

County of Kern
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION-MINUTES

Regular Meeting
Monday September 19, 2011

Commissioners Present: Jewelle Scales (js), Linda Payne (lp), Deborah Hess (dh), Tomeka Powell (tp), Ed Herrera (eh), Marisa Banks (mb)

Commissioners Absent: Marcus Mitchell, Andre Taylor, Kathy Stobert

Others Present: Linda Sargent, Tony Martinez, Lila Perez, Samuel V. Rowland, Karen Goh, Donald Wesson, EEO Officer Michael Goulart (mg)

Meeting called to order at 5:30

1. **FLAG SALUTE 5:30**
2. Welcome Community members
3. (JS) read Human Relations Commission Vision and Mission Statements
4. **PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:**

(JS) presented Andrae Gonzalez from Bakersfield City School District (BCSD) to discuss bullying.

Mr. Gonzales introduced himself as a public servant and Trustee with BCSD. BCSD has 41 school sites and over 28,000 students. He is also representing a non-profit called Children First. He discussed "one book, one Bakersfield, one Kern County". This year's book is The Other Wes Moore. Children First exists because of two reasons. Situations going in the community; drugs, violence, poverty. The other reason is because there are 27,000 young people that represent the future of our city, and area. Since schools can't do everything alone we need to take a holistic approach to raising our children.

Children First began their work in February of this year. The first president of Children First is Lila Perez. Children First has built a community garden with the Boys and Girls Club. Commissioner Hererra was one of the people assisting in taking down a dilapidated jungle gym to make space for the garden. Children First hosted a recent forum to discuss the BCSD Student/Parent Handbook.

Children First has four goals: to build a network of caring adults, to support schools and existing programs, strengthen families, and rebuild community.

Mr. Gonzalez invited the HRC to two upcoming events: film screening of *The Pursuit of Happiness* at East High School on September 22, 7 p.m.

Second event is a Community Forum on October 6, 2011 at Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church.

Mr. Gonzalez provided an information packet that includes a resource list regarding bullying/cyber-bullying. Packets were given to Commissioners.

(JS) asked members of the public if they had any comments regarding our conversation topic.

Lila Perez - stated that the school district has a professionally trained, nationally recognized trainer that speaks about bullying named Rich Richardson.

(JS) asked if there were any comments about items that appear on the Agenda.

Linda Sargent from the Kern County Superintendant of Schools stated that the KCSS will have a bullying prevention/intervention training on November 18 at the KCSS office.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

August 15, 2011 regular meeting

Motion to approve with correction: Powell, 2nd: Hess, All Ayes

6. **NEW BUSINESS:**

a) Annual Report-

(JS) – would like commissioners to compile a record of what they have done, events they have attended for the HRC in the last year. Commissioners were requested to submit a biographical statement for the Report.

(MG) – the statement that I requested is a brief bio statement for the Personnel department Newsletter. The bio for the Annual Report will be more comprehensive and include HRC activities for the previous year.

(JS) – HRC picture will be taken during the November 21, 2011 regular meeting.

b) Ethics Training

(JS) – please make sure that you are scheduled to take the Ethics Training provided by County Counsel's office.

(MG) – I will get the Commissioners information about Ethics Training.

7. **OLD BUSINESS**

a) Approval of Strategic Planning Items: 2011 Events

(JS) – referred everyone to page 8 of the strategic planning document. We need to get started on the planning process for the Annual Essay Contest. I have sent you some correspondence from County Counsel regarding fundraising of public and private funds. Sooner is better for scheduling the event.

(MG) what we have done in the past is work backward from the date that we establish for the event. Winners need to be announced 30 days prior to the event. The HRC needs 30 days between essay submittal and selection of winners. Schools are normally given 30 days to submit essays after the contest

is announced. The overall timeline is approximately 90 days from announcement/informing schools to event date.

(TP) asked if there is a title of the contest.

(MG) the event is the Human Relations Commission Annual Essay Contest.

