

**MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2009**

Commissioners Present: Bruce M. Abrams, Joyce Abrams, Gracia Molina de Pick, Mark K. Dillon, Shonee Henry, Nghiep Le, Gary Lynn, Teresa Oyos, Carolina Alcoser Ramos, Les Williamson, Susan Hawk

Excused: Mary Alcock, Nicole Murray Ramirez

Absent: None

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

Vice Chair Abrams called the 206th meeting of the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission (HRC) to order at 5:40 p.m.

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION: Guests Judy von Kalinowski and Woo-Jin Shim from the City's Human Resources Department introduced themselves.

Roll Call: 11 Commissioners were present, 2 excused, and 0 absent.

Minutes – The May 20, 2009 minutes were approved, with the following clerical revisions noted by Commissioner (Cmsr.) Lynn: (1) the word “upcoming” was deleted from page 2, paragraph VI(A) line 6, word #4; (2) the word “to” was deleted and replaced with “the” on page 4, paragraph VI(C), last paragraph, line 3, word #14; and (3) the word “and” was added between “rallies” and “helped” on page 4, paragraph VI(C), last paragraph, lines 4-5.

II. OLD BUSINESS

Harvey Milk Breakfast/Nonfiscal Holiday: Cmsr. Oyos reported that the Harvey Milk Breakfast turned out to be a fabulous event. There were almost 1000 people there. Assembly member John Perez was the keynote speaker, and his presentation was very well done and inspiring. Cmsr. B. Abrams reported that it was a moving and diverse event. Chair Ramirez spoke, and the Mayor and his daughter Lisa hosted the event. Perez spoke about the history of discrimination in San Diego, hate crimes and the community. The event was wonderfully done. The breakfast was co-sponsored by the HRC and the LGBT center. Next year it will probably be held at the Hilton. ED Walker noted that the HRC's logo was prominent on the event materials.

Executive Director Interviews and Retirement Luncheon: Cmsr. B. Abrams announced that ED Walker's retirement luncheon will be held tomorrow at 11:30, at Tom Ham's Lighthouse, to honor ED Walker's devotion and contributions to our organization. If anyone would like to attend and reserve a seat, checks/money should be sent to Judy von Kalinowski, at the Human Resources Department. ED Walker was presented with a gift from the Commissioners.

Cmsr. B. Abrams reported that interviews are being conducted to fill the Executive Director position. Resumes are being reviewed by Judy von Kalinowski and ED Walker. They have received approximately 25-30 resumes, which was narrowed down to approximately 6

interviews. They are still interviewing so if any of the Commissioners know someone who is interested, have them submit their resumes to Personnel as soon as possible.

III. NEW BUSINESS

Letter to Napolitano re: Friendship Garden Fence: ED Walker distributed a letter to the Commissioners addressed to Secretary Napolitano (Department of Homeland Security) requesting immediate action to restore routine public access to Friendship Park. A third page listing the endorsements was added to the draft previously sent to the Commissioners. Cmsr. Lynn asked for clarification on what careful allocation of staff means. ED Walker explained that border patrol and custom agents are often not kind and gathered together, so there needs to be a better allocation so it is not so overwhelming to others who visit the park. The letter was prepared by a committee and will be sent by Friday. If the Commission endorses it, the Commission will be added to the growing list of endorsers.

A motion was made by Cmsr. Williamson, seconded by Cmsr. de Pick, to endorse the letter to Secretary Napolitano, calling for the restoration of public access to Friendship Park. All were in approval.

