



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
Monday August 23, 2010
REGULAR MEETING
City Hall Council Chambers & Room 1027
First Floor, 301 W. Second Street, Austin, TX 78701

MEETING MINUTES

Chair Lisa Scheps called the Board Meeting to order at 5:37 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Lisa Scheps
Judy Cortez
Tom Davis
Delia Perez Meyer

Human Resources Staff Present:

Yamile M. Ortiz, EE/FHO Admin. Support
Enrique Serrano, EE/FHO Acting Administrator

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of July 26, 2010 were approved; Commissioner Cortez motion, Commissioner Meyer second on a 4-0 vote.

CITIZENS COMMUNICATIONS

None

ITEM I

Update on trip to Denver in regards to the Community Youth Court by Steve Swanson of Community Leadership and relationships Initiative for Youth (CLARIFY), Judge John Vasquez of the City of Austin Municipal Court and Commissioner Judy Cortez.

Judge Vasquez: the purpose of the trip was to look at the way the youth cases are handled in Denver. Judge Vasquez found that Denver has a similar community in demographics and size as in Austin. He mentioned Denver is working in partnership with the City, County, School District, and the Court, resulting in reduced number of youth filing cases in courts.

Judge Vasquez explained that Denver has the Safe City's Program based on doing students and families' assessment after the first incident rather than sending the student to youth court. This program uses the restorative justice known as restorative intervention where students, families and the courts work together improving the atmosphere on school campuses. Judge Vasquez ended saying his vision is to incorporate a similar program in Austin and also would like to bring some people from the city of Denver to do a presentation to persuade the city to support this program.

Mr. Swanson: emphasized Judge Vasquez' that people in the school system, the safe city's program, and the courts are working together and being successful doing things in a different way. Mr. Swanson mentioned about the Restorative Justice or R.J institute where they are training Teachers, School Resource Officer (SRO), and Principals on how to do it. He ended by saying that this is a great story to tell and learn from it. Mr. Swanson added that soon he will have information about the next community event and he asked the commissioners for their support.

Commissioner Cortez: mentioned that she was grateful and privileged to be a delegate with Robert Martinez, Judge Vasquez and Mr. Swanson, and learned about Denver's youth court safe city's program and the restorative intervention process. Commissioner Cortez added that there is a meeting pending with one of the Assistant City Manager, Mr. Lumbreras regarding this issue.

After the panel presentation Commissioner Scheps inquired about talking to city council for possible funding to bring people who are working in this successful program in Denver to Austin to talk about the program. Commissioner Scheps: how long has the program been running in Denver? Judge Vasquez: four years.

Commissioner Meyer: State Representative Pete Gallegos wants to support this program. Mr. Swanson added that eight months ago they discovered that the Texas Education Code Community Building is using the Restorative Justice Program called the Working Relationships Program and emphasized their willingness to work with States Representatives.

ITEM II

Approve Revised Bylaws.

Commissioner Scheps: read bylaws changes from city ordinance # 20100729-086, part 1, and section b. After approved; Commissioner Meyer motion, Commissioner Davis second on a 4-0 vote.

ITEM III

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

Commissioner Scheps: Commissioner Cortez will represent the City of Austin and attend the 2010 Conference 8/29 -9/1 in Mobile Alabama. A reception will be held to announce next year conference in Austin.

ITEM IV

Election of Officers

Commissioner Scheps: held the annual election. The nominations were Judy Cortez for Chair and Lisa Scheps for Vice-Chair. She asked if there were any other suggested nominations; no one suggested any one else and ran uncontested. The election results: Commissioner Cortez as chair and Commissioner Scheps as vice-chair.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Meyer informed the group Journey of Hope is coming to Texas in October 15 through to the 31 2010, the group will bring 15 people who will be traveling all across the state

talking about issues against the death penalty. Also she invited every one to the October 30, 2010 march here in Austin.

Commissioner Scheps: talked about item VIII and she announced next month discussion of appeal by Marcus Marshall.

She explained as part of the appeal process that both sides will have a chance to explain their positions and the commissioners will have the option to either uphold, reverse, or make a new decision.

At 6:02 pm Commissioner Scheps invited the public and the commissioners to meet in room #1027 for a non-voting work session.

ITEM V

Discuss issues around the Human Rights Commission bylaws and protected classes.

Commissioner Scheps said that the commission bylaws' protected classes are not the same as the city's protected classes. According to the commission information which Commissioner Brenner is researching as per the state law the state does not recognize sexual orientation and gender identity, so that is why those items came out of our bylaws. More information will be discussed in the September meeting.

ITEM VI

Discuss homeless issues in Austin as per our annual work plan and working with the Women's Commission.

Commissioner Scheps said these are few beds for single women in our city and the Women's Commission is taking us up on doing a joint resolution. A meeting will follow soon. Council members Randi Shade and Laura Morrison are behind the scenes supporting this issue.

Commissioner Scheps made a separate note about the Salvation Army getting money from HUD- Housing Urban Development Department, because they have transgender clientele and they are notoriously bad with transgender people; with the money that Salvation Army is going to get from HUD, they have to assist their transgender clientele and there will be a difference.

ITEM VII

Discussion of the Community Youth Court.

Commissioner Cortez mentioned Judge Vasquez is ongoing attempts to increase the court tickets by two dollars from its current rate of five dollars. This increase is to raise funds to cover administrative cost.

ITEM VIII

Discussion of appeal by Marcus Marshal in regards to Charge Number: HRC-CF-10-004

Commissioner Scheps mentioned that Commissioner Cortez will receive information in how this appeal process is going to run. She explained that the Commissioners will be hearing testimony from each side; Commissioners will have the opportunity to cross examine and ask questions about the case. After the hearing the Commissioners will have the option to uphold, reject or modify the decision.

ADJOURN

Chair Lisa Scheps adjourned the meeting at 6:36 pm without objection.