



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
Monday April 26, 2010
REGULAR MEETING
City Hall, Council Chambers & Room 1027
First Floor, 301 W. Second Street, Austin, TX 78701

MEETING MINUTES

Chair Lisa Scheps called the Board Meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Lisa Scheps - Chair
Judy Cortez - Vice-Chair
Elizabeth Brenner
Tom Davis
Delia Meyer

Human Resources Staff Present:

Yamile M. Ortiz, EE/FHO Admin. Support
Charles Gorham, EE/FHO Administrator

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of March 22, 2010 were approved after two corrections and changes were made; Commissioner Davis motion, Commissioner Cortez second on a 5-0 vote.

CITIZENS COMMUNICATIONS

None

ITEM I

Presentation by: Irit Umani, Executive Director of the Trinity Center concerning support for the homeless and the need for additional services especially for single women.

Mrs. Umani spoke about the services the center provides to the homeless men and women in Austin. There is not housing but they work with other resources providing services as case management for health and financial assistance, temporal shelter were they feel safe, respected and not judged by any one. The center is for the homeless like a community center where they are not treated as clients but as neighbors.

She emphasized this center is the only one that serves only homeless women on Mondays and Tuesdays. These women are victims of domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health issues and the center only has 10 beds to take care of them, which are not enough. She also stated that

there are many single homeless women living on the street, which is dangerous; these citizens are abandoned in our city, they need help. Ms. Umani stated that the city of Austin has planned 300 support housing units for year 2013, but the need is for about 3,000 units for men and women homeless.

Mrs. Umani requested assistance and told the commissioners that this homeless situation is solvable and to make a priority to assist the center. She invited the commissioners and the public to visit the center and help to improve the services the center provides to the homeless.

After her presentation the commissioners requested Mrs. Umani to tell everyone the hours of operation and physical address. She informed the address is: 314 East 7th. Street - at the corner of 7th and Trinity. The center operates in the basement of the Saint David's Episcopal Church. The center operates from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm, serves about 40 people a day providing breakfast and lunch.

ITEM II

Presentation by Julia Subvry, Private Citizen and possibly a representative from the Census Bureau on the 2010 census and its relation to the Latino Community.

Commissioner Scheps mentioned that this item will be presented during the next meeting on May 24, 2010.

ITEM III

Update on the proposal to host the 2011 International Association of Official Human Rights Agency (IAOHRA) conference in Austin.

Commissioner Scheps informed the commissioners and the public that the final bid is moving forward and she is working hard coordinating everything for the conference.

ITEM IV

Discussion on adherence to attendance policy

Commissioners commented that it is clear to all of them that the absences are excused only if there is a personal illness or injury. A board member who is absent for three consecutive regular meetings or one-third of all regular meetings in a twelve month time period automatically will be terminated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / STAFF BRIEFINGS

Commissioner Scheps mentioned about the Equal Employment – Fair Housing Conference, it was very successful and that Charles Gorham and his staff did a wonderful job.

Mr. Gorham thanked the commissioners that were able to attend, and stated that the keynote - speakers were very pleased with all attendees and they would love to come back to the next year's conference. He said that there were about 120 people attending the Employment day and 103 people the Housing day of the conference. The comments from the attendees were positive and they were impressed with the presentations and the materials.

Commissioner Scheps announced about Commissioner Jay Chung resigned. He moved to south Florida to his new job. Every body will miss him and wish him and his family good luck.

At 6:05 pm Commissioner Scheps invited the public and the commissioners to meet in room #1027 for a non voting work session.

Commissioner Meyer announced that there is going to be a meeting on May 4 with Council Member Martinez, to support another death penalty situation. Also Commissioner Cortez said that Mr. Swannson and Judge Vasquez will be there to discuss death penalty and youth courts issues and resolutions.

ITEM V

Discuss issues around the Human Rights Commission bylaws and protected classes.

Commissioner Scheps mentioned that Commissioner Brenner is researching on this matter. The bylaws Article 2 – Purpose and Duties – section A number 1 and 8 were reviewed and discussed. Charles Gorham explained the Commissioners the issues of receive and investigate complaints. Article 3 Membership – Section E about board member absences was also reviewed.

ITEM VI

Further discussion on the homeless issue in Austin as per our annual work plan.

Commissioner Scheps mentioned that St. David's is interested in assisting the Human Rights Commission with the homeless situation they are having a meeting the first week of May to discuss options.

Charles Gorham suggested the Commissioners that are different agencies that can assist with housing and employment. He mentioned the Austin Tenants' Council about some temporal housing.

Commissioner Scheps said the shelter system needs to be reviewed and there are advocates in the city that knows about it but are not helping. She emphasized that the homeless situation is a Human Rights issue and they can not stop continuing looking for help.

ADJOURN

Chair Lisa Scheps adjourned the meeting at 6:37 pm without objection.