



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Monday January 23, 2012

City Hall Council Chambers & Room 1027

First Floor, 301 W. Second Street, Austin, TX 78701

Chair Tom Davis called the Board Meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Tom Davis, Chair
Paul Rhea, Vice Chair
Judy Cortez
DeWayne Lofton

Human Resources Staff Present:

Yamile M. Ortiz, EE/FHO Staff Liaison
Tony Robertson, EE/FHO Executive Liaison

1. CITIZENS COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Morris Priest: Citizen of Austin who attends CAMPO's meetings. Mr. Priest handed out information about CAMPO – Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization – Public Participation Program. Mr. Priest spoke about the program and he referred to the Environmental Justice Title VI Strategies, the Goals, the Get Involved, the Comments periods. He mentioned he has been attending CAMPO meetings for many years and this organization stopped giving back up material before their meetings since last year when the new Executive Director and Chair person came aboard.

Mr. Priest mentioned he has requested the back up material but has not received any and this is a violation of their Bylaws. He stated that not giving information to the public has become a common occurrence. Mr. Priest expressed he would like the Commission to urge CAMPO to discuss this situation with the executive directors because he believes transportation affects every one and with the new plans, the public is not aware of what the director is doing.

Chair Davis encouraged Mr. Priest to e-mail him about his concerns, with the objective of placing Mr. Priest on the agenda of a future Commission meeting.

Ms. Eliza May: from Austinites for Geographic Representation (AGR): Ms. May mentioned that Ms. Lupe Sosa did a small presentation during the last Commission meeting in October 2011 and she discussed their organization. Ms. May requested to the Commissioners that she be placed on the February agenda.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of November 23, 2011 were approved; Commissioner Rhea motion, Commissioner Cortez second on a 4-0 vote.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY CHAIR:

- a. Change in the order of business for the Commission
Commissioner Davis explained the order in the Agenda's old business has been changed because he reviewed that we have to operate by Robert's Rules, which directs us to do Old Business first.
- b. Packet of information received from Sabrina Brown.
Commissioner Davis explained that neither he nor the EEOC/FH staff knew the reason she sent the packets – she was contacted about this, but never replied.
Commissioner Davis said Commissioners did not need to take any action on this.

4. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Presentation by Judge Kelly Evans and/or Judge Leonard Saenz about the Judicial Support Task Force, regarding their work on the Youth Court and the Student Rights to Education Initiative.

Judge Leonard Saenz mentioned that Judge Kelly Evans was not able to come to the meeting and he was honored to do the presentation. Judge Saenz did a PowerPoint presentation on the Judicial Support Task Force and explained this task force has members from the Austin City Council, AISD Board of Trustees, and the Travis County Municipal Court.

Judge Saenz stated that we live in a great city where we have many governmental partners and private entities dedicated to helping our children. The Commission inquired how we can make the current system less punitive, and what modifications can be made to support children from 10 to 18 years old and their families. Judge Saenz commented the current system works with the Justice of the Peace to process cases in middle and high schools. Municipal Court is responsible for cases on parents in elementary schools, as well as city class misdemeanors. There are on-site courts in some schools in the Austin area with court officers who work with students.

Judge Saenz explained how the Justice of the Peace works with the City of Austin, AISD, Travis County, and the Juvenile Probation Department. He stated that the Juvenile Court Officer has exclusive jurisdiction with 10 and 11 year old children, and that this court connects with these children to assist them to the services they need to change students' behaviors. Judge Saenz explained the school district has come up with a few strategies to assist with this program and implement best practices with advanced court case management tools, class initiatives, case managers, social workers, and structured family resources center to focus on parents to get them more involved in students' life.

Judge Saenz mentioned there is a data collection and training program that helps in the enforcement of social contracts. Judge Saenz mentioned the school district wants to support the approach of community service by bringing students from colleges or

universities as interns to serve in the court to assist with case managers connecting the resources with families.

Judge Saenz stated that the youth court implementation of the Judicial Support Task Force is working rapidly; they are working with stakeholders to fund the program. He said the benefit of this approach is to provide more support for family and children, and more effective time management in processing cases. They have quarterly meetings to get feedback from the schools and the community.

b. Update by Karen Gross of the Anti-Defamation League regarding the activities of the Austin Hate Crimes Task Force.

Ms. Gross handed out information on the history, structure, work processes, roles, and goals of the Hate Crimes Task Force, and she provided updates on the last meeting they had in the middle of January 2012 with some City Council members. Ms. Gross mentioned this task force initiative was launched a year ago to identify opportunities for better preventing hate in the community. They created the mission and vision focusing on a community of respect that is free of hate.

The task force created three groups. The Prevention group deals with education and proactive ways to reduce bias; the Response group deals with data and training, infrastructure, policies, and procedures; and the Restoration group deals with restoring and healing the community. The Restoration group is known as the community circle. The task force became a partner with the communities in schools, talking with children in groups about what students think about bullying and hate. The community circles help to engage students and to help adults to think how to be safe in schools.

Ms. Gross said that the Task Force heard a presentation by Ballet Austin's Executive Director on the Light Holocaust & Humanity project, an anti-bias/prejudice group, and that the Task Force had voted to become a partner of the project. She mentioned that the Task Force also agreed to co-host KLRU's Civic Summit in April 2012.

Ms. Gross mentioned the County Commissioners were appointed to serve in the task force group. She pointed out that 213 schools in Texas are involved in the "No Place for Hate" program. This program's resource guide provides training to everyone engaged in how to deal with hate discrimination. This task force group is also about community respect and challenging and engaging staff in their place of work.

c. Discussion and possible action regarding the proposed Mission Statement for the Commission.

Tabled

d. Discussion and possible action regarding the 2011 Work Plan objective to raise awareness among Austin's citizens of our mission as advocates against discrimination.

Tabled

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Presentation by Activate Austin on its objectives, and how they and the Commission can work together against discrimination in Austin.

Dr. Lauren Ross said that she is involved in Activate Austin, a newly formed organization fighting against racism in Austin, but that she was not representing them that night. This new organization is working on communicating their message to the larger community without giving voice only to people who have more privileges – she emphasized, people like her.

Dr. Ross gave her biography from the last 20 years and spoke about Austin sub-culture. She told two stories that involved racism, and said that no one wants to talk about racism – specifically when it involves situations concerning East Austin. Dr. Ross stated we need to recognize that racism exists in Austin and we need to develop the capacity as a community that can talk about it because this affects all of us.

Chair Davis invited Dr. Ross, the public, and the commissioners to continue the meeting in room 1027 as stated in the agenda.

ADJOURN

However, at that point Commissioner Lofton informed Chair Davis that he had to leave the meeting. As a result, Chair Tom Davis noted that the Commission no longer had a quorum and adjourned the meeting at 6:45 PM.