HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

WORK SESSION

Saturday, March 23, 2013

9 am - 1:00 pm in Conference Room
Mexican American Cultural Center
600 River Street
Austin, TX 78701

Chair Paul Rhea called the Commission meeting to order at 9:12 am.

Commission members in attendance

Paul Rhea, Chair	Elizabeth Brenner	Tom Davis
Judy Cortez	DeWayne Lofton	

1. CITIZENS' COMMUNICATION

No citizen communications

2. NEW BUSINESS

a. Overview of Commission Purpose and Charge

   i. Overview of HRC bylaws and ordinances. Inquire if Sections 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 of the City Code can be rewritten so the provisions of those sections are made to agree with each other.

   ii. Challenging members to renew commitment and be more active Commissioners.

       1. Would like to see each commissioner bring at least one topic from the community for the HRC to discuss this year.
       2. Stress timeliness, attendance, and participation throughout each meeting, proactive attendance monitoring and feedback.
       3. Reminding all members to complete required training by deadline.

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b. Review of 2012 Goals

    i. The goal of taking a more proactive stance for human rights with regard to racism failed because of communication and publicity issues.

        1. The issue of "racism" is too broad and HRC needs to narrow its scope.
        2. HRC needs to partner with other commissions and non-profits to expand their reach.
        3. HRC should hold a citywide community forum as a one-time event.

    ii. Best practices in meeting management:

        1. Request that Historic Land Commission move their meeting the 7:30pm
        2. If it is not feasible to extend our current meeting time - look into possibly moving our meeting to another day and or time.
        3. Establish ground rules for joint commission meetings to ensure civility and productive discussions.

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

    i. Strengths – HRC available to listen; ability to brief City Council on key issues; Council champions issues regarding HRC; Team works well together; support of EE/FHO.

    ii. Weaknesses – Community is not aware of the HRC; Length of televised portion of commission meeting; still have a vacant position; need more commissioner involvement – bringing community issues to the HRC.

    iii. Opportunities – training on processes and procedures; increase communication and effectiveness due to new staff- foster relationships, set expectations; City Council restructuring; resolutions do not always need City Council approval- just HRC support (Youth Court Initiative); change focus of resolutions to force City Council action that is more aligned with HRC goals.

    iv. Threats – Does the City view the commission as relevant; Current resolutions are out of the City Council's purview; Many commissions have closed nationwide. HRC needs to conduct more outreach to increase community awareness.

d. 2013 Work Plan – Major Goals

    i. <u>Community Discussion/Forum on Racism</u> – The Human Rights Commission will organize and host a community-wide forum to discuss racism in the City of Austin; the forum will be held in coordination with Human Rights Day in December 2013. Workgroup consists of Commissioner Lofton (lead), Chair Rhea and Commissioner Cortez.

    ii. <u>Outreach to Community</u> **–** Establish personal contact with stakeholders in various community groups through phone calls and in-person meetings to increase awareness of the Human Rights Commission and to inquire about city policy initiatives the commission could recommend to city council.

    iii. <u>Improve Internal Processes</u> – Request staff to provide training to HRC on the discrimination complaint and hearing process at the EE/FHO; inquire if Sections 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 of the City Code can be rewritten so the provisions of those sections are made to agree with each other; inquire with City Clerk about alternate times for HRC meetings; establish ground rules for joint commission meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Paul Rhea adjourned the meeting at 12:54 PM without objection.