

KERN COUNTY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Kern County Administrative Complex – Fifth Floor, Point Conference Room
1115 Truxtun Avenue, Bakersfield
Tuesday, April 8, 2014 at 5:30 PM
Monthly Meeting Minutes

Present: Marissa Banks (mb), Fiona Lytle (fl), David Vivas (dv), Marcus Mitchell(mm), Walter Williams (ww)

Absent: Manuel Cantu, Jewelle Scales

Others Present: Michael Goulart (mg) Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, Jina Kim from GBLA

Agenda Items: called to order at 5:30 PM

1. Flag salute: Commissioner Lytle
2. Public Presentation: Gina Kim from Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance provided information regarding the GBLA Fair Housing Project. Power Point handout attached.

*Commissioner Williams arrived at 6:03 p.m.

3. Approval of minutes: March 11, 2014, monthly meeting
Motion: approve (fl) 2nd: (ww) vote: All ayes

4. NEW BUSINESS:
 - a) Discussion of Human Relations Commission Vision Casting

(mm) Some of these items have come forward before. Commissioner Lytle and I were able to get together between meetings so here are some of the things we would like to recommend.

1. Seek training from Department of Justice.

(mm) Do we have a motion to seek training from the Department of Justice?
Mo: WW, 2nd: MB, All Ayes

2. Maintain law enforcement subcommittee programs/partnership with Kern County Sheriff Department.

(mm) I think we should continue this effort. Anyone can be in the subcommittee but I think that the members from district 5 need to be involved. I am willing to be part of it and I believe Jewelle has also committed. I just think we need the appropriate support from the community in order to end up with something that is different from what the Sheriff's Department already provides in the Citizens Academy. The next step would be to meet in subcommittee to discuss moving forward.

3. Remove essay contest from HRC annual projects.

- (mm) The discussion for me is that I'm not sure if this is getting us the results we are looking for. At this point we have had to cancel because of lack of participation. Unless anyone on the commission objects I see no reason in moving forward to reschedule the event.
- (mg) I want question regarding the only entry that was received. What does the commission want to do with that entry, considering the student followed the rules and submitted timely?
- (fl) I will personally write them a letter thanking them for the entry and explaining that we have had to cancel the event.
- (mb) Is there anything that we can give the student?
- (mg) The commission does have some money remaining from last year's event. This is the money that has been used in the past for the cost of the banquet and awards.
- (mm) I think that we have to be careful. Is it like were offering a consolation prize because the event didn't happen?
- (mb) I feel that any student that followed the rules and took the time to do it should be rewarded.
- (fl) I would like to look at the quality of the entry before moving forward.
- (mb) I am interested in rewarding the effort.
- (mm) I would like to distribute the essay to all the members of the committee to review and unless someone objects we can consider awarding something such as a gift certificate or gift card.
- (fl) I can create a certificate that we can all sign and send to the student. If there was collaboration with the teacher I would like to send a thank you letter to the teacher also.

4. Seek permanent representation to attend HRC meetings from the following areas: middle school, high school district, college/university, NAACP and others as needed.

- (mm) What this discussion is talking about his collaboration. Because Walter has a good relationship with GBLA, we quite often get presentations from them. I think there are some other partner agencies in the community that we should actively begin to partner with. I think we serve the same folks and the resources and partnerships would really help us.

These are some of the ideas that we talked about but if any other commissioners have ideas about who we should be collaborating with I think it is important to discuss. As a commission we need to be able to refer people to other organizations and we should have a relationship with them know what they are about. I think collaboration also is creating something that allows us to get our message out and working with others that can also carry our message for us.

Right now we don't have a lot of people bringing issues forward. I think it through collaboration we might be able to find ways to get people to want to participate. For example there is a large Filipino community and Delano and culturally there might be an opportunity to collaborate with them.

(mb) I believe that one of the best ways to build collaboration is to commit to being out in the public and going to functions where we can be seen and make the public aware of us. If no one is coming to us we need to get out and go to them.

(ww) How do we tie their problems into what we do? We don't want to go out and say that we can help people if we can't really help them.

(mb) I just think we need to make our faces known as the Human Relations Commission. And I think that once we do they will try their problems back to what we do and it will be our job to listen and refer them to the appropriate agency.

(ww) But we have to understand, I'm not going to listen to you if it doesn't tie into my problems. It doesn't have anything to do with me I'm not even take the time to look up at you. If I'm concentrating on my problems and it doesn't have anything to do with the ability to pay rent or put food on the table or stable housing then it doesn't affect me.

(mb) There will be some events that we go to that may not tie in. Last year I spoke at the housing conference. After I finished speaking all kinds of people came up to me and said we didn't even though the Human Relations Commission existed.

We just need to get out and make our presence known. Just coming to this meeting once a month will not increase the public's awareness of what we do. I would like to see something done that is why we give our time.

(fl) We are supposed to be a resource to the community. The community doesn't always know exactly where to go but they should know that they could come here to deal with a wide variety of issues, all of the things that our mission statement addresses, and then we will help them with the process.

