



HUMAN RIGHT COMMISSION

WORK SESSION / ANNUAL RETREAT MEETING

Saturday March 10, 2012

8:00 AM - 12:00 noon

**LRC Learning & Research Center Building
2800 Spirit of Texas Drive, Training Room # 9
Austin, TX 78719**

MINUTES

Chair Tom Davis called the Meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Commission Members in Attendance:

Tom Davis – Chair
Paul Rhea – Vice-Chair
Elizabeth Brenner
Judy Cortez
Delia Meyer
George Reynolds

Human Resources Staff Present:

Yamile M. Ortiz, EE/FHO Staff Liaison
Enrique Serrano and Carla Scales, EE/FHO Executive Liaisons

Facilitator:

Mr. John D. Harris, Federal Mediator

CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

None

OBJECTIVES

Chair Davis stated that the primary goals and objectives defined were the direction of the Commission during 2011, and during 2012 the Commission will continue to focus and concentrate on advocating for human rights, by preparing, adding, and selecting comprehensive strategies to identify a progressive path to impact, value, and educate the community.

ORDER OF THE MEETING

I. Introductions and Process Review

Chair Tom Davis reviewed the material hand out for the Commissioners. He introduced Mr. Harris, who was the Facilitator for the meeting. Mr. Harris spoke about his job in a Federal agency in Houston; he works as a Field Mediator in Texas. They do mediations in collective bargaining agreements in federal and public sectors and facilitate trainings in employment mediation.

II. Overview of Commission Purpose and Charge

A. Commission Charge/Purpose from City Council

- Overview of HRC By-Laws and Ordinances
Commissioner Davis mentioned the Commissioners got a copy of the Bylaws to review.
- Training – Ensure all members have gone through training.
Commissioner Davis mentioned the Commissioners had gone to the required training.

B. Chair's Observations and Comments

- Recognize everyone's contribution.
Chair Davis recognized the Commissioners and the Human Resources Department staff for all the support and well job done during last year and during the IAOHRA Conference in 2011.
- Chair Davis challenged members to renew commitment or acknowledge limitations.
- Chair Davis stressed timeliness, attendance, and participation throughout each meeting in 2012. Chair Davis reviewed how important is to attend to the meetings, be on time, and participate. He explained the support liaison is in charge of maintaining monthly attendance records and do quarterly reports of the Boards & Commissions.

III. Review and Celebrate 2011 Accomplishments

- A. Mr. Harris facilitated this session; he focused on the three priority goals and encouraged the Commissioners to participate giving their feedback and suggestions.

GOALS FROM 2011:

- By 6/30/2011 as a Commission, create an agreed-upon message that educates and informs the public of the purpose, vision, and commitment of the Human Rights Commission, to be used as a unified message of the Commission.

Commissioners mentioned they started working on putting the message together. The message need more work because they need to agree on what to inform to the public in any community event. Commissioners mentioned they work on the brochure.

Former Chair Cortez recognized every one for working together as a team and she suggested the Commission could work on policy issues, city implementation, and lobby some of Human Rights Commission at State level.

- By 6/30/2011, create a marketing plan that identifies which issues, people, commissions, and organizations should be targeted in educating and informing the community of the purpose and mission of the Human Rights Commission, and why it is important to them.

Commissioners agreed they need to work on this goal for 2012 committing and bringing ideas to review all during a Commission meeting in April. They spoke about getting to the media and the community. Ms. Scales mentioned the EEO/FH Office has a contact list that can be shared with the Commission. Mr. Serrano confirmed the office will send the list to Chair Davis.

Commissioners agreed to invite other Commissions and people from the community to come to the meeting to do presentations instead of waiting for the members of the community to approach the Commission.

- Plan, develop, track progress, implement, and evaluate the International Association of Official Human Rights Agency (IAOHRA) Convention held in August 2011, to ensure a successful event.

Chair Davis and Commissioner Cortez discussed the IAOHRA Conference and recognized previous Chair Lisa Scheps, who contributed a great deal in the organization for the conference.

B. Listing of 2011 Accomplishments

Commissioners agreed they impacted the community by working with the community groups like: Youth Court, Group Home Issues, Anti-Bullying Program Campaign, the Death Penalty, Discrimination Issues, and Proposed Resolutions.

