



**CITY OF YPSILANTI
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Monday, February 25, 2013
7:00 P.M.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioner Claudia Pettit	Absent
Commissioner Arika Lycan	Absent
Commissioner Krista Nordberg	Present
Commissioner Glen Sard	Present
Commissioner Darlene Scott	Present
Chair John Shuler	Present
Vice Chair Jennifer Symanns	Present

A quorum was present.

III. AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Nordberg moved, supported by Commissioner Scott, to approve the agenda.

On a voice vote the motion carried unanimously. The agenda was approved as submitted.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of minutes from February 25, 2013

Commissioner Nordberg stated that she had not brought the flyers as she stated she would at the last meeting, but she would email them to the Commissioners to hand out.

Commissioner Nordberg move, supported by Vice Chair Symanns, to approve the minutes as submitted.

On a voice vote the motion carried unanimously.

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Report and discussion on disabilities forum

Chair Shuler asked Vice Chair Symanns about the progress she has made in planning this forum. Vice Chair Symanns stated that she was going to fulfill a support role for Commissioners Nordberg and Pettit as they had taken the lead on this topic.

Commissioner Nordberg stated they were still in the planning phase and identified some of the contacts she planned to reach out to.

Chair Shuler suggested asking those contacts if they knew of additional resources or other people to contact to participate in the forum. He asked if they had narrowed their focus to a specific topic.

Commissioner Nordberg stated that she was contacting agencies that work with County residents who have disabilities and the difficulties with finding housing, benefits and employment. She suggested different organizations and groups in the area and described the services they provide.

Chair Shuler asked if there were any resources available at the University.

Vice Chair Symanns mentioned that there was an ADA Coordinator and a Council for Disabilities Concerns, and said she would reach out to them to see if they wanted to participate in the forum.

Chair Shuler suggested contacting the academic departments to reach out to students interested in going into social sciences.

Vice Chair Symanns suggested they start reaching out to their contacts to see who responds back.

Commissioner Nordberg stated that they needed to confirm a date before she felt comfortable reaching out to her contacts and asking them to participate.

Commissioner Scott suggested the November forum be dedicated to disabilities.

Vice Chair Symanns suggested the month of September.

Commissioner Nordberg stated that September would be good because of the timing with Medicaid expansion.

Chair Shuler asked if they wanted to tentatively shoot for a September date.

Vice Chair Symanns replied that September worked for her.

Commissioner Nordberg agreed.

2. Report and discussion on Hispanic/Latino forum

Commissioner Sard stated that the only central organization, that was County-wide, he was able to find was Casa Latina, which appears to be a newer organization that was fairly small. He added that he had also contacted a Spanish professor from Eastern Michigan University and he is waiting to hear back from him, as well as from Casa Latina.

Commissioner Nordberg stated that she knows Charo, the Executive Director of Casa Latina, and she said the organization is very well entrenched in the Hispanic community.

Commissioner Sard stated that there are other groups he found, however they are mostly on-campus student groups catered to international students. He said that he feels they should focus more on people who live in the community.

Commissioner Nordberg stated that she would follow up with Charo herself.

Chair Shuler suggested contacting United Methodist Church, or other Hispanic churches in the area, as this kind of outreach is often the mission of churches.

Commissioner Nordberg stated that Cooley Law School has an Immigrant Rights program.

Vice Chair Symanns asked if the University of Michigan had a similar program.

Commissioner Nordberg replied that their program was not as robust as the Cooley program. She mentioned receiving emails about ICE raids that happen locally and stated that somebody has to be a watchdog.

Commissioner Sard asked if that was something that would fall under the purview of the Human Relations Commission.

Vice Chair Symanns answered that it falls under the purview of providing more information to the Community, which is valuable.

Chair Shuler asked if it was strictly a Federal activity or if the local Police were involved.

Commissioner Nordberg stated that she hopes the local Police would not be involved. She added that this is a reason that the Latino community remains underground. She reiterated that Casa Latina is a very well entrenched organization and many people are involved with the organization.

Commissioner Sard stated that he assumes the majority of the people in the Casa Latina community, and in Washtenaw County, are documented.

Commissioner Nordberg stated that there was still a large portion of the population that remained underground.

Chair Shuler asked what percentage of the Latino population was documented.

Commissioner Nordberg replied that she was unsure, which is another reason that there needed to be more information on the topic.

Commissioner Sard stated that he would see what he could find out.

Commissioner Scott states that she was assisting with the Hispanic/Latino forum but her contact had fallen through. She stated that she was looking for the name of the gentleman that former Commissioner Foley had invited to a previous meeting.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that she found his name, Rey Mondragon, in the official minutes from the meeting he attended.

