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**HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

**Thursday, July 9, 2015**

Community Meeting Room

Palo Alto Civic Center

250 Hamilton Avenue

7:00 PM

REGULAR MEETING

**ROLL CALL:**

**Commissioners Present:** Alhassani, Chen, O’Nan, Savage, Stinger, Stone

**Absent:** Gordon Gray

**Council Liaison:** Council Member Wolbach,

**Staff:** Minka van der Zwaag, Mary Constantino

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

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

Chair O’Nan welcomed Valerie Stinger to the Human Relations Commission (HRC) and stated that the HRC is very pleased to have Valerie on board. Commissioner Stinger thanked Chair O’Nan and expressed that she is very happy to be part of the HRC.

**V. BUSINESS**

**1. Update from Project Sentinel on the Mandatory Response Program**

Chair O’Nan welcomed Paul Hebert from Project Sentinel and Jeff Blum and Marina Brodskaya, co-chairs from Palo Alto Mediation. Mr. Hebert explained that he is the case manager for Project Sentinel assigned to the contract with the City of Palo Alto and his role is to answer the phones for Palo Alto Mediation, offer tenant/landlord counseling and provide educational materials for citizens in Palo Alto. Mr. Hebert provided a one-page report representing the frequency of phone calls. There were 388 calls logged, and when he receives multiple calls or spends a long time on the phone the issue becomes a case and this year 147 of the calls became cases. A majority of the calls are tenant calls and 1/3 of the calls are from landlords calls. There are also the neighbor calls which are a small but significant piece of his work. When they take in a case they resolve it as either counseled, conciliated, mediated or educated and council cases amount to the largest number of cases and as the civil code is explained it suggest that mediation is the best solution.

The Mandatory Response component of the ordinance that created the mediation program is one of the heaviest tools. The mediation program provides for mediation and the ordinance provides for certain notices to be given by landlords on all key communications. The Mandatory Response Program is a

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much more formal and this year there were 114 cases that were topic of contention and there were 4 cases that were opened under the program this year. He advises tenant that they can either invite their landlord to mediation or demand them to participate; most of the time when a landlord is approached by the mediation program they do voluntarily participate.

Chair O’Nan asked if the people who are renting out rooms are seniors, families or young professionals living together. Mr. Hebert replied all of the above plus Airbnb. Residents do not understand if they rent for multiple months they quickly fall into the category of a landlord and the impromptu landlord ends up with all of the responsibilities. A new trend is that many people are renting out rooms in their homes to help make ends meet and in order to address that need Project Sentinel put on two free workshops that were well attended.

Commissioner Alhassani asked for more details on these types of Airbnb calls. Mr. Hebert replied that landlords say that the tenant signed up for one month, but they wanted three and now will not go away. Renters can establish themselves as tenants, which is a variation of a scam, knowing that if the landlord makes a mistake in the termination process it could take several months so they stay put and then move on and do it again. Other calls are landlords who have multiple tenants renting multiple rooms creating havoc in the home and inviting people to stay overnight. There is a lot of unanticipated complexity in the role of a landlord and the Airbnb homeowners are not thinking of that when they rent a space.

Commissioner Stinger asked whether Project Sentinel knows anything about the people who do not respond to the evaluation. Mr. Hebert explained that Project Sentinel provides a feedback form for everyone who participates in mediation or conciliation and the responses have been uniformly positive but when the mediation goes the full three hours people are tired and take the evaluation with them to send later but do not, and then Project Sentinel follows up with them by email. Anyone who talks to Project Sentinel expresses gratitude that the service is available.

Commission Chen asked where the residents found the information about Project Sentinel. Mr. Herbert replied on the internet, referrals and repeat users. Project Sentinel is advertising on the Palo Alto Networks Distribution and forums like Next Door. Mr. Hebert explained that Project Sentinel also receives referrals from police, code enforcement and animal control.

Mr. Blum from Palo Alto Mediation explained that there are currently 21 mediators, and they are actively recruiting. Currently he is working with Marina on next year’s mission, vision and doing a survey to members to get their sense on how to make the meetings more meaningful, informative, and safe. They are also working on outreach with local libraries, educating with meditation presentations to children and adults and fine tuning their website to provide a more prominent position.