C. Discuss management of our meetings to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in deliberations.

Ms. Scales spoke about the Commission's structure; she mentioned the City Manager designates a city department to provide support for each board. The board reports directly to the City Council. The HRD – EEO/FH is the office designated for this Commission. The department director appoints an administrative staff liaison and executive liaison to provide guidance to the board to make sure they comply with the processes and regulations to work within the limits of the board's mission. The Legal department deals with the procedures and guides as they relate to the ordinances and codes, Chapters 5-1 to 5-4.

Commissioners suggested that the lessons learned from this and other commissions' mistakes will assist us in maintaining efficiency and competency.

Commissioners suggested that the decorum of Commission members – regular attendance, presence for the entire meeting, outlooks commitment, and professional standards – was an important factor in our meetings.

IV. SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats)

- Strengths – Commissioners suggested:
 1. open and be available to customers
 2. courteous

3. posted agendas
 4. send resolutions to convey
 5. keep Council Members informed
 6. post approved resolutions on the website
 7. youth task force
 8. held hearing
 9. responding to events regarding HRD
 10. have meeting televised and available on-demand
- Weaknesses – Commissioners suggested:
 1. commissioners and staff are still learning the process
 2. need to be more prepared before hearings
 3. City Code 5-2 through 5-4 are inconsistent and ambiguous
 4. need to stop meetings and continue in another room
 5. everyone is not engaged in HRC issues
 6. need unified voice
 7. more commission participation
 8. more outreach participation
 9. no enough time to review documents before meetings
 10. do not have a process to seek guidance from legal department
 - Opportunities – Commissioners suggested:
 1. post resolution on website along with media release
 2. meet with Council Members
 3. lobby Council on issues important to HRC
 4. work with City Legal to improve code as it pertaining HRC
 5. discuss meeting structure
 6. attend to additional outreach to media opportunity organization
 7. set the agenda for Human Rights Commission in the city and state websites
 8. setting example for the community toward HRD
 9. death penalty issues to share with Council
 10. influence State on HRC issues before or while in session
 11. engage Council to help with Legal guidance process
 - Threats – Commissioners suggest:
 1. legislation anti-Human Rights Laws
 2. reluctance of the Commissions
 3. political environment
 4. do not have a process to seek guidance from Legal
 5. involvement of Human Rights Commission at national level

V. 2012 WORK PLAN – MAJOR GOALS

This primary goals and objectives will define the direction of the Commission during 2012.

GOAL 1: Create a marketing plan and begin doing outreach

- Deal effectively with Council, community organizations, and citizens – ongoing

- Create “talking points” for Commissioners to use when talking to individuals and groups
- Learn to use social media (consider best practices from other locations)
- Improve the AHRC web site, starting by recovering the content we agreed on late last year
- Commissioners meet with appointing Council Members on issues and progress
- Post approved resolutions on web site
- Compile a list of other commissions and reach out to appropriate ones
- Compile a list of community organizations we would benefit from working with
- Create letter of introduction to community organizations.

GOAL 2: Take a more proactive stance for human rights

- Racism – partner with PODER, Activate Austin, Commission on Immigrant Affairs, etc.
- LGBT issues – attend local Fair Housing Conference for LGBT issues; attend national Fair Housing Conference for LGBT issues
- Hate crimes – work with Hate Crimes Task Force
- Death penalty – get a resolution against it before the City Council
- City contractor non-discrimination – work with that task force
- IAOHRA – submit at least one resolution to the national IAOHRA conference

GOAL 3: Improve the Commission’s processes

- Discuss our meeting structure; improve it in ways to be decided upon
- Work with City Legal Department and EEO/FH liaison staff to improve City Administrative Code sections 5.2 through 5.4
- Improve Commission hearing procedures
- Put process in place to get materials to Commissioners in time to study them before meetings and hearings
- Be prepared for meetings and hearings
- Get all of our resolutions onto the Council agenda for consideration

VI. Closing

Commissioners agreed to work and on the issues related to their tasks.

ADJOURN

Chair Tom Davis adjourned the meeting at 12:00 pm without objection.