

**MINUTES  
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2009**

**Commissioners Present:** Bruce M. Abrams, Joyce Abrams, Mary Alcock, Mark K. Dillon, Susan Hawk, Gary Lynn, Les Williamson, Shonee Henry, Lorraine Johnson

**Excused:** Nicole Murray Ramirez, Carolina Alcoser Ramos, Gracia Molina de Pick, Theresa Oyos, Nghiep Le

**Absent:** None.

**Staff:** Ashley Walker, Executive Director (ED); Lori Thacker, Deputy City Attorney

Vice Chair Abrams called the 203rd meeting of the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission (HRC) to order at 5:38 p.m.

**I. PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

**Roll Call:** 9 Commissioners were present, 5 excused, and 0 absent.

**Minutes** – The February 18, 2009 minutes were approved.

**II. OLD BUSINESS**

**San Diego Food Bank:** Commissioner (Cmsr) Lynn inquired on the status of the information request made to the San Diego Food Bank. ED Walker sent an email and 2 phone calls but has not had time to follow up. They are trying to become part of the Food Stamp Distribution Program and may be too busy. She will follow up.

**Meeting with Councilman Faulkner:** Vice Chair Abrams reported that he and Cmsr. Alcock met with Councilmember Faulkner about getting City Council involved in the Commission and he seemed very enthusiastic, so we need to get back to him. Cmsr. Alcock stated that he would like to come to speak to the Commission. Vice Chair Abrams stated that Faulkner seemed sincere about dealing with homeless issues, and is interested in having a homeless shelter in his district.

**III. NEW BUSINESS**

Vice Chair Abrams stated that Chair Ramirez has requested to add to new business that we have a speaker on Don't Ask, Don't Tell, at the next meeting, who will do a 10 minute presentation to the Commission. Chair Ramirez will get more information/details. ED Walker stated that someone from Reality Changers will be presenting at next month's meeting. We can have both present.

**Harvey Milk Breakfast:** ED Walker stated that a committee of around 30 has been formed to organize the First Annual Harvey Milk Breakfast, which will be held on May 22, his birthday (Friday). It is the hope and expectation that it will be on par with the MLK and Cesar Chavez breakfasts. It will be held at the Holiday Inn at the Embarcadero. Commission will have a table at the event. 6 Commissioners said they can come.

Vice Chair Abrams stated that the breakfast will be at a union hotel and they will focus on labor issues and the history of Harvey Milk. At the same time there is a process going on to get the day declared as a non-fiscal holiday. Chair Ramirez flew up to Sacramento and was recognized with Sean Penn at a press conference, and our Commission was recognized as the first statewide to act on and ask that this be made a statewide non-fiscal holiday.

Ed Walker stated that by the time of the breakfast, the bill could be well on its way to getting passed. The holiday is non-fiscal, meaning it's not a state paid holiday, schools and offices aren't closed, but will be used to commemorate, celebrate, recognize and further the things Milk stood and died for.

**Cesar Chavez Parade and Breakfast:** ED Walker: 4 Commissioners stated they might be able to attend the parade. Someone needs to attend a mandatory pre-parade orientation this Saturday; if not, we cannot be in the parade.

Cmsr. Hawk volunteered to attend the orientation. ED Walker will email Cmsr. Hawk the information, and suggested group dress similarly, but will talk further about it later.

ED Walker: If any of the Commissioners want to go to the Breakfast on the 30th, let her know. She assumes Chair Ramirez has a table.

Commissioners Lynn, Hawk and Vice Chair Abrams stated they can attend.

#### IV. CHAIR'S REPORT – None.

#### V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**Office Move:** ED Walker stated that the office has moved to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor and she is still attempting to move many records and supplies. They used to have 4 offices and now have 1 so she is not sure how all will fit. Disability Services, which has 6 employees, has been very gracious and has offered to help with all the boxes. She has been having difficulty meeting with her new boss. Her boss has been very busy with labor relations so it has been hard getting a response. But, they have been very pleased with what we have been doing. Things have been hectic, the phones are constantly ringing, people are waiting, and things have been hard without Connie to screen through the calls and visitors.

Cmsr. J. Abrams inquired whether we sent a letter expressing our disappointment with how the Department has been downsized. She mentioned it to Councilmember Sherri Lighter, and Lighter said how horrible it is that the Commission only has an ED. It is possible we may get a councilmember go to bat for us.

