



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
Monday November 22, 2010
REGULAR MEETING
City Hall Council Chambers & Room 1027
First Floor, 301 W. Second Street, Austin, TX 78701

MEETING MINUTES

Chair Judy Cortez called the Board Meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Judy Cortez - Chair
Lisa Scheps - Vice-Chair
Elizabeth Brenner
Tom Davis
DeWayne Lofton
Delia Meyer

Human Resources Staff Present:

Yamile M. Ortiz, EE/FHO Administrative Support
Janice Yarbrough, EE/FHO Acting Administrator

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of October 25, 2010 were approved; Commissioner Scheps motion, Commissioner Davis second on a 6-0 vote.

2. CITIZENS COMMUNICATIONS

None

3. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Steve Swanson and Judge Vasquez will be updating the Human Rights Commission on Our Community's Youth Court and other Community Issues.

Mr. Swanson and Mr. Martinez gave an update on the Community's Youth Court task-force meeting from the week of November 15th, 2010. The name of the task-force group is Justice Support Group. They brought a power point presentation on Community for Youth – Community - Based Leadership and Action. The message in the presentation explained new ways to relate to children and the community.

Mr. Swanson: The Justice Support group is in the process of creating another community event in March 2011; they are looking for a sponsor and location for that event and requested help from the commission. He explained that the meaning of this event is to send the message about being proactive about relationships to prevent problems and not to expose children to problems. He added information about the School Community Partnering Team which focuses on schools, students, teachers, and parents working together. The group's dream is that no school and/or no child should feel that they are alone in this city.

Mr. Martinez: The Justice Support group is enthusiastic in promoting the community's involvement with this program. The parents, students, teachers, business, and the justice system are interested in the Restorative Justice Process.

Judy Cortez: Judge Vasquez was not able to attend the meeting, however sent a message about the restore of justice models implemented in San Francisco and other big cities where the Restorative Justice process is working with the Justice Support group task-force. These cities are models in the task force groups which are working well with the process.

Mr. Swanson: ended his presentation encouraging the commissioners to keep talking about the Justice Support group and what they are doing. He also added that the International Association of Official Human Rights Agency's (IAOHRA) conference is coming to Austin in the fall of 2011 so, it will be a good opportunity to celebrate a city which is taking meaningful steps in making this Justice Support process work for the community youth court. He gave his phone number 512-422-5686 to the public and the commissioners if some one wants to be involved in this program.

b. Presentation by Megan Flowers and Karen Gross of the Anti Defamation League (ADL) speaking on their current Hate Crimes initiative, anti-bullying program, "No Place for Hate" as well as other programs of the ADL.

Ms. Flowers: stated she runs the education programs locally and in central Texas. The Austin Anti Defamation League has been running for seven years, and program has grown 40% for the last two years. Schools are promising to sign a Resolution of Respect; opposing hate and discrimination.

Ms. Flowers: emphasized that every student should feel safe and welcomed at their campuses. If student sees bullying or any hate act, students get involved and report incidents. She added that last year the ADL earned 93 "No Place for Hate/Community of Respect" designations and they expect to earn more this year.

Ms. Flowers: discussed the brochure provided to schools for students, parents, teachers, and administrators called "No Place for Hate." This resource guide provides training to every one engaged in how to deal with hate discrimination and encourages inclusiveness, emphasizes diversity and empowers ADL educational resources. Ms. Flowers closed her presentation by adding that the Austin Independent School District (AISD) works together with school police and city police in enforcement and prevention of hate and discrimination.

After Ms. Flower's presentation, Ms Karen Gross talked about an initiative that the Anti Defamation League has been working in conjunction with some City Council members on

how to deal with hate crimes and challenges the ADL group to come up with ideas on how to implement a proactive and responsible process.

Mr. Gross: mentioned that eight months ago the ADL started to talk about creating a proposal to prevent hate crimes. ADL came up with an idea that worked in the mid 90's and was creating task-forces with specific objectives like acting with dialogs, building relationships, and creating prevention policies. Part of the task force is training and getting up-to date information with federal and local statutes on how to investigate hate crimes and how that affects the community.

Ms. Gross: informed the commissioners and the public that after the ADL presented all the information to the City Council members, that on Thursday, November 18, 2010 a resolution was approved in support of the Comprehensive Hate Crimes Initiative. The first meeting will be in mid December 2010, and the National Director of the Civil Rights from Washington D.C. will come to help (as he did with other communities in the past) to develop task-force groups and assist the Austin office's needs.

Ms. Gross: concluded her presentation saying that the ADL is excited to implement this important Comprehensive Hate Crimes Initiative program and added that the more the community is educated in these issues, the more the municipalities and the city are safe.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

* Commissioner Meyer: talked about the 11 Annual March on Death Penalty on October 30, 2010; they have 100 attendees who participated with the Journey of Hope and participated in 50 speaking engagements across Texas in cities like Austin, Houston, Dallas, Del-Valle, and others.

* Human Rights Commissioners canceled the December 27, 2010 meeting. The next meeting will be on January 24, 2011.

5. OLD BUSINESS

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

Commissioner Cortez: the IAOHRA conference for 2011 is in the planning stage. Commissioner Scheps: spoke about the next step of the planning process to create an advisory council putting together a committee of only three commissioners. She mentioned that they will be talking with Carla Scales, City of Austin Human Resources Assistant Director and Robert Gomez, Texas Workers Commission Civil Rights Division Director to be part of the committee.

Commissioner Scheps: explained that they are looking to create a larger group with advisory committee members and small groups with sub-committee members who will work hands on. She mentioned that Commissioner Davis will soon be talking with Council Morrison who wants to be involved in the planning for the 2011 IAOHRA Conference on different Human Rights issues. There are considering "Living the Legacy" from the 1964 Civil Rights Act as the theme for the conference.

b. Discussion on the homeless issue in Austin as per our annual work plan and working with The Women's Commission.

Commissioner Scheps: mentioned that she met with Irit Umani, Director of Trinity Center last month to talk about a program call "Dress for Success" and a Shoe Drive event for spring of 2011. They are working with other groups like the Salvation Army and Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH).

c. Discussion on the next Annual Work Plan.

Commissioner Cortez mentioned the next Annual Work Plan meeting will be held on Saturday, January 15, 2011 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. She added: the commissioners will be informed of the facilitator's name, the location, and the agenda at the beginning of January 2011.

ADJOURN

Chair Judy Cortez adjourned the meeting at 6:58 pm without objection.