

**HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING**

November 3, 2010

Present: Commissioners Alton Harvey, Daniel Brown, David Harburg, Esther Griffin, Maria Moreno, Rob Solomon, Alternate Commissioner Jamila Kisses, Council Liaison Catherine Arnold and Staff Liaison Nancy Bates

Excused: Commissioner John Cornelius and Alternate Commissioner Blair Thomas, Alternate Commissioner Heminder Singh

Guest(s): Karen Redington Fernandes

Superintendent of Beaverton School District (BSD), Jerry Colonna, came to the meeting to talk with the Commission about the recent incident with a student teacher at Sexton Mountain Elementary School. Chair Solomon introduced Mr. Colonna and asked him to include information on the process in the school district for processing complaints, and that became part of the conversation with him after the specific incident involving the student teacher was covered.

Mr. Colonna started out by giving some demographics in the district, e.g., that it is the third largest district in the State with over 39,000 students current enrolled. He also indicated that in the 2010-11 school year, 46 percent of the students are minorities and the top ten non-English languages spoken at home in order are: Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Arabic, Russian, Somali, Telugu, and Hindu. Mr. Colonna then indicated that it has been beneficial working with Lewis and Clark College, which at first was strained, but then everyone came together and they found out about the core values. There were unanimous feelings about the teacher coming back to Sexton Mountain. He then went on to describe what the School District needed to do to solve the problem, which included multiple groups of people. He indicated that it is a bigger issue than one teacher, one school and one classroom. BSD is working on larger system issues now, including a strategic plan that includes diversity, caring and respect.

Mr. Colonna indicated that BSD had to avoid politics and focus on students and staff. He is retiring in June and has eight months to work on this and make a real difference in the community before he leaves. There is going to be a lot of people doing a lot of small things to change the culture around kindness and respect. There are 5,000 staff members and 39,000 students, and over 70,000 parents and guardians. They had to ask the question: Without something written, how do we know what we can share with the students. Answer: Respond based on the values of the organization. They need a better balance of work with an emotional climate. There must be discussion should be around what is right vs. who is right.

Mr. Colonna expressed appreciation for being invited to speak at the City of Beaverton Human Rights Advisory Commission. He shared that he is putting together a standardized plan to work with all the colleges and universities from which the student teachers are placed. He also shared that there is a bill being drafted by the Bureau of Labor and Industries regarding interns and student teachers. On November 16, the district cabinet will start a comprehensive review of all school regulations and curriculum documents related to sexual orientation. The target is to rap it up in March and take new wording to the School Board.

He also shared that he is working with two large school districts in the state regarding training around diversity and sexual orientation. The District is also working with Basic Rights Oregon (BRO) for training for a higher level of decision makers. They may have two other large district to work with BSD on same. The hope is to take this through June and the next superintendent will take it forward.

There will be surveys in the district in the spring. They will put a new series of questions around inclusiveness, discrimination, bullying, etc. To close, Mr. Colonna read a statement about the incident. He said he met with the Mayor that day and apologized for what happened. He then apologized to the HRAC. He also said that the only way they can turn it around is by their actions to be able to change the public perception. He then took questions from the HRAC until about 7:55p.m. Mr. Colonna was invited back to the March 2 meeting as a follow up.

No hearings

Committee Reports

Outreach:

1. City of Beaverton staff Erin Hickey visited the meeting as a representative of the Diversity Task Force. She gave a report on current projects that the DTF is working on, e.g., a policy regarding document translation; a City Services Guide, and a project with the Center for Intercultural Organization to do a survey of targeted communities and their perceptions of the City. Ms. Hickey indicated there will be a public report on the results.
2. Regarding the visit from Deputy Bickford at the October meeting: One week after, Chair Solomon received a phone call from a citizen who wanted to help. Chair Solomon was able to refer the citizen on to Deputy Bickford.
3. Washington County Council on Human Rights: The Immigration Forum is/was scheduled for mid November. They were waiting for responses from Senator Merkley. It is possible the Forum could be moved to February.
4. NAC visits: Each Commissioner reported on their individual presentations to their assigned NAC. Generally it was felt that the NACs were engaged and asked questions. The Commissioners handed out the HRAC website address. Attendance ranged from 17 to 30 neighbors.
5. There were two more sessions at the Asian Health & Services Center. Both were well attended and Commissioners Harburg, Kisses and Solomon were well received.

December Guest Speaker: Kazi Haque from Intel will talk about Social Business Policy. Intel is partner with Grameen Bank in their social business endeavors. The meeting is at the Library and begins at 6:30p.m., with the speaker beginning at 7:30p.m.

The Commission is looking for a February speaker who can address the subject of Bullying. Commissioner Griffin agreed to explore options. Other topics suggested included homelessness.

Diversity Award: The deadline is November 12, and as of November 3, no nominations had been received. Posters did not state the deadline. Commissioners will follow up with some groups, e.g., the Chamber of Commerce.

The question was asked of the Staff Liaison, were posters put up in City Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45p.m.