. Tina Dodge Vera recommended checking in with the Center to see if things were running okay. Equinoa volunteered to do that. Dodge Vera said that the last time she checked, they were still looking for a staff person.

Human Relations Award for Calendar Year 2015

Kislingbury stated that the CARE group should be recognized for their efforts. Cervantes and others explained that in order to be considered they would have to be nominated by someone not on the Commission.

Cervantes directed the group to review the award application so they can get the process going. The group discussed the awards process and time schedule that was included in the meeting agenda packet. Cervantes asked if the award would be announced online. Smith answered that Executive Assistant to the City Manager Laura Hyde would have the information posted on the City's website according to the time schedule. Cervantes requested that the group be informed when it does get posted: Smith relayed that the award nominations would also be mentioned in the *City Bridges* newsletter. Hughes-Tafen revealed that she had not heard of the award before attending an HRC meeting last year and expressed her concern of it not being publicized enough. Hare commented that they do the best they can, but the award doesn't get a lot of play. Equinoa shared that, in spite of their efforts last year, they only received three nominations. Hare relayed that word of mouth was probably the best avenue to receive nominations.

Citizen's Concern about a Traffic Stop

Cervantes described the citizen's concern of being discriminated against by an Albany police officer and expressed his own concern over the incident. The concerned citizen was going to come to the meeting but had to cancel. Cervantes referenced an e-mail from Hare that gave a summary of the traffic stop. Kislingbury said that the driver and the Police Department gave two very different accounts. Cervantes said that he was happy the incident had not escalated to where someone got hurt. He expressed his desire to make a recommendation that the City procure the proper equipment such as vehicle and body cameras to protect the suspects as well as the police officers.

Members of the Commission were surprised that Officer Jorge Salang's nationality was mentioned at the end of the summary, stating it had no relevance to the case. Hare responded that they don't normally write up a report for traffic citations but, because of the questions brought up, Captain Eric Carter was directed to interview the officers involved and provide the summary. Hare explained that both he and Carter know Salang and know that he is sensitive to minorities. Equinoa described working with Officer Salang at an event and shared his sense that Officer Salang would not have mentioned his nationality if he were writing the summary. Hughes-Tafen said that it raises questions on why the captain felt it necessary to add that information.

Kislingbury questioned why the officer would approach the vehicle with his gun drawn. Hare explained that he did not have his gun drawn but that he used the standard procedure of approaching with hand on hip.

Hare said that he would hate to leave the young driver thinking he had been discriminated against. He shared that we have ways for the public to interact with the Police Department and learn their procedures such as the Citizen's Academy and the Ride-a-Long Patrol Observation. Hare suggested inviting the driver, his father, and the passenger to be part of a Ride-a-Long. He said that we see our piece of things, but there is a whole other piece we don't get to see and a ride-a-along helps with that. Hare reported that the young man received good treatment in court.

Equinoa recalled the group asking, in light of incidents across the nation, for updates from the Police Department on how they handle these types of situations. Hare responded that it was his recollection that the group had specifically requested that the Linn County Sheriff come speak regarding their handling of suspects with mental illness. The Sheriff was invited through an e-mail Whitley drafted. Hare relayed that Linn County Sheriff Bruce Riley recommended having the jail psychiatrist come and answer the group's questions.

In regards to the ride-a-long suggestion, Hughes-Tafen said that it was equally important for the police officers to understand the citizen's perspective.

Cervantes said that equipping the officers with the right equipment would have saved this misunderstanding. Hare explained that there are cameras in all the patrol cars except for the one used in this instance. He pointed out that the cameras only see what they are pointed at. Hare added that the officers would love to have the body cameras, but there are issues in providing them. Not only are the cameras themselves expensive, but the administration of the program would be expensive. The City of Sweet Home uses the cameras, but it is easier for them since they are a smaller community with fewer interactions to administer. Cervantes replied that the expense does not outweigh the importance of having them.

Hare asked the group if they would like him to reach out to the driver in a nonthreatening way with an invitation to a ride-a-long. Cervantes expressed his agreement. Hughes-Tafen voiced her concern about the dynamics of a ride-a-long and it not giving equal perspective of both sides. Hare responded that his experience on a ride-a-long is that there is plenty of time to talk. Both sides would be together to share with one another. Hare assured that he would be extending an invitation not a demand. It was decided to go ahead and have Hare extend the invitation to do a ride-a-long and report back with any updates.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Agenda items for joint meeting with Hispanic Advisory Committee (Tuesday, October 27 @ 3:00 p.m.)

Cervantes requested that the lack of availability of chairs and tables from the Parks & Recreation Department for use at Sunday's Festival Latino event be an agenda item. Cervantes explained that, due to a miscommunication, the tables and chairs were not going to be provided for the event. Parks & Recreation Director Ed Hodney was notified of the problem; and, at the last minute, the HAC was able to utilize the equipment. Hare explained that the Parks & Recreation Department expressed frustration that they had tried to reach out to the organizers of the event to assess the group's needs but never received a response. Whitley asked if the equipment was not going to be provided because there was an event conflict. Hare answered that it was a staffing issue. The Department needed to have staff scheduled to prepare and provide the equipment. Cervantes said that there was going to be a follow-up meeting at the end of October to iron things out for next year.