Comment from Donald Wesson (inaudible)

(JS) The goal is to do an email blast. We did it differently last year. Christine Frazier asked that the HRC use a single point of contact with the Superintendent of Schools and that SPOC would distribute the info. We weren't very successful last year so we are going back to the drawing board this year to try to establish relationships with the principals of the schools and send the information to them.

(EH) Last year we had a number of schools that did not participate and we did not do a good job of spreading the word directly.

(MG) Traditionally, prior to last year my office (Personnel) would update the list of County-wide middle schools and send the information packet directly to the principal of each of the schools.

(JS) Looking at other events, last year we did a Spring Mixer where we introduced HRC members and prospective members to the community. I would like to do that event again to introduce a full Commission to the community.

(EH) Could we incorporate this event into a regional or regular meeting?

(JS) If we could incorporate the event into a regular meeting it would be less expensive than the event last year.

(MB) Could we do a mixer based on an issue that is going on a region that we serve?

(JS) We could do that; we would just need to keep our same model intact. I would like to see each one of the commissioners host a regional meeting.

(JS) Are we still interested in having a GLBTQ event? We had talked about the DOJ assisting us with this event. Would the DOJ be interested in doing just a hate crimes event and incorporating the GLBTQ aspect into it? We can merge the DOJ hate crimes and GLBTQ issue. The reason the HRC became interested in doing a GLBTQ event was due to incidents that happened while Proposition 8 was being contested.

(JS) Previous HRC commissioners had discussed doing a Human Relations Hall of Fame banquet to give award to people that are heroes in social justice. This may be a good event for the future but not feasible for this year.

Motion to accept strategic plan for 2011-2012 (maker of motion?)

Karen Goh – stated that as a Commission, the HRC does not have a large amount of manpower or resources and events such as a black tie function take a large amount of energy, and resources. She suggested that the HRC think realistically about where our energies could best be used and to do something that the public will be interested in and see the value in participating in. It is important to do something that can be seen as a “win” for the HRC. Fundraising is also difficult given the economic climate and the fact that the HRC is seen as government and the public already feels like they are giving all their money to the government. The HRC should consider what they want their hallmark and legacy to be.

(MB) What is it that the HRC wants to do as a commission? Hosting a regional meeting is great but can it involve an issue? What issues do we want to attack?

(EH) The essay contest has always been successful. We are here to educate and the essay contest helps us do that. If we do something like a mixer I would like to see it attached to an issue or a regional meeting.

Karen Goh – being aware that it is hard to get people to come out and participate, what do you do once you have them? Focus on thinking of a different way of approaching how to get people interested.

(JS) We need to do events so that we can be visible in the community. We are trying to reconnect with the community. We need to regain our credibility so we can leave a legacy of what the HRC does. Sometimes an event may not suit the purpose that we are looking for but it gives us exposure in the public eye so that we can get people involved into what we are doing. One of the things that we are doing by changing the public presentation piece is adding more weight to the public piece to focus on issues and discussion.

Karen Goh – You may start thinking about events and activities that the HRC can tag on to.

(JS) we are doing that but we face an issue because first we need to establish visibility and connections within the community.

(EH) because of the makeup and purpose of the HRC, when we have a hot button issue, such as the Compassionate act or Proposition 8 we become visible and the room is packed.

(LP) I think that if we put all of our efforts into the Essay Contest and make it our focus that it will bring light onto the HRC since we will get exposure throughout the County.

(JS) I think that is a piece of it but I'm not sure it will pull in people from the public. I think it's a reconnect piece and a visibility piece but not a credibility piece to get people to come in. We need to and are working on a needs assessment to find out what the community needs.

(DH) we need to be careful that we are not creating the expectation that we are going to solve issues. We can direct and discuss but we may not be able to solve issues.

(JS) we need to be working from a position of having a dialogue with the community where we are not saying we are going to solve all of your problems but we are in problem solving mode.

(EH) one of the committees that gets a lot of exposure is the Law Enforcement committee. We have developed a good relationship with the Law Enforcement Community.

(JS) next month we have Lt. Mullins from the BPD coming in to speak to us.

(MG) the essay contest also fulfills an educational component to the community.