ED Walker stated she doesn't know if we could get that position back. But, she would like to get together with Human Resources with a strategic plan. If they can all get together there may be a workable solution. The problem is, they are too busy in labor negotiations right now, and have cancelled all but 1 meeting with us. There has been no strategy meeting where they all sit together, discuss the strategy, how it all fits together, what mission statement is, etc. There might be resources, but we haven't had time to figure it out. ED Walker would love to help figure it out, but there is no one to talk to about it now. Human Resources has 6 in Labor Relations, 1 in Diversity, 3 in Training, 6 in Disability Services, and her. In all, there are 17. Labor Relations has a secretary but she is in Labor Relations, does not assist HRC. Disability Services has an intern, 2 in front answering phones, budget analyst, estimator, and they handle some of ED Walker's work. They will all get together and present to Labor Relations what they come up with. She wants to get things set before leaving so as to not leave things in flux.

## VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### A. Hate and Violence Prevention

- **United for a Hate Free San Diego:** ED Walker: ED Walker was there last week for the resolution against hate motivated behavior for the San Diego City Council in the morning, also making last Monday United Against Hate Day in San Diego. San Diegans United Against Hate, (SDUAH) presented to El Cajon in the afternoon, showed what San Diego had done. They seemed interested in something similar. Next month, will be going to Del Mar, Encinitas, Carlsbad, La Mesa, and Lemon Grove. SDUAH will also be going to LA for International Interfaith Conference, where they were asked to present. SDUAH will also be speaking to SANDAG Public Safety Committee on Friday. It's going really well. The only one not going as well as they wished is Santee. Jack is the representative at SANDAG, he is a city council person, and he was offended because we made a reference in our template to Santee (Carlos Cortez, the marine who was beaten in Santee and is now a paraplegic, and also made reference to an incident in Vista and Oceanside). Jack was offended because he thought it would make people not want to move to Santee and would cause a decrease in property values. Jack talked to Randy Voepel (Mayor). We need to respond to a letter from Jack and ED Walker wanted to talk to Randy because she knows Randy, but the committee said no. They wanted to talk to Randy as a committee. ED Walker will call Randy and make appointment. We also got an editorial in last month's paper and are now responding to public comments. Things are moving well, and to have San Diego act so quickly is a wonderful thing, which was due to Ben Hueso and Tony Young.

Cmsr. Williamson – John Minto is a City Councilmember for Santee and he is also a police officer, and gets involved with these issues and would be a good resource.

ED Walker – we have accomplished much of what we want – to get all 16 jurisdictions in the same place to talk about the issue - and now we are willing to go

to each jurisdiction and help frame a declaration, moratorium, proclamation, to make it comfortable for them.

- **Safe Passage:** Cmsr. Williamson: They are not meeting monthly anymore since the AG is not involved. Will meet quarterly. They met 3 weeks ago. There has been more parent and community involvement. There has been an increase in safety, but there are still a few hot spots that the police need to stay on top of. The School Police also gets involved, but their role has been limited. They can only get involved before the kids go home, only to and from school, but once they get home, even for a minute, cannot get involved. In general, it is going well and violence has decreased.

## **B. Immigration**

**Immigration Rights Consortium** – ED Walker: Commission agreed when we joined IRC that we would take on a major part of the education portion. We can't do the training, but put together one of the best immigration rights toolkits. They developed a manual, "Know Your Rights," with 11 sections, parts are in 7 languages, with DVDs door hangers, everything you need to train. There is a last piece that needs work – the legal piece – where there have been differing/wrong opinions. 3 immigration rights attorneys will go through the sections and talk about the legal issues, will videotape and make DVDs as part of the kits. It was distributed last Monday. Paid members of the Consortium get copies; Cmsr. Dillon will get a copy.

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Johnson that the Commission watch the video and get a presentation on the toolkit/immigration issues. Commissioner Williamson seconded the motion. All were in approval.*

ED Walker will also send a table of contents. If the Commissioners know someone who does training immigration issues, let her know and she can provide a toolkit.

## **C. Educational Disparities**

Cmsr. J. Abrams reported that she went to Hoover to visit the 6 students who participated in the MLK breakfast. She handed 3 of them certificates, the other 3 were absent. The students were thrilled, said they will take them home and frame them, and use in their college applications.