(ww) We can't be a resource when you're not tied into the resource. I know every service provider there is. If we want to do that I can have the service providers come here. If we let them know what we want to do they will help.

(mb) That would be great to have one time meeting with all of the service providers coming here to tell us what they do so when someone comes to us with an issue or a problem we would know where to send them.

At the same time, we need to get out. There are all types of events going on that the commission needs to be at.

(mm) So as we talk about this how do we make it happen? Is it district specific? Would we expect commissioners to be aware of what's happening in their district and be willing to attend those events? Like Marissa said, if all we do is meet once a month in this room then nothing will be accomplished other than meetings. The work of the commission needs to happen between meeting dates. If we have a hearing somebody comes here and were doing something that's fantastic, otherwise, we aren't getting any work done by simply meeting.

We should be out in the community. We need to be attending events whether they be school board meetings, community meetings held by other agencies, or any other similar events.

- (ww) April 23, at 10 a.m. the Department Of Human Services and having their resource fair. I can email you the information and we can get a booth. I get information like this all the time and I can always share with you.
- (mg) The commission has a table drape to use in events like that. The commission also has a banner. Those are always available to commissioners when attending events.
- (mb) Can we also work with the various chambers of commerce?
- (mg) Any type of visibility should be beneficial to the commission. For instance if you work with the Chamber of Commerce and one of their members meet with someone that may have an issue to bring to the commission that person can refer to them to the commission if they are aware of what it is that you do.
- (mm) How does this happen how do we do these activities and attend these events?
- (mb) We just need to be more strategic and to be aware of what's going on in our city.
- (mm) Marissa would you like to draft something up that explains the vision?
- (mb) I don't think we need to draft anything. I'm saying with the vision is. I think we need to make an assignment and move forward to do what we are saying.
- (mm) So the expectation for commissioners is what? We have talked in this room but what we do next?
- (mb) My expectation is that when we leave this room and in the next 30 days that all the commissioners will go online and find out what's happening in our city. We bring that information back and then determine that out of all of the events that are happening in the next 3 to 4 months which ones are events that the commission shall participate in.
- (fl) Will we be reporting back on what's going on in specific districts?
- (mm) What I understand Marissa saying is that from this meeting we will go through with looking at events that are upcoming and opportunities for collaboration and then we will actually bring that list to the next meeting and talk about who will attend which events.
- (ww) Will we go as individuals or as a whole commission?
- (mb) Depending on the event we may go as a whole commission or two or three of us may go to specific events.
- (fl) What if there's a cost associated with attending the event?
- (mm) If there is a cost we would try to get it waived.

- (mm) Ok, so for the next meeting will each Commissioner please bring the information that they find related to upcoming events.
- (mg) Not related to special events but something for the commission to also consider is that the commission attempts to have one meeting per year at an outlying location. The last meeting we had at an outlying location was in Maricopa.
- (dv) To bring additional exposure to the commission would we be able to prepare something like a flyer that can be posted on social media? I can also create something if that is allowable. I would need to know if I need permission to use the County logo.
- (fl) As a marketing idea, when we create partnerships we should ask them to use our logo so that could give us additional exposure and recognition and people will know who we are connected with.
- (mm) We can use the County seal we have permission to do that. The torch logo was created for an event and it kind of became our logo but we do have permission to use the County seal.
- (dv) I can create something simple and I will put it together and send it out to the commission for your review.

Once HRC vision is determined, meet with Supervisors to communicate vision and goals and bridge support.

- (mm) Each year we create a vision of what the commission is focused on. Once we do that we can walk the halls to meet with the supervisors and discuss it with them so hopefully they can bridge support to the commission.

Jewelle also mentioned possibly creating a monthly book club and partnering with the library to find an assigned book that the commission agrees upon and having a facilitator to a discussion about the book. This would allow the community to read the book talk about the issues addressed in the book and what changes the book could bring about in our community.

- (mg) Would you consider collaborating with “One book, One Kern” as they already have an annual project that is similar?
- (mm) I can talk to Shari Gomez next week when I see her for Management Council Board.
- (fl) The last two items we discussed are related to reacting to things that happen in the community whether positive or negative and being able to write letters of support or concern to the Supervisors. If something comes out in the newspaper and we know that there is something that we can do, I think that we should be in a position to act and to feel empowered to do so.
- (mg) So you are talking about drafting letters to the Board to let them know that the Human Relations Commission is in touch with the issue(s)?

- (fl) Yes. The idea is to be a “bug in the ear” to let the Commissioners know that you can do something more than just talk about the issues, we can write a letter to make our supervisors aware of our position.

Also, I am a researcher by heart so I like to look at best practices and I would love to look at other HRCs that are similar to our area just as a way to benchmark our processes moving forward.

- (mm) I would love to see that happen.

Here’s where I am going to ask the question. Does everyone understand their role as a Commissioner in Kern County and what we should be doing? Here is what I feel like, although I am the chair I feel that we are all equals and we need for everyone to feel like this is their commission they can make suggestions and bring motions forward. I feel like right now people are just reacting to what other people bring up. What I am saying is that I need people to get engaged and to start to figure out ways to make some things happen. It can’t just be on the officers of the commission or the chair to make it happen.