Chair Shuler asked if anyone needed help on the projects they were working on.

Vice Chair Symanns stated she feels everyone is off to a good start.

Commissioner Sard suggested the Commission come up with a list of topics they would like speakers to address.

Chair Shuler mentioned an item, that he said he would have to find in the annual report, that the Commission was going to look into last year and he wanted to be sure the Commission followed up on it. He added that he thought it had something to do with the Police Department.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that she felt the Commission was considering asking Mr. Mondragon to come back and speak again.

Commissioner Sard stated that he remembers the Commission wanting to find out if any of the Police Officers were bilingual or if interpreter services were available.

Chair Shuler asked if this should be a part of the forum or if it should be handled separately.

Commissioner Sard stated that the decision should be left up to the Police Department and whether or not they feel it is an important issue that should be addressed.

Commissioner Shuler asked if there were any local document translation services.

Commissioner Sard replied that there were a lot of Google results for resources in the County however he stayed away from those resources because he wanted to find more official resources that weren't wholly focused on immigration as he felt the issues were a lot broader than that.

Chair Shuler asked if City Hall has a translator available and whether or not the Commission should ask Council to budget for those kinds of services.

Commissioner Scott stated that schools are required to have those resources available.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that while the Police Department is not required to have someone on staff, there often ends up being a native Spanish speaking Officer on shift.

Chair Shuler asked if the courts have a translator.

Commissioner Nordberg stated that if the services are requested they will be provided however she does not know how often the services are requested.

Commissioner Scott stated that citizens may not know the translation services are available.

Commissioner Sard stated that at the University of Michigan hospital translation services are offered to patients and can be provided, typically, within one hour.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that there was a shared list of translators that the County maintained of volunteer translators and she felt there were good resources available within the County.

Commissioner Sard asked Deputy Clerk Sylvonna Reed if anyone had ever requested translation services during an election.

Ms. Reed replied that voters who need assistance typically bring someone with them to help. She added that special accommodations are available for people in need, with advance notice, who would like to attend the public meetings at City Hall.

Commissioner Sard stated that he had seen ballots printed in other languages before to assist non-native English speakers.

Ms. Reed mentioned that there are communities where it is required to print all election materials in another language to accommodate the population within that jurisdiction.

Vice Chair Symanns mentions that she was interested to know where the information was coming from that determined what percentage of the population spoke a foreign language and what language they spoke.

Chair Shuler asked what schools provide ESL courses.

Commissioner Nordberg stated that the libraries may provide courses.

Vice Chair Symanns suggested Washtenaw Literacy and mentioned the ESL resources they offer.

Commissioner Scott discussed the requirement that public schools receiving Federal funding must assist parents in communicating about their children's schooling.

Vice Chair Symanns asked if the support the school provides can be as simple as having a translator available.

Commissioner Scott answered that a translator could be considered a sufficient option. She stated that parents are supposed to be provided with whatever support they need to be a part of their child's learning. She added that, in her experience, there is almost always an advocate that would step up and speak for the parents with these needs.

Commissioner Sard asked if it was an exception or the rule that parents would take advantage of the resources available.

Commissioner Scott answered that her community was fairly homogeneous so it was an exception but it was changing towards the end of her career as a principal.

Vice Chair Symanns asked if the resources provided to parents to be a part of their child's learning went beyond just assisting parents with language barriers.

Commissioner Scott answered that it was mostly supporting parents with language barriers in terms of understanding their children's academic status.

VII. NEXT MEETING DATE

April 22, 2013

Vice Chair Symanns asked if the Commissioners wanted to discuss an agenda for the next meeting or if they wanted to keep the same agenda items.

Chair Shuler replied that they should keep the same agenda unless there were any additional suggestions.

Commissioner Sard asked if they should contact the Mayor to help them find new Commissioners to bring the Commission to full membership. He stated that he hopes Commissioner Lycan will be coming back, but they should also consider the need to find a replacement if she does not return.

Chair Shuler asked Ms. Reed to look in her records to see if there was any additional contact information for Commissioner Lycan.

Vice Chair Symanns stated that she had a membership list from February of 2012 and it showed Commissioner Lycan's expiration date had passed.

Commissioner Sard stated that it is a challenge to find members and he suggested the Commissioners recruit new members themselves instead of relying solely on the Mayor's nominations. He added that it was important to make sure the diversity of the Commission reflected the different facets of the community.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Symanns moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Nordberg seconded this motion.

On a voice vote the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.