

**MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2009**

Commissioners Present: Joyce Abrams, Teresa Oyos, Tiffany Harrison, Mitz Lee, Roberto Shim, Gracia Molina de Pick, Bruce Abrams, Mark Dillon, Shonee Henry, Gary Lynn, Nicole Murray Ramirez

Excused: Mary Alcock, Carolina Alcoser Ramos

Absent: Susan Hawk

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

Guests: Keith Turnham, Sally Smith

Chair Ramirez called the 209th meeting of the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission (HRC) to order at 5:30 p.m.

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Roll Call: 11 Commissioners were present, 2 excused, and 1 absent.

Public Comment: Sally Smith commented that she previously called attention to and raised concerns about the foreign exchange student and pedicab driver situation at the Embarcadero. This is a concern which is not getting better, as illustrated in the Reader last week. She filed a complaint as an individual with the Internal Revenue, because there have been violations of contractor law. Chair Ramirez requested that Ms. Smith provide information to ED Scarborough so the Commission can get more information and take it under advisement.

Minutes – The August 19, 2009 minutes were approved.

II. NEW BUSINESS

- **Welcome New Commissioners:** The new Commissioners, Roberto Shim, Tiffany Harrison, and Mitz Lee, introduced themselves. Commissioner Shim is a Pastor at Harbor Presbyterian Church and was nominated by Donna Frye. Commissioner Harrison works with the Urban League, is a student at SDSU, and was nominated by Tony Young. Mitz Lee is a former SDUSD board member. She lives in Mira Mesa and was nominated by Carl DeMaio.

Chair Ramirez stated that he is looking forward to working with the new Commissioners, and feels that this is an exciting change; however, he requested that the Commissioners be sensitive to the fact that there has been a decrease in representation in certain groups, such as African-Americans, on the Commission. Chair Ramirez stated that he receives calls from the Mayor and Council members asking for his recommendations for appointment and re-appointment of Commissioners. Chair Ramirez stated that he always makes it clear that his recommendations are his personal opinions, and that he is not making recommendations on behalf of the Commission.

- **Harvey Milk Stamp** – Chair Ramirez reported that in Washington D.C., there is a move to get a Harvey Milk stamp to honor him. The Commission was the first municipal body on record to endorse Harvey Milk Day. It has since been endorsed across the state and legislation is now pending on the Governor’s desk. Harvey Milk was presented with the Medal of Freedom by the President, which was accepted by his nephew, Stewart Milk. There is a national Citizen Stamp Advisory Committee which recommends new stamps to the Postmaster.

A motion was made by Commissioner B. Abrams, seconded by Commissioner Dillon, to draft a letter to the Postmaster and the stamp advisory committee, urging them to give serious consideration to a Harvey Milk stamp. All were in approval.

III. OLD BUSINESS

Keith Turnham Humanitarian Award – Chair Ramirez reported that the Keith Turnham Humanitarian Award will be presented this year, as well as the Ashley Walker Social Justice Award. Commissioners Henry and Lynn asked the MLK Breakfast committee if it could be presented annually at the MLK Breakfast, which was unanimously and excitingly approved.

- IV. CHAIR’S REPORT** – Chair Ramirez reported that Sheriff Gore will be coming to speak to the Commission in November.

Chair Ramirez had dinner with Bonnie Dumanis regarding the Busby incident and the closing of 14 medical marijuana dispensary stores. The San Diego City Council approved a task force to look into the issue. The Commission has supported compassionate use of marijuana, and he is glad the City Council voted to have a task force to look into the situation to make sure those who truly need medical marijuana are not lost in the situation. Dumanis wanted to relay that the prosecution has nothing to do with compassionate use of marijuana, but those dispensaries’ violations of the law.

V. **PRESENTATION – San Diego County Board of Supervisor Term Limit Initiative, by Jacob Regalado, SEIU Local 221.** Mr. Regalado presented on why the Commission should support San Diego County Board of Supervisor (BOS) term limits, and gave background information on the initiative and SEIU Local 221. Mr. Regalado stated that the current BOS has misrepresented the people in the County, they do not use taxpayer money wisely, and do not represent the underrepresented adequately. The County has one of the lowest food stamp utilization rates, was sued for not providing indigent care, and residents are not getting efficient service. Social services have been the main source of cuts. The BOS sued to not provide mental health services to at-risk individuals. They are not concerned with providing social service needs, but only to become fiscally sound. Without term limits, the BOS have become very comfortable. There is zero reason to fear being taken out. Additionally, because of contribution limits, it is hard for a challenger to raise money to challenge the current board. Although most of the time he would be against term limits, here, we need a change. Redistricting would probably not work because the districts would not be much different, and it would still be controlled by the BOS, who choose committee members and provide approval. Mr. Regalado requested from the Commission a written endorsement or help in collecting signatures.

