

**HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
September 1, 2010**

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

Excused: Commissioner John Cornelius and Alternate Commissioner Blair Thomas, Council Liaison Catherine Arnold

Guest(s): Taj Suleyman – Center for Intercultural Organizing; Gail Snyder – Lutheran Community Services, Duniya Lang – Interpreter for the Somali Community; Abdisalan Mouse – Founder of Oregon Somali Family Education Center; Faiza Kareem; Patty Narvaez – Barnes Elementary School; German Foreign Exchange student, Timon Back; Cassidy Fisher and Ben Harrison.

Communication from Staff Liaison: Business cards distributed to new commissioners; data/video projectors and laptops will be available for Commissioners to use at the NAC meetings.

No hearings

Meeting started at 7:00PM. Minutes of the August 2 meeting were approved with a change, which is to delete an incomplete sentence.

Guest Speakers

Gail Snyder, Duniya Lang and Abdi Mouse all presented information about refugees and challenges of the refugee communities, and the Somali community specifically.

- Lutheran Community Services matches volunteers with refugees, who are helped with adjustments to American culture and every day life challenges.
- 70,000 refugees/year come into America. In recent years, refugees are more traumatized.
- Refugees receive eight months of financial assistance
 - One time cash allotment of \$900-\$1100; seven months of \$640
- Refugees are billed for their airfare
- Caseworkers are overwhelmed and appreciate the volunteers help with refugee adjustment

Duniya Lang spoke on the challenges of the refugee communities, giving examples of the day to day difficulties that language barriers and culture gaps present. She pointed out that people in service organization are not trained in the culture of the people they serve. She would like to see a multi-cultural center. She reported that the community requests more on-going meetings and dialogue with the refugees. Ms. Lang asked two questions of the Commission: (1) What would be the outcome of the evening's meeting; and (2) Does the Human Rights Advisory Commission have the capacity to help solve their issues? She thanked the Commission for listening to her.

Abdi Mouse presented a slideshow about the Oregon Somali Family Education Center, which he founded because of an inspiration by a young student who struggled in school as a Somali refugee. He pointed out that there are about 7,000 Somalis in Oregon. His Center is based in Washington County near Aloha High School, and meetings are held regularly at the Beaverton Resource Center. He gave examples of how they work with State agencies and help refugee families, even those who are not Somali.

There was a question and answer period for the speakers, during which Chair Solomon answered the two questions: (1) HRAC is a resource to assist to the best of its ability, and the evening's meeting was to listen to the speakers and learn about the Somali issues; and (2) The HRAC is neither a legislative body nor a funding body. The Commission can advocate and advise the City Council and Mayor's office after they hear and deal with complaints. There are many resources to which the Commission can refer people, but its main purpose is to listen.

Taj Suleyman also offered how community agencies are working together to identify the issues and look for solutions. He stated that it is not just a social service issue, a connection issue, a communication issue, or an awareness issue, it is more a social justice issue.

Miscellaneous Business and Communication

After a discussion about whether or not to elevate current alternates to the vacant regular positions, it was decided that it is too close to the time the City is recruiting and selecting Commissioners for the next term. Staff Liaison took an action item to send the Commission a list of Commissioners, who they may have replaced within the last three years, and term expiration dates.

Project Updates

Chair Solomon summarized notes from the Outreach Subcommittee: He reminded the Commission about the October speaker who will speak about Human Trafficking, and that meeting will start at 6:30p.m. Chair Solomon will work with the City to produce a press release for the event. He also reported that he has been invited to attend meetings with City employees regarding community outreach.

Commissioner Brown reported that he is still trying to make contact with a source for a December speaker but has not yet received a response.

There is an October meeting at the Asian Health Center, which has offered to translate the HRAC PowerPoint into at least two other languages for the presenters, who will be Commissioners Kisses, Harburg, and Solomon. There will be two meetings—Wednesday, October 6, and Friday, October 15, both at 10a.m. The Asian Health Center expects between 60 and 80 people.

Public Service Announcement Update: A draft has been sent, and it is tentatively set for filming in mid September. It may be delayed due to the departure of the City's Public Information Liaison. Regarding what volunteers from the community will wear, it was the consensus of the group that people will be invited to wear whatever makes them comfortable—western or native apparel. Commissioners were asked to recruit volunteers. A suggestion was made to change the "Beaverton welcomes me" to "I am Beaverton." Discussion took place, but no resolution at this time.

There is a tentative November date for the Washington County Human Rights Immigration Forum. Pacific University in Forest Grove is the tentative location, with other locations being considered. The Commission was asked if it would like to be a co-sponsor to the event. It was moved and seconded and passed to co-sponsor the event with Washington County Human Rights Council, and Chair Solomon is currently serving on the planning committee.

In response to a complaint, there was discussion regarding how the Human Rights Advisory Commission responds to City of Beaverton's schedule of the parade on Yom Kippur. It was suggested that a letter be sent to the planning committee in 2011, and another letter from the HRAC to the City Council in support of the City's agreement to not let the scheduling mistake happen again. The decision to do something this year is still on the table.

The Diversity Summit Workshop on August 26 was attended by Chair Solomon, who reported that it was a positive climate, very accepting, welcome and open. He complimented one of the presenters, Taj Suleyman.

The Commission is invited to participate on the MLK Planning Commission, in which the City is a co-sponsor. Due to the decision to have the planning committee meet during the daytime, no Commissioner was able to volunteer to participate. Julie Rubenstein, IAN, reported to Commissioner Griffin that the planning commission will select some winners of the Creative Expression Contest to present at the event.

All of the NACs have been scheduled except Greenway, who chose not to have a presentation, but who will join the South Beaverton meeting on September 16. The Commission is still working on scheduling commissioners to present. Projectors and laptops will be reserved for commissioners to use at the meetings, if needed.

Commissioner Griffin reported that the Nike/THPRD/Latino Soccer Family Fiesta will be held on September 19.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.