Hare conveyed that the Parks & Recreation Department has always been supportive of Festival Latino. Since Dodge Vera is part of the HAC, Hare asked if the follow-up meeting would be satisfactory in mending the incident. Dodge Vera answered that she was looking for a larger communication about the support of the event. She stated that it is a City event, needing full support of the City, and explained that the City used to host the event. Equinoa suggested having a form that included a list of expectations with both agencies communicating. Whitley asked if the Parks & Recreation Department had given a formal apology. Hare replied that he didn't think the Department felt they owed one. Whitley asked if the group could recommend that the Department give one. Equinoa shared that Hodney had come up to the HRC table during the event to check on how things were going. Kislingbury noted that there were tables set up at the event in the middle section that no one touched. Dodge Vera explained that there have always been issues on where to place the tables in regards to the sun and that they are always looking for people to help organize.

Cervantes asserted that there is a responsibility to provide these types of community events and said that we need to be as helpful as we can. Kislingbury expressed that it was a nice event.

Cervantes requested that plans for the Martin Luther King Holiday be added to the agenda.

Festival Latino (September 20)

Dodge Vera estimated that around 500 people attended the event. They did not have a counter to keep track of attendance. Kislingbury said that at first it was mainly volunteers at the event but then the people really started to come. Dodge Vera reported that both West Albany and South Albany High School students participated. Kislingbury asked if students from Jefferson were involved. Equinoa responded that they weren't, but he was impressed that attendance is now in the hundreds compared to when it first began where only about 30 people attended. There were people waiting in line for the health vans before the vans were due to show up. He expressed that it was great to have it announced to the community in such a way to receive that kind of response and that it was a fantastic event that was fun and cultural. Equinoa shared that the new school superintendent would like to promote it through the elementary schools. He said that the population of the community is changing dramatically, making this type of event needed. Dodge Vera also reported that COMP Northwest and the Lions Club performed health screenings. Cervantes concluded that the event makes our city look really good.

Annual Summit on Homelessness, Wednesday, November 4; 9:00 a.m. – noon; City Hall

Smith informed the group that the event's focus is on housing. She said that guest speakers will include a formerly homeless family and a formerly homeless veteran sharing their success stories. There will also be a speaker from the Oregon Office of Housing and Community Services. The event will be held in the City Council Chambers. Both Cervantes and Kislingbury stated that they will attend.

DEBRIEFS

River Rhythms concerts (July 30 and August 6)

Equinoa brought up the security concerns again and discussion followed. Hare commented that the issue was raised with the Parks & Recreation Department. He will check with Hodney to see what they decided to do. Hare explained that the the Department tries to utilize volunteers. The amount of money collected is small in terms of the cost of the program. If the Department had to pay for security, it would not be worth it. Whitley made a suggestion for the Commission to provide security.

National Night Out (August 4)

Not discussed.

Updates

Albany Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO)

No discussion.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

Smith suggested the group consider the annual memorial service for the homeless.

Hispanic Advisory Committee

There was no meeting this week. The next meeting will be Tuesday, September 29, at Linn County Child & Family Services on Pacific Boulevard.

Calendar of Events: 2015

Cervantes recommended City officials and employees attend the Tim Wise lecture hosted at LBCC on October 14 at 2:00 p.m. Hare communicated that he forwarded Cervantes' e-mail announcing the event to all City staff. Cervantes shared that the film will be shown at the campus library before the lecture. Tim Wise will also be lecturing on a later date at the Corvallis LaSells Stewart Center.

BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

Equinoa, as a representative of the Community Development Block Grant Program, gave an update on the Sunrise Park renovation and its delay. He reported that Transportation Systems Analyst Ron Irish said there is grant money available for transportation issues related to the park. Equinoa explained that due to those grant funds, other funds could go back into the "pool" to upgrade other things at the park. This makes it a priority to move forward. Equinoa stressed the need for ways to update the neighboring community on the reason for the delay so that they don't think the ball was dropped or their ideas not heard. Planner III Anne Catlin is working on a notice to be distributed. Smith added that the duplex by the park will be coming down.

Kislingbury announced that he saw Carmen Moody and that nothing more has happened since the July 31 incident. He would like to see two HRC Commissioners attend Moody's neighborhood's upcoming Neighborhood Watch meeting at the Calvary Baptist Church the second week in October. Kislingbury will be gone that week, so he will not be able to attend. The neighborhood group had not settled on what day of the week. Kislingbury will get back to the group with the actual date and time.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

October 27, 2015

ADJOURNMENT

Cervantes adjourned the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,	Respectfully submitted,	Reviewed by,
Signature on file	Signature on file	Signature on file
Gina Burrese Administrative Assistant	Holly Roten Administrative Assistant I	Wes Hare City Manager