Commissioner Dillon - Commissioner Dillon presented on why the Commission should not support BOS term limits. Commissioner Dillon stated that although he is upset with BOS decisions, he does not agree that term limits is the right tool to solve the problem. Term limits have been shown to have a negative impact. Commissioner Dillon provided a brief history of term limits, the theory behind it, and discussed its negative impacts. A study was done in which it was found that term limits in fact decreased the representation of women in state houses. If term limits are imposed, you may get rid of the right people today, but the next time, it may be used against the right people. There is no evidence that term limits increase the quality of the individuals in office, or that it results in the kind of structural change that is sought. Additionally, lame ducks actually become more arrogant and self serving knowing they do not have anyone to answer to if their time is up. Commissioner Dillon agreed that the BOS should be replaced, but does not agree term limits is the right way to do it.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

ED Scarborough provided the January – June 2009 Crime Report for the City of San Diego. The Mayor has been touting a decrease in violent crimes; however, hate crimes went up. There were 28 hate crime cases this year, compared to 23 in the same time period last year. It is a disappointing trend. Hate crimes were not separately listed on the Crime Report. It is unknown whether hate crimes were already included in the statistics. Vice Chair Abrams stated that if a crime is a hate crime, the punishment is accelerated; therefore it is important that it be

identified and noted by the City. ED Scarborough will look into how the statistics were compiled in relation to hate crimes.

ED Scarborough reported that the 3 new Commissioners met with her and Vice Chair Abrams for an orientation to discuss their roles and responsibilities. All were briefed and were excited about joining the Commission.

ED Scarborough reported that there is an event (Center on Policy Initiatives 2009 Gala) next month which coincides with the Commission's next meeting. ED Scarborough asked who will attend to assess whether we need to move the meeting or venue. Vice Chair Abrams and Commissioner de Pick stated they will attend. Vice Chair Abrams stated that Chair Ramirez will probably attend as well.

ED Scarborough reminded the Commissioners to fill out their monthly reports. She requested that they send her the forms online, at the meeting, or to provide flyers of the events attended.

Vice Chair Abrams requested that Commissioners try to arrive at 5:00 to the meetings to socialize and so we can start on time. If you will not be attending, email him, as he needs to order the food and we are on a budget and we want to save money where possible.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Hate and Violence Prevention** – Vice Chair Abrams reported that you should now all have been added to the Hate Free email list.

Commissioner Lynn reported that the Hate Free Summit will be at the Ronald Reagan Center in El Cajon on October 1, 2009, from 5:30 – 7:00. There will be 5 panelists, including Bonnie Dumanis, a representative from the Sheriff's Department, and a representative from the education field, among others. They expect around 300 to attend. Snacks will be catered. It is important to RSVP. Commissioners were provided a pdf with information to the Commissioners. Commissioner J. Abrams requested that it be sent to her again.

Vice Chair Abrams invited the new Commissioners to participate on the Hate and Violence, Immigration, and Educational Disparities Committees, which are the Commission's priorities.

- B. Immigration** – Commissioner Dillon reported that he attended the IRC meeting on Monday with EDs Scarborough and Walker. Because of funding for a communications director, they can start communicating to a broader audience, such as North County. Also, the train the trainer

process is going on now. ED Walker stated that the Commission took on the education component and did a spectacular job on the toolkit. It will be used across the state and nation, and all the needed information is in one place. ED Walker thanked the Commission for their good work on this.

Vice Chair Abrams stated that if any of the Commissioners know of any speakers through the consortiums they attend, to ask if they can come to speak to the Commission, to refresh our knowledge on issues and explore ways the Commission can help.

- C. **Educational Disparities** – Commissioner J. Abrams reported that the Superintendent resigned, as did his right-hand man. There has been a lot of upheaval and no one knows who will take over. The Acting Superintendent is the same as the last one. She has not had any contact and could try to get in contact with Arun if he is still there.

ED Walker stated that a commissioner is needed for the Central Committee for the Education Consortium. Vice Chair Abrams asked that the Commissioners receive for more information so they can determine if they can/want to participate.

Commissioner Lee stated that she feels that complacency is a big problem in San Diego schools. There is only 50% reading and 46% math proficiency. The community needs to determine what it wants, and she would like to see the Commission take the initiative. Parents need to organize themselves and ask what they expect from our schools. She is working on doing this now, and hopes that the Commission will support these efforts. Commissioner de Pick recommended that the Commissioners read the San Diego Union-Tribune article. The front page article is an eye-opener. There is 40-55% or more minorities in most schools. Many do not speak up, such as Latinos, because teachers are held in high regard and are not questioned. Additionally, long term teachers want to retire because the way the system is set up, they get a good retirement. The system is not sustainable. We need to be aware of what is going on in the schools and make the public more aware.

Vice Chair Abrams suggested that the 3 Commissioners with strong education backgrounds might want to be on the Education Consortium.

- D. **Criminal Justice System Disparities Committee** – ED Scarborough attended the Death Penalties Coalition. The ACLU will be bringing a statewide expert for a meet and greet if you are interested.

Vice Chair Abrams suggested more participation in this arena, or a redesignation of topics at our next retreat.

E. Legislative Update – None.

XIII. COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Lynn stated that they need to work on a process for soliciting nominations for the Keith Turnham Award, as well as the format. Last year was the first year they had the award and it was not a formalized process. As previously discussed, the criteria will include being veteran or service-related because of Keith's military background and being a POW. They need to have some kind of structure for processing the award. It is a high priority and should be done by the end of the year. The same goes for the Ashley Walker Social Justice Award. Vice Chair Abrams suggested that ED Walker can help create the criteria for her award, and suggested that the Mayor and City Council be involved, so their offices could be incorporated into what we do. Commissioner Dillon suggested a short biography of Keith and Ashley as well. Commissioner Lynn will work with those who expressed interest in helping with the awards processes to develop the criteria, format, and structure.

IX. MEETING ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 7:25.

Prepared by Lori Thacker, Deputy City Attorney

Approved by Danell Scarborough, Executive Director