IV. PRESENTATION: SDUSD Violence Prevention/Human Relations Strategies

Arun Ramanathan, Chief Student Services Officer, and Agin Shaheed, Program Manager for Race/Human Relations & Advocacy, did a presentation to the Commission on SDUSD's programs and partnerships regarding anti-bullying, sexual harassment and hate crime issues in the schools. Mr. Ramanathan's responsibilities include issues concerning special education, counseling, mental health, truancy, expulsion and after school programs. Mr. Shaheed's office provides meaningful integration, mediation, conflict resolution, counseling, advocacy, and sexual harassment training. Mr. Shaheed explained SDUSD's policies and procedures on dealing with sexual harassment, and discussed some of SDUSD's programs, such as Don't Laugh at Me, an anti-bullying program, Peer Mediation Training, Our Village, Safe School Ambassadors, Hombre Noble, and partnerships with organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League. They also work with the Gang Commission. Hate crimes automatically go to the school police. Mr. Ramanathan explained that the primary focus of their counselors is anti-bullying. The focus is on prevention and support. Counselor job descriptions have been revised to now focus on socio-emotional issues rather than school management. They are also pushing for more one-on-one student contact to prevent violence and bullying, to provide students with a place where they feel they have a trusted adult to talk about issues. They had hoped to have at least a half time counselor at every site, but with budget cuts, counselors were cut, which affected 58 sites. They are hoping to be able to restore the counselors in the future. The district also has a mental health resource center which provides direct mental health services to students, and the Early Mental Health Initiative, which looks at the very young and provides play therapy. The district is looking for more partnerships. They have a partnership with the Anti-Defamation League, and are particularly looking into the issue of cyber-bullying.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT – None

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – ED Walker reminded the Commissioners to fill out their monthly activity reports.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Hate and Violence Prevention –

United for a Hate Free San Diego - Cmsr. B. Abrams reported he has been sending emails directly to the Commissioners on hate and violence issues. Cmsr. Lynn reported that a number of organizations have come together, and they are planning a public forum to discuss hate crimes and hate incidents. The forum was originally planned for July but will probably be scheduled for September. A rally is also being planned in east county where there is a preponderance of hate organizations. Cmsr. Lynn will provide more information when it becomes available.

ED Walker distributed the minutes from last week's United for Hate Free San Diego meeting. ED Walker remarked at the wonderful minute-taking skills of their minute-taker and provided the minutes to the Commissioners so they can see what is going on with the group and receive further information on hate crimes. Cmsr. Lynn reported that Lori Saldana was at the meeting and gave a report on what was going on statewide as well as locally. He also went to the Reality Changers event along with Cmsr. Williamson, and Lori Saldana was there as well.

Safe Passage – Cmsr. Williamson reported that after the first meeting in September there will be a parents' meeting. He will attend and will let them know about the Commission and hand out materials. Cmsr. Williamson also reported that there is a group of police officers that are putting on a mentoring program starting in September. He will be attending the meetings and will keep the Commission updated on its progress.

Cmsr. Williamson also reported that he saw Keith Turnham today, who is amazing and doing very well.

Cmsr. Lynn referred to the Hate Free San Diego minutes, which talked about the hate crime against Rhythm Turner. The assailant will be sentenced next month and the community is being asked to support her. Cmsr. Lynn will provide the court date when known, and support for Rhythm Turner would be much appreciated.

B. Immigration –

Immigration Rights Consortium – Cmsr. Dillon reported that they are now working on a train the trainer program, and a communication program that will come out of the IRC at the end of the summer which will focus on changing attitudes about immigration. There was also a national group on immigrant rights that met in DC, and they are starting to lobby nationally.

Cmsr. B. Abrams announced that Cmsr. Alcock suggested that the Commission's agenda be posted on the website.

C. Educational Disparities –

Education Consortium – ED Walker reported that SDUSD passed a resolution to begin the process of making A-G the default curriculum for the district. It was a watered down version but at least the process has been started. They have a grant and money to get a company to do an analysis of what’s going on and inform them what they need to do in terms of training, resources, and teachers.

ED Walker reported that yesterday she went to Grossmont Unified High School District to talk to Superintendent Collins about A-G. It was a wonderful meeting. They will not get a proclamation, but learned that they have moved further than other districts such as SDUSD, Carlsbad and Sweetwater in making A-G the default curriculum. Superintendent Collins gave them homework and books to read for their next meeting.

D. Criminal Justice System Disparities Committee – None

E. Legislative Update

Cmsr. de Pick reported that the moratorium on the death penalty is being lifted. Legislation is pending that will allow the continuation of the executions. Minorities, particularly Latinos and blacks, have a disproportionate representation on death row. With advances in forensic evidence, it has been discovered that many have been put on death row when they shouldn’t have and the wrong person was killed. The Commission should try to influence legislation against lifting the moratorium on the death penalty.

VIII. COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Cmsr. B. Abrams reported that interviews for the Executive Director position will probably be concluded next week. ED Walker stated she will continue as a provisional employee.

Cmsr. Oyos provided and distributed information about the Happy Birthday Frida celebration.

IX. MEETING ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

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