

KERN COUNTY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Kern County Administrative Complex – Fifth Floor, Point Conference Room
1115 Truxtun Avenue, Bakersfield
Tuesday, March 11, 2014 at 5:30 PM
Monthly Meeting Minutes

Present: Marissa Banks (mb), , Fiona Lytle (fl), Jewelle Scales (js), David Vivas (dv), Manuel Cantu (mc),
Walter Williams (ww)

Absent: Marcus Mitchell

Others Present: Michael Goulart (mg) Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, Marquez Equalibria,
Montika Caddell

Agenda Items: called to order at 5:30 PM

1. Flag salute: Commissioner Scales

2. Public Presentation: None

3. Approval of minutes: January 14, 2014, monthly meeting

Motion: approve with corrections (fl) 2nd: (dv) vote: All ayes

4. NEW BUSINESS: None

5. OLD BUSINESS:

a) Discussion of Annual Essay Contest cancellation.

(fl) Unfortunately we had to cancel the essay and art contest due to lack of participation from the schools. Regardless, I don't think it's all negative I think it's an opportunity to reconnect with the middle schools and continue to promote the commission. If we want to change the contest this gives an opportunity to get in touch with the right people and maybe create an advisory team. We may consider having a permanent representative from the schools on our advisory board.

(js) I was wondering if we could think about connecting the actual event to someone who is an advocate for the human relations commission, for instance “the Karen Goh essay contest” I think having a name attached main draw attention to the contest.

(fl) I think that we should collaborate with an existing organization or community program; some type of event that we can host or sponsor.

(mc) When I was running the migrant program at McFarland Unified they had the same contest tied to the Annual State meeting. The winners were announced at the meeting and it was tied into a big event that happens within that organization.

(fl) Is that something that we would discuss during our vision meeting?

Comment from Marquez Equalibria: One of the things I was mentioning before was a suggestion of inviting someone from the school district and having permanent representation at your Human Relations Commission meetings so when you have these types of discussions you already have someone with the foot in the door to help you with that

Another thing that I see organizations like yours doing is creating an incentive for students that helps them. Another thing to think about is that information has gone digital these days. Think about the power the kids have in their pocket with their phones. Consider this, instead of an essay what about a video that promotes the message of positive human relations?

(js) I think also having some marketing from HRC from a permanent representative and actually getting into the schools. Our time is so limited but actually getting into the schools and having a conversation with the principal lets them know that we are a living body.

(mg) One of the things that I found interesting this time is that efforts that have worked in the past did not work this time. My daughters have attended St. Francis and because I already have a relationship with the school I have made direct contacts with St. Francis school and all of the

private schools in the area. I made the same contacts this year and we failed to receive any entries from any of the schools. In the past many of the private schools participated.

(mb) We need to look at that in our vision planning.

(mc) Kern COG does a contest every year. We could contact them and ask what has worked for them. Aaron Hakimi is the contact.

Comment from Marquez Equalibria: How about if you partner with the Chamber of Commerce and see if they can donate some type of mini cameras for students to use that allows them to record and edit their video.

(js) Maybe we need to address this vision planning but we can pick up where we left off in the planning efforts. We can start now to build the momentum that we want.

(fl) I know Marcus is not here to discuss the vision planning but we need to discuss a time when we can get together.

(dv) I have a question, is this contest for Bakersfield only or is it open to everyone?

(fl) The contest is for all middle school students in Kern County.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Judicial and Legislative Review: (JS) The transgender facility issue is coming back. We may anticipate people coming to talk to us about it.

(mb) Can you elaborate on the issue?

(js) The issue deals with schools being required to allow students to use restroom facilities based on their gender identity and not their sex.

(ww) Does identity mean what you want to be or what you are based on how you were born?

(js) Your gender identity is based on the sex you identify with, not necessarily how you were born.

(ww) My problem with that is if I am a parent, just because you identify with something but you don't have the equipment to use that bathroom, what happens when a kid gets raped? People have the right to do whatever they want but they should build an extra bathroom for that. I think that would keep everybody safe. With that kind of extra emotional factor how do you guarantee everyone's safety?

