

Kern County Human Relations Commission
Kern County Administrative Complex – Third Floor Multi Purpose Room
1115 Truxtun Avenue, Bakersfield
Tuesday, February 9, 2016 at 5:30 PM
Monthly Meeting Minutes

Present: Brady Bernhart (Ber), Louis Medina (Med), David Vivas (Viv), Jewelle Scales (Sca), Marcus Mitchell (Mit), Michael Caves (Cav)

Absent: Joseph Snyder

Others Present: Michael Goulart (Mg) Principal Human Resources Analyst, Nancy Renfro, Kathleen Faulkner, Marilyn Droppers, Jim Faulkner, Catherine Wagner, Camila Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Marquez Equalibria

Agenda Items: Called To Order at 5:30 Pm

1. Flag Salute: Commissioner Mitchell.

2. Public Presentations:

a) Marilyn Droppers, Director of Faith In Action, made a presentation to the Commission regarding improving relations between her organization and the Bakersfield Police Department. Ms. Dropper's statement is attached.

b) Nancy Renfro, Faith In Action, provided additional information about local crime statistics, her organization, and the goals of Faith In Action to create a dialogue with local law enforcement.

c) Kathleen Faulkner, local attorney, spoke about her experience in handling local Civil Rights abuse cases. She also spoke about the need to create more accountability of law enforcement.

d) Catherine Wagner, Attorney, American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, told the Commission that she was here to get an understanding of what has been happening with the Bakersfield Police Department and Kern County Sheriff's Office.

e) Marquez Equalibria, Department of Justice, told the Commission that his agency offers an impartial, free resource to the Commission, community groups and law enforcement.

Sca) Commissioner acknowledged the attendance of Dolores Huerta.

Cav) Commissioner asked members of Faith In Action about the Dialogue with Chief Williamson of the BPD.

Ber) Commissioner told the attendees that he is not familiar with the community's stance on community policing but previously lived in a community where law enforcement attended all of the community and neighborhood meetings they were invited to.

Med) Commissioner told the attendees he went on a ride-a-long with the BPD and saw a lot of action. During the shift the officer responded to a burglary, a welfare check and a stabbing. It was eye-opening and a good experience as a citizen, to see officers work their shift. The experience provided an opportunity for one-on-one communication and change at a micro level.

e) James Faulkner, local attorney, told the Commission that he tried the 1st police shooting case that went to a verdict here in town. He also said that Chief Williamson has done a good job but the community has continued to ask for neutral review panels for officer involved shootings. He said he believes that more openness may mean fewer officer involved shootings.

Mit) Commissioner said he recognizes the work that Faith In Action does and understands the difficulties that are sometimes faced in trying to create a dialogue. He said any police form is a microcosm of the community.

Viv) Commissioner thanked Faith In Action for their work. He also said that he has worked with the Delano Police Department and that he thinks it is right to expect accountability and transparency from law enforcement.

Cav) Commissioner said that if law enforcement's hesitancy to continue a dialogue with Faith In Action is based on misperceptions of the group that the HRC may be able to help.

Sca) Commissioner said that she is aware of some issues that can be a barrier to communication, such as open investigations. She also said that she was disappointed with community zone meetings that took place because she felt that the people who needed to be there to hear the information did not attend. Commissioner Scales said that she believes that a process for communication between the community and law enforcement needs to be addressed but what the community needs the most is to have an item that they can look at as a “win” in relation to communication and transparency with law enforcement.

Commissioner Mitchell made a MOTION: to explore a partnership with community groups regarding issues of community policing. 2nd: Commissioner Caves VOTE: All Ayes

Issue was referred to HRC/Community/Sheriff’s Department Collaborative Ad-Hoc Committee.

3. Approval of Minutes:

Tuesday December 8, 2015. **MOTION to approve with corrections: Medina 2nd: Mitchell**

Vote: 5 Ayes, 1 abstain (Caves)

4. New Business:

a) **Discussion of “piggybacking”, “Community Voices”, workshops**

Commissioner Caves made MOTION: to table Agenda Items 4, 5, and 6 to the March 8, 2016 regular meeting. 2nd: Mitchell, Vote: All Ayes

b) Tabled to 3/8/16

5. Old Business:

a) **Planning Matrix**

Tabled to 3/8/16

6. Committee Reports:

Tabled to 3/8/16

7. Staff Report: None

8. **Commission Member Presentations or Announcements:**

(Med) Commissioner Medina reported that he went to an historical event. The group Marriage Equality USA celebrated the fact that they are disbanding or actually morphing into the National Equality Action Team as a result of marriage equality becoming the legal standard. Commissioner Medina said that he feels that he is living through history.

Commissioner also said that February 11, 2016 is 211 awareness day in Kern County to celebrate the 20th anniversary of 211 which started as the Kern Helpline. He reported the Helpline received an average of 400 calls per month at inception and now receives 5000 calls per month. Tours of the call center will be available on Thursday 2/11/16 at Community Action Partnership of Kern (CAPK).

(Mit) Commissioner reported that the VITA program offering tax preparation assistance to those making less than \$54 thousand dollars per year is available at the Department of Child Support Services.

9. **Adjournment: Motion: Scales 2nd: Caves Vote: all ayes 6:51 p.m.**