



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

WORK SESSION

Saturday, January 24, 2015

**9:00 Asian American Resource Center
8401 Cameron Rd Austin TX 78754**

Chair Sara Clark called the meeting to order at 9:21 a.m.

Commission Members in Attendance:

Sara Clark, Chair

Will Krueger, Vice-Chair

Paul Rhea

Judy Cortez

Elizabeth Brenner

Lauren Guilbeaux

Human Resources Department Staff Present:

Jonathan Babiak, Administrator, Equal Employment/Fair Housing Office (EE/FHO)

Mike Hockmuller, Manager, Organizational Training & Development

1. CITIZENS' COMMUNICATION

There were no citizens' communications.

2. NEW BUSINESS

a. Introductions and Process Review

b. Overview of Commission Purpose and Charge - The commission shall:

- i. advise and consult with the city council on all matters involving racial, religious, or ethnic discrimination, and devise practices to promote equal opportunity;
- ii. serve in an advisory and consultative capacity to all city departments, advisory boards, and regulatory agencies to assure effective compliance with non-discrimination policies and orders, and recommend to the city manager measures to improve the ability of various departments and agencies to insure equal protection of any and all persons and groups against discrimination;
- iii. recommend to the city council legislation to aid in programs designed to eliminate prejudice and discrimination and encourage community support for the legislation;
- iv. aid in the formulation of local community groups in neighborhoods as needed to carry out specific programs;

- v. initiate and facilitate discussions and negotiations between individuals and groups to lessen tensions and improve understanding in the community;
- vi. assist in the enforcement of all laws prohibiting discrimination against persons where jurisdiction is not specifically vested in another agency;
- vii. receive and investigate complaints and, as provided by state law, and if necessary, subpoena witnesses and documents needed for investigation of those complaints, and initiate investigations of tensions, acts of prejudice, and practices of discrimination;
- viii. conduct public hearings on complaints and investigate and report to the council in writing facts, findings, and recommendations after using persuasion, mediation, and conciliation before any public hearing, and after making certain that any person named in any report of investigation was given the opportunity to be heard before the board with the right to examine and cross-examine witnesses;
- ix. institute and conduct educational programs to promote equal treatment, opportunity and understanding, and sponsor meetings, institutes, forums, and courses of instruction to lead to a clearer understanding and solution of human relations problems;
- x. assist in training city employees to use methods of dealing with intergroup relations that result in respect for equal rights and equal treatment, and cooperate with the local Police Department in developing and including human rights courses in the curriculum of police training;
- xi. conduct research, obtain factual data and hold public hearings to ascertain the status and treatment of racial, religious, and ethnic groups in the city and the best means of progressively improving human relations;
- xii. provide services and information to the city manager and heads of all city departments and agencies to achieve the purposes of this chapter; and
- xiii. cooperate with all city, state, county, federal, and other governmental agencies, as well as racial, religious, ethnic, nationality, educational, community, civic, fraternal, benevolent and other groups, associations, societies, and individuals with constructive talents and resources helpful in achieving mutual appreciation of the privileges and the responsibilities of citizenship in a land of freedom enriched by free commerce and full utilization of all human resources from all racial, religious, ethnic and national groups

c. Review and Celebrate 2014 Accomplishments

- i. The Commission passed a recommendation to City Council to authorize the City demographer to update the African American Quality of Life Report.
- ii. We spent several months hearing presentations from the community and hearing their needs.

- iii. The Commission advocated for the congregate meal program at the Asian American Resource Center.
- iv. The Commission passed a recommendation for the City Council to add source of income as a protected class to the City ordinance. Council added the protected class in December 2014.
- v. The Commission passed a recommendation for the City Council to amend City code to add retaliation in public accommodations. The Law Department is currently working amend the City code to add the retaliation protection.
- vi. The Commission sponsored the Transgender Day of Remembrance.
- vii. The Commission passed a resolution that the City Council in its federal legislative agenda include support for funding for the National Housing Trust Fund. That action was adopted by the council in November 2014.
- viii. Strengthening communications and relationship between the Commission and the Austin Police Department, reducing tensions.
- ix. Youth Court has been implemented.
- x. Opening and mandating relationships with various community groups.
- xi. Maintaining the Facebook page for the Human Rights Commission.
- xii. Raising awareness of the EE/FHO office.

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

- i. Strengths –Partnerships are strengthened through our work; Relationships with community leaders
- ii. Weaknesses – Tracking resolutions and communication; Commitment to the resolution: Pass resolutions and continue to follow all the way through;
- iii. Opportunities – Data collection strategies with the Austin Police Department; Continuing to build relationships with communities and their leaders;
- iv. Threats- Influx of new council members in July who are unaware of HRC functions

e. 2015 Work Plan – Major Goals

- i. Increase Community Awareness of and Involvement with the Human Rights Commission - Commissioners will reach out to individuals in the community and a variety of community groups to open/continue a dialog about human rights issues facing the City of Austin, with the goals of understanding the needs better, continuing to identify specific areas suitable for the Human Rights Commission to take action on, and increasing community awareness of and participation in the work of the Commission.
- ii. Increase Focus on Follow-Through - Commissioners will focus on following through on our recommendations to: (1) ensure that the recommendations reach and are understood by the appropriate audiences; and (2) increase the likelihood that the recommended action is taken by the City Council or other targeted body. For each recommendation the Commission makes, a Commissioner will be

assigned to this follow-through effort, and will report back to the Commission periodically on the progress of the recommendation and desired action. Progress reporting will be a routine agenda item.

- iii. Create a Plan for 10-1 Commission Transition and Diversity - A sub-committee of Commissioners will draft a written plan for a smooth and successful transition to the new eleven-member Commission structure, including a proposed format for passing along current Commissioners' institutional knowledge and community contacts. During the early 2015 process of Commissioner selection by the new 10-1 City Council, the plan will also include suggestions for achieving increased diversity on the Commission.
- iv. Continue collaboration with the Austin Police Department and other City bodies to address human rights issues, including racism and discrimination
- v. Continue to address affordability issues in the City of Austin
- vi. Continue to address challenges facing people with disabilities in the City of Austin

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm without objection.