(LP) we reach children and parents through the essay contest and the parents will go back into their community and discuss what the event is about.

(JS) we want those things to happen but we are not creating an environment that allows it to happen. What happened after this year's essay contest and what has happened in previous years in terms of connecting after the event?

(MG) I think that we have to acknowledge that the way we handled the event this year was unlike how we had handled it in the past. The ability for the HRC to connect directly to the schools was taken away and by following the request from the KCSOS student participation was all but eliminated.

(JS) the conversation should be what will happen after the contest. How can we use it as a vehicle to connect with the Community? One of the things that the family day at the park did is extend the conversation out. That event will continue the momentum. Have the event but after the event how do we continue the conversation and dialogue?

(LP) Can Supervisor Goh tell us what some of the issues are in the community that you are aware of right now?

Karen Goh – of course there are issues such as David Turner. Dialogue is taking place between the community and Law Enforcement.

Donald Wesson – This is still an issue but I would advise the HRC to be very careful regarding getting involved in it. It is a hot issue and there are many people already involved in it. This may not be a good issue to get involved in just to get exposure for the HRC.

(EH) the Bakersfield Police Dept. has a diverse liaison committee. When they have a hot button issue they call the committee, go over all of the details and attempt to provide an understanding of the issue. The Sheriff's Dept. may not

have the same type of process.

Karen Goh – I agree that this is a hot, dangerous issue. The reality is that there are people that are unhappy in the community and there is unrest over it. What could the HRC do be helpful to the situation without taking sides and have you ever explored a similar situation?

(EH) at one time we had a Hispanic advisory council attached to the KCSO. The process and panel was formalized and they dealt with similar issues. The toughest thing to do is find the truth. We want to create a dialogue. We can't investigate them because there are others that are charged with doing that type of duty.

Samuel Rowland – I am a community member and wanted to see what the HRC does. I have worked with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department in the past and dealt with similar issues that the HRC handles. It takes all agencies to work together to raise a child and to help the communities. If you get the faith based community involved they can help because they know the community and often times they know what is going on before you hear about it. I have first-hand knowledge of this type of situation by being in the community and dealing with the Bakersfield Police Department. Others in the community are interested in working to fix the problems with local gangs. Your mission is good and you can do more.

Comments by Commissioner Banks and Donald Wesson inaudible.

(JS) to have a town hall meeting for the sake of having a meeting is not the goal of the commission. We need to do something where we can make an impact. We can strategize with Lt. Mullins next month about the type of meeting we want to have. We need to do something where we can have a small victory.

Tony Martinez – comment inaudible

(DH) because of the Brown Act we may be able to form an Ad-Hoc committee that can meet without being subject to the same requirements of the Act. This may give us an opportunity to facilitate a meeting between the two groups.

(JS) as we brings people in to the conversation we actually want to have an impact. We don't want to facilitate just for the sake of doing it.

b) Bylaw Review, Subcommittee Structure and Assignments

(DH) Commissioners Mitchell, Stobert and I met and we looked at the issue of committee meetings. We are looking at possibly eliminating some of the committees or making them Ad-Hoc, such as for the Essay Contest. We are also looking at the election of Secretary.

(JS) there are rules for amending the bylaws related to notification of the full Commission and BOS for approval. It is difficult to get work done in committees

because of the open meeting requirements.

c) Election of Secretary

(DH) we don't see how a Secretary can sit on the Commission and also take notes.

(MG) this discussion was tabled from the July meeting. I have had discussions with Commissioner Taylor about the responsibilities of the Secretary. Mr. Taylor feels that the position I occupy, which is the County Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, is responsible for taking the minutes at the meetings. The EEO Officer is not responsible for serving as the Secretary of the Commission. As stated in the Article VII of the Bylaws the Secretary is an elected office.

(JS) the bylaws do not say that the Secretary is responsible for taking minutes it says that they track them.

(MG) I have prepared the minutes by default because we have not had enough bodies to fulfill all of the elected roles. Another factor in determining the responsibilities for the minutes goes beyond changing the bylaws. The HRC can change the bylaws but they do not have the authority to modify a job classification. That responsibility lies with the Civil Service Commission. Since the EEO Officer does not serve as the Secretary of the HRC by definition, only the Civil Service Commission has the authority to modify the position. That is the same authority required to modify any Civil Service job classification.

