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HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Thursday, October 9, 2014

Council Conference Room

Palo Alto Civic Center

250 Hamilton Avenue

7:00 PM

REGULAR MEETING

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: Chen, Morin, O’Nan, Savage, Stone

Absent: Alhassani, Bacchetti

Staff: Minka van der Zwaag, Mary Constantino,

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Savage made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2014 meeting.

Seconded by Commissioner Chen. AYES: Unanimous.

AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS:

None

BUSINESS

1. Digital Leaders, Palo Alto Housing Corporation. Film Screening of *Living in Palo Alto*.

Chair O’Nan explained that a major responsibility of the Human Relations Commission (HRC) is to make recommendations for HSRAP funding and these funds are sent out to the community. One of the HSRAP grantees is the Palo Alto Housing Corporation (PAHC) and one of their programs is called Digital Leaders which is a summer youth internship to learn how to make films. Chair O’Nan stated that *Living in Palo Alto* touched on many issues that pertain to the HRC’s scope. This film was made by a brother and sister team, Dami and Titi Bolarinwa. Titi and Dami explained that they wanted to make a film about living in Silicon Valley to present the view of a teenager living in a tech hub with their everyday problems and struggles. (Film Screening of *Living in Palo Alto*.)

Commissioner Chen asked Titi and Dami where they found the films participants. Dami explained that both of the interviewees attend Palo Alto High School, and one he has known since elementary school.

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Commissioner Stone congratulated them for their work, and asked Damir if he spoke to anyone else when making the video? Damir stated that he did interview other people and they did see the divide but didn't want to be on film. Commissioner Savage asked what other groups have seen it. Titi explained that the families at the Digital Leaders reception saw the film. Commissioner Savage asked Titi and Damir if they have ambitions to be filmmakers. Titi said that she would like to make a film and Damir likes interviewing people one on one and making a connection. Titi stated that they would like to enter their film in a film festival. Damir explained that the film can be seen on YouTube under Palo Alto Housing Corporation.

Chair O'Nan asked Damir and Titi how these issues have impacted them. Titi explained that living around high tech role models makes you just want to work harder to be in that position. Damir stated that it impacted him because his family of five had lived in downtown Palo Alto in a three bedroom apartment but because only one parent was allowed to work they were required to move into a two bedroom where both of his parents could work to provide for their family. Growing up you have to learn how to cope and understand your situation.

Chair O'Nan stated that one of the remarks in the film that struck her the most was that one of the boys said that it is a challenge to have empathy when you are rich. Do you think some of your wealthier classmates are insensitive and do you think you need to educate them or do you think they need to have a life lesson? Damir replied that some of the people who live in Palo Alto do not understand that not all people in Palo Alto grow up with the same wealth that they did. Titi explained that a lot of Palo Altans and the media see Palo Alto filled with rich people. They don't see that there is a middle or lower class. Damir stated that the media portrays East Palo Alto as the "hood" and you are leaving your bubble of Palo Alto and entering someplace that is dangerous.

Chair O'Nan stated that one of the boys indicated that the prestige of being in the Palo Alto school system was a guarantee to get into a 4-year college; however, many students may need to go to a community college to help pay for their tuition. Do you think they are riding a wave of Palo Alto prestige and not aware of the struggles of their classmates. Damir explained that many feel that going to school in Palo Alto is a golden ticket and you can go to any four year college but there are others who feel that they need to work toward attending college to achieve their dream.

Chair O'Nan asked Damir and Titi how being an immigrant has impacted them. Titi replied that there are many white and Asian people in Palo Alto. East Palo Alto is filled with blacks and Latinos. In classes at school you don't see more than one student in your class of your race and minorities do not sign up for higher level classes because they think they do not belong there.

Commissioner Morin asked them to what degree do they identify as Nigerian American? Titi replied that she identifies herself as being African because that is how people identify her, but since she came to the United States when she was one Titi finds it difficult to identify with a culture she has not been a part of. Damir shared that he spent time in Africa, and he can bring his experience to America which separates him from the norm.

Titi explained that she has been in Digital Leaders for two years and this year was focused on video making and taking photographs of teens in the media which she liked since she feels there is negative teen portrayal. Damir explained that this year was his fourth year participating in Digital Leaders. Last year was his favorite year because they were able to play sports with kids, but this year Damir explained

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that he really enjoyed the photography. Dami is now a photographer at the Palo Alto High School Campanile Newspaper. Dami stated that photos can say a thousand words but a video can say infinite, and he loves to make videos that connect with people.

Ana Angel from Palo Alto Housing Corporation explained that this summer they had 10 interns. Palo Alto Housing Corporation selects students from 26 affordable housing communities. The program is an internship, they receive work experience and are required to sign in on a time sheet. They attend for eight weeks and at the end of the program they receive a stipend for their work. This year the interns went to Microsoft and Google. Every summer the program has a theme and last summer the theme was immigration focusing on youth voice. During the program the interns are required to do community service and next summer the Palo Alto Housing Corporation hopes the interns can work in other organizations for the experience. Ms. Angel stated that the program has a blog located at PAHCdigitalleaders.wordpress.com

1. Follow-up on Retreat Work Plan Items. Review Roles and Responsibilities

- a. Civility Roundtables – Commissioners should try to attend Mountain View’s Civility Roundtable on Thursday, November 6, 2014 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Police Department Community Discussion – April/May/June, 2015 - Commissioners Savage and Stone

