

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10 **HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

11 **Thursday, December 13, 2007**

12 Council Conference Room

13 Palo Alto Civic Center

14 250 Hamilton Avenue

15 7:00 PM
16
17

18 **ROLL CALL: Commissioners Present:** Blum, Khan, Mendoza, Savage, **Staff:** Kathy Espinoza-
19 Howard, Amy Johnson
20
21

22 **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

23 Ms. Maria Centurion spoke about an issue regarding a human rights lawyer who has been detained in
24 China illegally because he spoke out against human rights violations. He also is known for defending
25 people oppressed in China. No one knows where he is, and there are many people trying to rescue him.
26

27 Mr. Nan Su, spoke about using the Global Human Rights Torch Relay as an opportunity to spread the
28 message of human rights and to push China to improve their human rights situation. He asked that the
29 HRC put an item on the next agenda to pass a resolution in support of the Torch Relay.
30

31 Mr. John Abraham, a Palo Alto resident, provided hand outs to the commissioners. He said that he was
32 not sure what has happened to the discussion regarding alternate reporting of demographic data. He
33 spoke about a similar issue in New York regarding a study. The study in New York referenced external
34 benchmarks. He provided an internet URL which gives the complete report. He is encouraged by this
35 information and hopes that the City of Palo Alto might look into a similar type of analysis.
36
37

38 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

39
40 None
41

42 **AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS:**

43
44 None.
45

46 Commissioner Savage explained that the discussion regarding alternative methods of reporting
47 demographic data and other issues will be on the agenda for the January meeting.

48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96

BUSINESS

1. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED RESOLUTION REGARDING CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN MYNMAR (BURMA):

Commissioners Mendoza and Khan submitted a draft resolution in the packets.

Commissioner Blum commented on the wording and suggested some changes to the wording of the draft resolution.

Commissioner Mendoza asked for any speakers on this issue to speak before the commissioners made changes.

Ms. Yasmin Varya said that she would like to ask for additions to the draft resolution. She spoke about how she was born and lived in Burma for many years as well as the current conditions in Burma. She spoke about the missing items that she would like to see in the draft resolution such as how many cities passed a selected purchasing law. Companies that operate in California such as Chevron should be identified so that Palo Alto residents are aware of how the military is supported in Burma by such companies.

Commissioner Khan explained that the committee removed the items regarding companies such as Daiwoo and Chevron because she felt there were no substantial facts to support the claims making this difficult to get passed by City Council.

Commissioner Mendoza agreed to Commissioner Blum’s suggested wording changes.

Commissioner Blum said the City Council does not generally pass resolutions regarding issues outside of the city.

Commissioner Mora said that it is within the HRC charter to address global human rights issues and suggested that the HRC find a way to word the resolution so that the City Council might pass it.

Commissioner Blum suggested that the HRC pass the resolution as a commission and not send it forward to the City Council.

The Commissioners discussed wording modifications to the draft resolution.

Commissioner Mora made a motion that the HRC approve the resolution as edited and send the revised resolution to the following people: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, and Representative Anna Eshoo. Seconded by Commissioner Blum, AYES: Unanimous.

2. CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF CODE OF CONDUCT

There was a brief discussion about adding additional verbiage regarding GC 54957.9 that states the HRC may clear a meeting and continue deliberations in the event any member or group of the public willfully interrupts the meeting. It was decided not to add such verbiage.

There was a brief discussion about where to display the HRC Code of Conduct. Commissioner Savage

97 suggested that it be on the cards only.

98

99 There was a brief discussion about making further modifications to the Code of Conduct because of its
100 length. But no changes were made.

101

102 It was decided that as a trial, the code of conduct would only be included on the back of the comment
103 card and possibly verbalized by the chair at the beginning of each meeting.

104

105 Staff would prepare a new speaker comment card with the code of conduct verbiage on the back for the
106 next meeting.

107

108

109 **3. REPORTS FROM OFFICIALS:**

110 **A. Commissioner Reports:**

111 Commissioners Savage and Blum stated that they met with the Police Chief and discussed planning a
112 community meeting as well as alternative methods for collecting demographic data which will be
113 discussed at the January meeting.

114

115 **B. Council Buddy Reports:**

116 None

117

118

119 **C. Council Liaison Report:**

120 None

121

122 **D. Staff Liaison Report:**

123 Kathy Espinoza-Howard said she has been the HRC liaison since 1998 and at that time there was
124 also a discussion about Burma. She also stated that something has changed recently that commissioners
125 no longer seem to follow an issue all the way through, leaving other members to attend committee and
126 council meetings who do not have the same experience with the issue. She has noticed a loss of
127 momentum such as what recently occurred. On Monday night, there was no one there from HRC to
128 speak to the Immigration Resolution. The City Council tabled the issue never to see the light of day
129 again. She said that she was thinking that the HRC needs to establish a method of quality assurance for
130 passing resolutions. In the case of the Immigration Resolution, the total staff time spent on this item was
131 21.5 hours, not including whatever time the HRC spent on it. The cost of staff time was approximately
132 \$2,700.00. Ms. Espinoza-Howard suggested that the HRC form a small subcommittee to create a
133 criteria of determining whether an item warrants going to City Council or not. She also explained that
134 the HRC loses credibility every time an item is rejected by City Council.

135

136 The commissioners discussed sending out the Immigration Resolution as passed by HRC only.

137

138

139 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

140 Commissioner Khan announced the birth of her baby boy in November. The commissioners also set a
141 date for their next social at Commissioner Khan's home on January 6th at 5:30pm.

142

143

144 **CALL FOR AGENDA ITEMS**

145 Alternatives for collecting demographic data and other police issues.

146 Criteria for passing and sending resolutions to City Council
147 Planning agenda for meeting with City Council in March.
148 New Committee Assignments
149 Resolution regarding Global Human Rights Torch Relay

150

151

152 **ADJOURNMENT**

153 The meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.