



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
Monday October 25, 2010
REGULAR MEETING
City Hall Council Chambers & Room 1027
First Floor, 301 W. Second Street, Austin, TX 78701

MEETING MINUTES

Chair Judy Cortez called the Board Meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Judy Cortez - Chair
Lisa Scheps - Vice-Chair
Elizabeth Brenner
Tom Davis
DeWayne Lofton

Human Resources Staff Present:
Yamile M. Ortiz, EE/FHO Admin. Support
Janice Yarbrough, EE/FHO Acting Administrator

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of September 27, 2010 were approved; Commissioner Scheps motion, Commissioner Brenner second on a 5-0 vote.

2. CITIZENS COMMUNICATIONS

None

3. NEW BUSINESS

a. Presentation by Rifka Reichler, Board Member of Transgender Education Network of Texas talks about The 11th Annual Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Ms. Reichler and Ms. Susan Pollack-French are members of the board; they presented cases related to transgender citizens murdered because of their gender identities or gender expressions and because transgender-based hate or prejudice.

Ms. Reichler: told the story of Rita Hester who was murdered in Allston outside Boston on November 28, 1998. She was a male-female transgender who was stabbed several times and found dead inside her apartment and whose murder is still unsolved. She mentioned that more than one transgender person dies every month in our country victim of violence against transgender people.

Ms. French: talked about her son who is a transgender man who has not been physically hurt, but he was denied medical insurance. Her son is involved in the transgender community for 10 years in Texas, in Houston and now in Austin. The transgender community gets together each year to commemorate a Day of Remembrance and raises public awareness of hate crimes against transgender people.

Ms. French: invited the public and the commissioners to join them to stand in solidarity the Day of Remembrance that marks the 12th anniversary of Rita Hester's murder. The event will take place on Saturday, November 20th at 6:30 pm on the steps of Austin's City Hall

Commissioner Scheps: stated that last month the Human Rights Commission voted to be the sponsors of the Transgender Education Network of Texas and the Mayor of the City of Austin, Mr. Leffingwell issued a proclamation for that day as he did in the past.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Davis: announced that the City of Austin Comprehensive Plan is looking for volunteers to participate in the planning process of working groups. If someone needs more information contact him.

5. OLD BUSINESS

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

Commissioner Cortez: mentioned that the conference for 2011 is in the planning stage.

Commissioner Scheps: spoke about the next step of the planning process is to create an advisory council putting together a committee and explained that only three commissioners will be part of that committee. She mentioned that they will be talking with the City of Austin Human Resources Department – Carla Scales and the Texas Workers Commission – Robert Gomez to be part of the committee.

Commissioner Scheps: explained that they are looking to create a larger group with advisory committee members and small groups with sub-committee members who will work hands on. She mentioned that Commissioner Davis will be talking soon with Council Morrison who wants to be involved in the planning for the 2011 IAOHRA Conference to bring up different Human Rights issues. Also, they are looking to create a theme for the conference.

- b. Discuss on the homeless issue in Austin as per our annual work plan and working with The Women's Commission.**

Commissioner Scheps: mentioned that she meet with Irit Umani, Director of Trinity Center last month to talk about a program call "Dress for Success" and also working to do a Shoe Drive event for spring of 2011. They are working with other groups like the Salvation Army and Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH).

ADJOURN

Chair Judy Cortez adjourned the meeting at 6:05pm without objection.