Digital Leaders – February/March, 2015 - Chair O’Nan

Day Worker movie and Immigration Issues – Summer 2015 – Commission Chen

- b. Senior Summit – Early 2015 - Bring agencies together to help them collaborate. Event or forum that everyone can be invited to. Commissioners Bacchetti, O’Nan and Morin
- c. Work with Supervisor Joe Simitian to request funding for two or three identified issues and then request Council to match the funds – Dates to be Determined - Commissioners O’Nan and Alhassani
- d. Outreach to Immigrant Community - Chinese Parents Club. Staff is waiting for the Chinese Parents’ Club Business Plan - Dates to be Determined - Commissioners Chen and Morin
- e. 25 cities Initiative to end homelessness – Dates to be Determined - Commissioners Alhassani and Stone.
- d. Assignment of Liaisons
 1. Police Department – Commissioners Savage, Stone and Morin
 2. Project Safety Net – Commissioner Stone
 3. Palo Alto Mediation – Commissioners Alhassani and Stone

2. Introduction of the HRC Report on Low Income Housing Study & Recommendations –

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Vice-Chair Bacchetti and Commissioner Chen

Chair O’Nan reported that Vice Chair Bacchetti, who was to introduce the report, was absent from the meeting. Chair O’Nan explained that the HRC had an affordable housing learning series and from that series Commissioners Bacchetti and Chen prepared a report. With the updating of the Housing Element and Comprehensive Plan, the HRC is provided the chance to influence the City’s housing policy. Commissioner Bacchetti wanted to approach the Planning and Transportation Commission to see if the HRC could join them and form a Blue Ribbon Commission to look at the whole issue of affordable housing and hopefully have an impact on the Comprehensive Plan. Chair O’Nan stated that all of the HRC Commissioners need to review the report and the report will be on next month’s agenda for discussion.

Commissioner Chen stated that the report was a challenge to write since there is so much data available. Commissioner Chen explained that she did some of the research and used the United States Census Bureau website which does not have up-to-date information but provided a good background. Commissioner Chen shared with the Commission that only 8.4% of the population who live in Palo Alto work in Palo Alto. Chair O’Nan stated that Palo Alto works hard to have a reduced carbon footprint but it doesn’t make sense that most people need to commute into the City.

3. Planning for Council Study Session – Chair O’Nan

Chair O’Nan stated that she is struggling with planning the Study Session since there is an election and the Council may change. November 17, at 6:00 p.m. is the scheduled Study Session which is after the election of the new Council. Chair O’Nan asked if the date of the Study Session could be changed. Ms. van der Zwaag said that she will check to see if the Study Session can be pushed for a later date. The next HRC meeting is Thursday, November 13 and may not allow enough time to distribute the Study Session PowerPoint. Commissioner Savage added that if the PowerPoint is a stumbling block it is nice but is not essential.

Chair O’Nan said that it has been an interesting year because the HRC has obtained some new information from the needs assessment that has not been shared with Council and that is why the HRC should speak to the new Council so they can be educated on HSRAP, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and the other items that the HRC has been working on. It is important to have the Council up to speed because if the HRC went to Council with an item from Supervisor Joe Simitian to carry the HRC would need to ask Council for matching funds and Council would be more willing to fund the requests.

Ms. van der Zwaag added that the Commission may need to give permission to the Chair and Vice Chair to create a short summary in preparation for the Council Study Session.

Commissioner Savage made a motion to give the Chair and Vice Chair the ability to create a summary for the Council Study Session. Seconded by Commissioner Morin AYES: Unanimous

4. Selection of Commissioner to serve on Human Services Resource Allocation Process (HSRAP) Request for Proposal Ad Hoc Committee – Chair O’Nan –

Ms. van der Zwaag requested to have a Commissioner assist in revising some of the review criteria of the HSRAP application. The committee would need to review the comments from the last HSRAP cycle to improve the criteria and the length of the application. The timetable for the review

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is during the next month. Commissioner Bacchetti expressed an interest at the agenda planning meeting and Commissioner Chen stated that she is also interested.

5. REPORTS FROM OFFICIALS:

A. Commissioner Reports:

Commissioner Morin reported that she met with the Santa Clara County HRC. They are interested in having social justice movies and would like to co-sponsor the publicity, funding, and in-kind donations with the City of Palo Alto to attract as many people as possible. Commissioner Morin would like to continue the discussion at the next HRC meeting. Ms. van der Zwaag reported that it is important to get more clarity from the Santa Clara County HRC.

Commissioner Stone attended the Project Safety Net (PSN) Meeting. He explained that the director stepped down and they are looking into what direction they will go. Ms. van der Zwaag is updating the Policy and Services Committee on Tuesday, October 21 regarding the future of PSN.

Commissioner Chen attended the Santa Clara County Regional Forum regarding affordable housing, homelessness and community improvement needs.

Chair O’Nan reported on the sneak peeks of the new Mitchell Park Community Center and Library. The facility has great meeting spaces, a teen space and young child space. The facility is beautiful but the issue is accessibility for teens that don’t have a way to access the great new resources. As the HRC, it is our task to make sure that everyone has access to the new resource. Opening day is December 6, 2014.

B. Council Liaison Report:

None

C. Staff Liaison Report:

1. Next month the HRC meeting will be held in the Downtown Library.
2. HSRAP site visits. It is important that all of the agencies have visits. Senior Adults Legal Assistance, Dreamcatchers, Momentum for Mental Health, Abilities United and Peninsula Healthcare Connections were not visited last year. Ms. van der Zwaag asked the Commissioners if they sign up, please make the commitment.

3.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL FOR AGENDA ITEMS

- A. Collaborate with Santa Clara County Human Relations Commission to feature social justice movies – Commissioner Morin
- B. Continued discussion of the HRC Report on Low Income Housing Study & Recommendations – Vice-Chair Bacchetti and Commissioner Chen
- C. Discussion regarding priority for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 5 year Strategic Plan –Hernandez/Weintraub
- D. Plan HRC Holiday Party
- E. Planning for Council Study Session
- F. Review Workplan Items

Approved

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.