(mb) Commissioner Scales you feel that we may have people come here to address this issue?

(js) We may have people come to the commission to discuss this issue and may have people that have supporting arguments on both sides.

(mg) This became law with the passage of assembly Bill 1266. In the state of California pupils have the right to use facilities consistent with their gender identity. I agree with Commissioner Scales that this is the exact type of issue that may be brought to the Human Relations commission for discussion. As commissioners you should endeavor to educate yourselves about this type of issue.

(fl) The panhandling issue is also going back to City Council for discussion. I sit on the Board of Directors for the Girl Scouts and they are affected by that as well because they would be grouped along with others and identified as panhandlers.

(ww) This is something I dealt with before I worked with the store owners in the issue had gone away.

(mb) Organizations like the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts that have been doing this for years how can they be lumped in as panhandlers?

(js) You have to apply the policy equally. I understand it but you have to be fair. Some people don't want to be harassed about a cookie.

(mc) Going back to the transgender issue, I may be able to get some more information from our student services department. I believe I was told that they have to have something from a doctor that discusses their gender identity.

(ww) It also protects them from being abused or attacked by other people because of how they identify themselves. These things are going to happen.

(mg) Again, I think that it's important to educate yourself about the issue because a parent will come and tell you that rapes occur right now that don't have anything to do with the gender identity issue.

(ww) It will happen more because the issue is there. If the issue wasn't there it would not be on their minds.

(mg) For the record, that is one opinion.

(dv) In the Delano School District, the suggestion was to have a separate bathroom for that purpose. The schools have to protect every student regardless. A.B. 1266 is a disaster because the California Constitution, Section 1, Article 1 guarantees the right to privacy which includes students as well. I can already see lawsuits coming from both sides.

(mg) I think all of this conversation goes back to illustrate Commissioner Scale's point that there is a potential for members of the community to come to this commission to discuss this issue.

(js) For someone that identifies as a female they will say I don't need a unisex bathroom because I am a female. I may have male characteristics but identify as a female therefore I need to use and have the right to use the female bathroom.

Comment from Montika Caddell: One of the things my sons have issues with is if someone of the opposite gender uses the same restroom while they are in there they can be accused of doing something to that person.

Marquez Equalibria: Related to this topic on the education side, one of the things we just came out with is called Transgender 101 training. It was really designed to create better police/community relations between the transgender community and law enforcement. It gives them a better command of the language and the differences between gender and gender identity or expression. As you move forward on that topic if you feel that that can be useful type of training we may be able to offer that. Although it was designed for law enforcement we may be able to work together to tweak the training to fit your needs. The training itself is not been released yet but it will be out in April.

(ww) One of the things that we need to think about is the emotional aspect. If a child is unstable and already doesn't know which way to go or child that's never seen the opposite sex, what kind of effect will that have on the kid? Will that lead to kids being more curious and wanting to try stuff just because they see something different?

Comment from Marquez Equilibria: I want to remind the commission that a few years ago there was an issue and supporters of the LGBTQ community were involved with you at training. They could be a good resource to tap into and lead you to other resources.

(mb) Michael I'm wondering because your kids go to parochial school, have you heard anything about this issue yet from the school.

(mg) I've not heard their schools take any position on the issue yet.

(mc) I wonder if they would be exempt because they do not receive public funding. If that is the case this issue is something that could boost their enrollment.

(mg) As you are having this discussion, I would just like to express the thought that as commissioners you need to take a step back re-examine the fundamental reasons why the human relations commission exists. This is the type of issue and situation that comes in front of the

human relations commission. As commissioners your role is to listen to anyone's concern or position related to this type of issue.

When you sit on this body you represent the entire community. Everyone has interests and opinions that you bring with you. But when you serve on the commission you are tasked with performing the position of a Human Relations Commissioner above all else. That is not to say that you ignore your own interest but in some situations you may have to check that interest at the door.

As a Commissioner it is your job to keep an open mind, listen to all sides of an issue and make decisions that are fair and equitable. From time to time your individual interest may make you uncomfortable in relation to your position on the commission. When things like that occur and may require some soul-searching from an individual perspective to determine your ability to serve on the commission.