(JS) I cannot support a Commissioner being responsible for taking minutes because if you are taking minutes you can't be active in the meeting. The bylaws don't have a defined role for the EEO Officer. How do we get the resources that we need to have someone that is responsible for it so that the Commissioners can be effective?

(MG) Part of the conversation is that you have to be aware that there would be more to making the EEO Officer responsible than modifying the bylaws. You have to be aware of the job classification component.

(EH) I duties of the Secretary are clearly defined. Michael may be taking the minutes but the Secretary should consult with him to verify the minutes as related to the discussion that takes place. I also think it is very important for the commissioners to be involved in correspondence and discussion that takes place.

(JS) there should be a dialogue with whoever takes the minutes. I'm not sure if it would be effective for a commissioner to take the notes but the Secretary should make sure the minutes are accurate.

(EH) can we have County Counsel look at the bylaws to make an opinion of what they mean related to the duties of the Secretary.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) Community & Media Outreach – Hess, Chair
No report
- b) Education/Essay Contest – Herrera, Chair, Hess
No report
- c) Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action – Commissioner Scales, Chair
No report
- d) Grants/Funding – Commissioner Scales, Chair
No report
- e) Housing – Commissioner Payne, Chair
No report
- f) Judicial & Legislative Review – Commissioner Scales, Chair
No report
- g) Law Enforcement - Commissioner Herrera, Chair
No report
- h) Special Issues – Commissioner Scales, Chair
No report
- i) Access and Functional Needs – Commissioner Scales, Chair
No report
- j) Annual Report Ad-hoc Committee –
No report

9. **STAFF REPORT:** (MG) The budget for the HRC has been reduced in recent years. The normal allocation to the Personnel Department Budget for Human Relations had been \$2500 in various budget keys. In the 2011-2012 Personnel budget the HRC was allocated \$700, most of which has been encumbered for business cards and badges. The Personnel Department will be speaking to the Administrative Office regarding backfill to previous allocation levels.

(JS) although the bylaws say that the Personnel Dept. has authority over the budget for the HRC it would be nice to see a budget report and how things are allocated and have a budget conversation to be able to say wait a minute don't take that away. A report would be helpful in order to make decisions. I think there was some profit from the essay writing contest so a report would be helpful.

(MG) Have you had discussions with Counsel about fundraising?

(JS) Counsel had two opinions. One, they did not see any reason why the BOS would not extend a line item in their budget to support the HRC. Two, there are two California

codes that say as a commission we are able to ask for private and public funds. If we are going to have the essay writing contest it's really easy, either it's funded in our budget or as commissioners we go out and fundraise. As for the mixer, I wrote a check for it to help move the HRC forward. These things cost money and if we still want to do them we have to pay for it.

(MG) if the HRC receives additional funding where should it go? Did your discussion with Counsel include the issue of the HRC having a separate bank account?

(JS) what we can do is record the information and pass it to the Personnel Dept. because you are the keeper of the bank.

(MG) did the discussion include the HRC bank account? It is not related to the Personnel Dept.

(JS) we didn't talk about it. We can't have a covert account.

(MG) when the HRC bank account was established is what meant for one purpose only which was to provide a vehicle to receive donations from the public to fund the annual essay contest. The Auditor's office was made aware of the account when Mark Quinn became the Director of Personnel. (AUDIO TAPE CONCLUDES) discussion continued related to HRC funding.

10. **COMMISSION MEMBER PRESENTATIONS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS:** On their own initiative, Commission members may make an announcement or a report on their own activities. They may ask a question for clarification, make a referral to staff or take action to have staff place a matter of business on a future agenda (Government Code Section 54954.2(a)). Commissioners should contact Christy Morley at (661) 868-3930 and advise her of any items to be placed on the agenda, any changes in their work place, home address, or telephone numbers.

11. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to Adjourn: LP, Second: EH, All Ayes