J. Abrams visited SD City Schools, and met with Arun Ramanathan, Chief of Student Services. They talked about the Commission's mission and the issues we handle and how they relate to the schools. SDUSD would be interested in doing a presentation to the Commission and facilitate a discussion on human relations issues (including hate crimes) in SD schools. A time was set for June.

ED Walker reviewed the upcoming guest speakers – April (Reality Changers & Don't Ask, Don't Tell); May (Councilmember Faulkner); June (SD Unified).

Cmsr. J. Abrams followed up with Chris Yanov of Reality Changers on the Gang Summit. He stated that the Gang Commission met and many felt the Summit was not productive, and they will not have one again for a while. ED Walker will send something to Mr. Yanov about coming to speak to the Commission around 6:00.

Cmsr. J. Abrams reported that there is a new Executive Director of Curriculum, Kurt Anthony. He met with her in a small group. They suggested forming a committee of lay persons and representatives from SD schools, which would meet on a regular basis, around 4 times a year, to give input into curriculum. He was receptive to the idea. The Assistant Superintendent, to whom he reports, thought it was a good idea, asked for a proposal, and he stated he would present it to the Board.

Vice Chair B. Abrams suggested that the Commissioners fill out their activity reports so we have a record of our activities to substantiate what we do. ED Walker will start attaching reports to agenda and minutes.

#### **D. Criminal Justice System Disparities Committee**

ED Walker reminded the Commission on the issue we discussed previously, about stopping the death penalty with a cost argument. There is a bill currently on Gov. Bill Richardson's desk in New Mexico, and will be the first test of life without the possibility of parole based on cost. Death penalty Coalition of San Diego has developed a website, called [www.taxed2death.org](http://www.taxed2death.org). ED Walker will send an email – with info on how you can contact Bill Richardson's office to support the bill.

#### **V. COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

Vice Chair Abrams asked if anyone had questions for the Deputy City Attorney. Inquiries were made about her the transition of leadership in the City Attorney's office. DCA Thacker stated that she practices Employment and Labor law for the City Attorney's Office. She works very closely with ED Walker's new Department, Human Resources, and understands how busy they are, as they are in the midst of labor negotiations. She stated that everything has been going well with the new administration and that work load has increased (very busy, but a good kind of busy) and that the environment is calm.

Cmsr. Johnson reported that in January, she attended the Day of Peace and was one of the presenters. She also worked on committee all last year. She suggested a short presentation on international peace movement to the Commission.

Cmsr. Henry reported that as a representative of Asian Real Estate Association she attended a meeting with legislators and councilmembers. She was approached by one of secretaries of a councilmember, saying she wanted to open a dialogue between Tijuana council and HRC and wanted to invite us to visit Mexico for a tour. She shared the information with Chair Ramirez. Cmsr. Henry thinks it might be a good idea to invite them to present. They also want to enter dialogue with San Diego City Councilmembers, which we may be able to assist in.

Cmsr. Hawk will talk with ED Walker about fitting in a presentation on the Native American community.

Cmsr. Alcock reported it was a delight meeting with Councilmember Faulkner and his Chief of Staff. He seems committed to understanding the plight of the Commission. They also met with Todd Gloria.

Cmsr. Dillon reported that several things are happening this month on cyberbullying - on the 30<sup>th</sup> will have the Cyberbullying conference, got 140 signed up although planned for 50. The conference will be to sensitize administrators on cyberbullying. Want to make people aware of causes of cyberbullying, how to recognize it, and how to deal with it. If it is successful, they will want to expand it and replicate it so can be used in other areas. Next week, Cmsr. Dillon will meet with Brian Bilbray. He plans to talk to him about the lack of support for gender discrimination and hate crime legislation.

Cmsr. Abrams commented on Obama's talk – there was a man who lost his job after 13 years of work, but can't find job now, and feels it's because he is a convicted felon. Obama's administration has already begun work helping felons who have proven themselves. This may be ripe time to reconsider the eliminate the box issue. Commissioner Abrams also visited Sherri Lighter and met with her and staff. She told her our issues, and received a follow up email and phone call. She may be able to help our Commission.

**VI. MEETING ADJOURNED:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

**Prepared by Lori Thacker, Deputy City Attorney**  
**Approved by Ashley Walker, Executive Director**