(dv) We also need to appeal to reason. What everyone has to say is important and we need to listen to them but we also have to appeal to reason, laying aside personal feelings for the rights and protection and privacy of everyone according to the California Constitution.

(ww) It boils down to common sense and understanding that as an individual it's okay even though my not be what I personally would do. The biggest thing to always remember is the safety of the community. As long as we keep in mind we can be as open-minded as we want but when it comes out to make decisions common sense is the best way to do it. None of this is about us it's all about the community.

(js) On that same note we really need to do some work to rebuild our relationship with the lbgtq community. When we conducted our last essay contest they were great supporters. They've also been involved when we've dealt with different issues like prop eight. This will be a great

opportunity to get them involved with this again to share the perspective and information they can provide.

On another note we need to work on the annual report. We have a new director of mental health, Bill Walker. And he has offered to take professional photos of the commission. He has asked that we come to him. He would not charge for the pictures and is available April 15.

7. **STAFF REPORT**

(MG) Commissioner Mitchell and Marquez Equalibria had emailed each other to discuss potential training opportunities that Marquez can offer. The communication didn't happen in time to make the agenda so I would like to provide Marquez the opportunity to present what he had discussed with Commissioner Mitchell.

Comment from Marquez Equalibria: Some time ago I had emailed the entire commission a PowerPoint with a sample presentation and set of exercises. Marcus had inquired some time ago about training and I was thinking what can we do in a block of time like two hours or so. I came up with this idea where we do some exercises to identify some characteristics and bring some self-awareness to the kinds of skills required as an HRC Commissioner.

Just like law enforcement has to train to keep their skills sharp, so does a Commissioner. If a human relations crisis happens how will you respond? Will you be ready? Will your skills be sharp? I can help facilitate a conversation where you determine what those skills are so that we can also use that as a guide for future training which could be like a tabletop simulation exercise.

For example, say that someone from the Sheriff's office calls you at two in the morning and tells you that he got your phone number from command staff, there was an officer involved shooting and there is a crowd forming. What you do after you hang up the phone? Do you send emails, do give other people a heads up? This is an exercise that gives us an opportunity to role-play. You

can then say it's now six in the morning and are getting a follow-up call. Maybe in the situation it proceeds to a press conference and a possible protest.

I thought it might be good to have some type of foundation first. Some of the questions on the PowerPoint expose you to basic conflict resolution skills. They talk about position versus interest. They deal with active listening skills and basic human needs. How do you react and validate people's concerns while at the same time remaining impartial?

I think we could probably do the first piece in less than two hours and the tabletop exercise can be for later time. You have the questions to give you basic idea and I'm sharing them with you so you can discuss and make a decision as to putting it on the agenda in a day that works best for you. If you want to do it during a commission meeting or if you wanted to do it on a weekend I can work with you.

I also have another issue bring up. I would love to continue working with you with your law enforcement subcommittee and I think it's important that we continue the work that was going on in the subcommittee. I think it's a very important committee and it's not every day that you get an opportunity for law enforcement to be proactive in coming to the table and working with you. This is an opportunity that is right there so I am requesting or asking if we can continue those meetings so we can keep the ball rolling and make sure that we are prepared in case anything happens in the future we have that foundation.

Comment from Greg Gonzales from the Kern County Sheriff Department: I just wanted to say that the Sheriff's Department has enjoyed the interaction with the commission and we're still very interested in moving forward in working with you.

(mc) How does a Commissioner become involved with the a sub – committee? How often do subcommittees meet?

(mg) Subcommittees meet as needed. When issues are brought to the full commission they may be sent to a subcommittee. If you're interested in joining a subcommittee all you have to do is say so.

(js) There are really two issues involved, there is a law enforcement committee that would deal with any law enforcement issues and there is also the ad hoc committee that is item K on your agenda. The ad hoc is working with the Sheriff's Department to try to improve relations between law enforcement and the community.

(mc) I can help on either the law enforcement subcommittee or the ad hoc.

(mg) Your name will be added to the law enforcement subcommittee and for the ad hoc committee we typically don't show names because the expectation is that any Commissioner may be involved in the ad hoc at any time.