With that said, it is just meant to be food for thought as we go forward. If we’re going to be effective it has to be each of us and I think that we have to get busy. I think that we have spent some time just marking time and we have a lot of talent and I think that we are all really committed so I would just love to see that we take the next steps.

- (ww) I think that we need to start with two things. One would be an invitation to come here, something that goes out to the grassroots leaders. We also need to get the church is to come here. They’re the ones that hear everybody’s problems. The question is how to get churches and the community to understand that they have problems.

Many churches may not see the problem if they do not see how it will benefit them. We need to get them to understand that they are supposed to help people with their problems because they are the ones that people take their problems to.

- (fl) Is it about getting our marketing together and sharing what we are here for?

- (mb) Are we still interested in doing the racial reconciliation conference? If we did that we would be servicing our community and anyone who lives in Kern County could benefit from that. If the commission could sponsor that it would be a step in the right direction.

- (mm) There seemed to be some hesitancy in the room the last time we talked about it because the activity is faith-based. I do not see that it is limiting for the commission because it’s a group that we work with. I think it’s way to build a relationship with the faith-based community. As I said last time, I am doing the event and it can be associated with the human relations commission are not. I sent a link and asked people to look at it and I did not get any feedback at all. So I do not think that there was any interest from the commission.

- (mb) Would there be a problem since we would be dealing with solving an issue that affects the whole community?

(mg) My standard disclaimer would apply that you are dealing with the individuals that appoint you to the commission. If you plan on doing any activity that you may think is controversial it would probably be advisable to make the members of the Board aware. Ultimately, if that body has any concerns they can address those concerns with you.

As Marcus discussed earlier if you are walking the halls developing a true relationship with that member of the board that appointed you then they will be more aware of what you are doing and more likely to share their concerns with you as you will be with them.

(fl) Our region is so large and if I was not a commission and I had to go to the outskirts somewhere to report a problem that I thought could be handled locally but it did not know how, I would not think to go so far. Is there a way we can set up a hotline or a website while we are creating our marketing that would allow someone to send us a request even if they didn't feel like they could meet in person. We should not just be a resource once a month during our meetings, we should continue to be a resource to the public whenever it is needed.

(mg) There is a telephone number that is set up for the human relations commission. The number is 661-868-3944 and it is basically a message line.

(fl) Is there a general email address for the human relations commission that we could all access?

(mg) There is not one set up but I can find out if one could be created.

(mm) That is something that could be put on the business cards. My card has my personal telephone number and email.

I think that everybody needs to go away from here today and think about the things that we have talked about and bring some ideas back next month.

(ww) One more thing to be aware of, last Saturday we gave an educational justice and family fair at compassion church. We had a total of about 100 people there. I got email from another person that said the schools were a little upset over what we were talking about. I guess the schools thought we had stopped looking at the issues but we are just doing it a little different way.

Now they want to have a meeting on Friday with us (GBLA, and the Huerta Foundation) to discuss the issues. I will let Mike know when the meeting is going to be.

5. OLD BUSINESS:

a) Discussion of training available from the Department of Justice.

(mm) We have discussed the training and that will happen next month.

b) Discussion of correspondence from the Kern High School District

(mm) I want to table this item until the next time we meet.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

7. **STAFF REPORT**

- (MG) A couple of months ago I told the commission that this year I prepared a utilization analysis that looks at County employees by gender and ethnicity and compares County employees to the available labor force. One of the things I included in that utilization analysis was the need for the county as a whole to recommit itself to the equal employment opportunity program.

One of the functions that I perform as the county EEO officer is to get EEO plan information out to the public and explain what it means and how our plan works. For instance our ability to provide accommodations to applicants that are testing for positions with the County. This helps to ensure that everyone has equal access to County employment.

I recently attended a meeting at Taft sponsored by the hire committee and the transition to independent living (TIL) program at Taft College. The TIL program is nationally known and works with college students that have various developmental or learning disabilities. During the first year of the program the students live on campus dormitory housing, go to classes, and work either on campus or off-campus. During the second year the program students live in off-campus Taft college administered housing. Students continue to attend classes and work, many in off-campus jobs.

The program works with employers in the area to develop jobs that allow the students to gain work experience and do exactly what the program states, transition into independent living situations.

I spoke to attendees at the meeting and explained the part of our equal employment opportunity plan for the county allows us to provide testing accommodations based on an individual's disability.

I will also continue to work with the hire committee. The hire committee is made up of representatives from service providers that work with the traditionally hard to employ population.

Finally, in order to comply with assembly bill 218, which is effective July 1, 2014, the personnel Department will longer be requesting applicants to provide criminal conviction history on their application for County employment. Instead, the personnel department will only solicit that information from a candidate once they've been successful in all of the examination components administered for the job that they apply for. There are some departments and some positions that are exempt from maybe 218 and for those departments or positions candidates will still be required to provide the information on their initial application.

8. **Commission Member Presentations or Announcements:** **None**

9. **Adjournment:** Motion: ww, 2nd: fl, Vote: All Ayes. 7:36 p.m.