(js) Since you brought it up Commissioner Cantu, there are also other commissioners sitting around the table and I don't see their name on committee assignments. Currently myself, Marcus Mitchell, representatives from the Sheriff's Department, and members of the community are working on the ad hoc committee. I believe Marcus was going to discuss some restructuring during vision planning.

(mc) Does the Department of Justice offer any training on deescalating situations, such as when dealing with parents during emotional or crisis situations?

Comment from Marquez Equalibria: That would probably be more related to your local mental health department.

(js) I can provide a contact from our mental health department. One of our former human relations commissioners, Joel Moreno, is our training administrator and he would be a great contact.

(fl) Hopefully this training will help us understand all those different departments better so when the community does come forward we will know exactly what resources we have for them.

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

(js) This Saturday is the NAACP annual awards dinner. We had some discussion about going as a group. The dinner is on Hodel's at 6 PM.

(fl) The economic Summit for Kern County is on March 26. We had eight tickets available at the moment. We will have a sellout. The keynote speaker is the Forbes magazine publisher. The Kern EDC website will have a list of all the speakers. We always have a fed, state, and regional speaker giving us an economic forecast and a summary of what happened in 2013. The summit is from 7 AM to 12:30 PM. There will be a large breakfast and partial lunch. Tickets are \$100. The event will be at the Doubletree Hotel.

(mb) On March 29 the educational justice family fair will be from 11 AM to 2 PM at compassion Christian Center. This is a collaboration between CCC, the Dolores Huerta foundation, GBLA, the Kern community leadership coalition, and stay focused ministries and the purpose of the event is to get families out to tell their stories about their experiences with suspensions and expulsions. It will also be a resource fair. The mayor and some other corporate sponsors are involved and will provide cap and gown to graduating eighth-graders and seniors.

(ww) Mayor Hall is donating for the eighth graders and Morgan Clayton is donating for the seniors but we're not sure about the cap and gown. The school system is particular about how they do the cap and gown so the sponsors may have to get out other awards or prizes.

We want the BPD there and the Sheriff's Department there to bring their cadets to talk about being a policeman and to show that this is an honorable job to get into. We also want people to know that they need to get involved and come fight for their kids because if they don't those kids

are going to be with them for life. They won't be eligible for the military or for government jobs and their future will be cut short before it even gets started.

(mb) We're trying to make a family-friendly event, the District Attorney's Office is involved and we just hope we get the stories from the parents.

(js) Are you videotaping during the event?

(mb) That might be very effective because we were just talking about technology. We want to get the parents there and make them comfortable. Some people may not be comfortable with pen and paper so giving them the opportunity to just tell their story rather than writing it down may work better.

Comment from Montika Caddell: a lot of parents have been complaining about security and the way that staff is treating their children at school. I had a problem because they told my children that they were gang members because of some of the friends that they hang around with. They were calling me and telling me that and I told them that they have been going to school with these kids since preschool, so they know them.

One day I took my son out of school for a doctor's appointment and after the appointment he wanted to go to school. I dropped him off at school and left and then he called me because security was harassing him because he was trying to go to school. They were telling him "what are you doing here?" "You are not going to be anything but a drug dealer." I had to end up going in and talking to the principal and let him know what happened.

I just don't feel that it's right because my child is trying to go to school and do what's right and they were degrading him because of the people he hangs around with. The security is disrespectful to the kids but they want the kids to be respectful to them. Going to the school district is not working. We've talked to them and we have written letters but the issue keeps occurring.

(js) What district are your kids in?

Caddell: They're in the Kern High School District.

(mb) For these types of events and what you're hearing tonight, this is why we are trying to engage with the various organizations and agencies that will make it better for everyone.

Equalibria: Here's an idea, the commission can request the policies from school on how the security guards handle that type of situation. Just making a request like that alone can work sometimes because it lets the school district know that a County body is interested in the issue. The attention brought on the issue can completely change the issue and you are just doing your mission in analyzing and asking questions.

9. **Adjournment:** Motion: GC, 2nd: DV, Vote: All Ayes. 6:35 p.m.