Chair O’Nan stated that last time Project Sentinel presented it was mentioned that they were doing more family mediations; is that still a growing segment? Mr. Hebert stated that family disputes are difficult, and Marina has done family disputes in Santa Clara County but none in Palo Alto. Chair O’Nan stated that teenage rebellion could get to the point where children are leaving home and the police department receives calls from parents who are looking for support. Is that a niche that Palo Alto Mediation could fill? Mr. Blum stated that they do not have a lot of cases like that, but Palo Alto Mediation could but would require additional training. They all know how to mediate, ground rules, structure, the 4-step process but it can get intense with a family involved.

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Commissioner Stinger asked whether they have worked with Adolescent Counseling Services to help train them in mediation since they have access to teens and understand their dynamic. Would that be an organization to reach out to? Mr. Blum replied that is a good idea to reach out to Adolescent Counseling Service and collaborate in some way.

Chair O’Nan stated that parents have been upset with the school district administration and feeling that they are not being heard and it has escalated up to lawsuits. Is that an area that Palo Alto Mediation could collaborate with? Mr. Blum replied that there may be special contracts in terms of a dispute with protocols to follow but they could look into that area.

Commissioner Alhassani asked how they decide whether someone should mediate or go to court. Mr. Hebert replied that the resident has choices and one of the choices is whether to go to court but he cannot tell them what will happen in court and cannot give legal advice. If a resident decides to go to court Mr. Hebert always suggests observing before they make the choice. He also tells them to try mediation, which has no cost, no possible negative impact, but no know can tell them what to do. Project Sentinel has a success rate of 70% plus.

## **2. Update from the Palo Alto Police Department**

Chief Dennis Burns introduced Acting Assistant Chief Bob Beacom, and Lieutenant Zack Perron, Public Affairs Officer. Chief Burns provided a handout which included the goals and objectives for fiscal year 2015. The goals are broader and values-based and how they want people comport themselves.

1. Provide excellent service in everything you do
2. Make a positive difference
3. Use your free time to address community issues and concerns
4. Support the organization and your coworkers
5. Create and act on opportunities to improve yourself, your workgroup and organization

Chief Burns first spoke about the special enforcement detail and their work downtown. Currently there are three officers and a sergeant assigned just to work downtown and their goal is to be half of the time on foot or bicycle in order to have a connection and direct contact with people to make sure they are following the law and municipal code. The police department is involved in a variety of different projects. They work with Downtown Streets Team, Opportunity Center and Downtown BID. The City Attorney works closely with the officers frequently prosecuting for municipal code violations. They have a relationship with Santa Clara County (SCC) Mental Health Liaisons, who are formerly police officers, help mitigate people in a health crisis. The police, probation district attorney, and mental health providers help solve problems, structure meaningful sentences and get them services that will help them.

Chief Burns explained that another topic of discussion is their Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) which is mental health training that goes above and beyond academy training. The goal is to have all of their patrol officers trained at CIT level. The officers also train at a higher level Interactive Video Scenario Training (IVST) where officers use an interactive video system and are shown different scenarios, work through different issues and find the right solution for the mentally ill. Another piece of the CIT training covers if the individual is having a mental crisis and not a violent offender; officers are instructed to slow things down and reduce the level of force.

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The Community Policing Philosophy is throughout everything the department does; hiring, training, and evaluation. How can the department make Palo Alto safer and connect with groups that are here in town? There are School Resource Officers who work out issues within the schools. A popular program is the Parent Project which is a class the department puts on three times a year in conjunction with school district where parents are given tools on how to be more successful and consistent with their at-risk or challenging children and how to build a better relationship. Every August the department has a National Night Out and has community crime meetings when there is an incident where the community is educated on what is going on.

For outreach in the community the officers have “Coffee with the Cops” which is informal meetings with the community. Dayshift officers Adopt a School and go to the same school every day and the officers get to know the kids. The officers have special bicycle rodeos for kids to show them how to ride their bicycles the correct way and wear their helmets. The Juvenile Diversion Program is a class to teach kids what they did wrong and the consequences for their poor decisions opposed to being involved in the juvenile criminal justice system. The Community Outreach Request (CORE) officers work with the community to form connections. Recently the department started a Chaplaincy Program with Pastor Paul Baines.

Chief Burns explained that the Council approved new body-worn cameras for all officers. Approximately 40-60% of interactions with the public are not in front of a patrol car so it is prudent to have the cameras on the officers because it collects great evidence, reduces false claims and “everyone plays better when the camera is on.” The cameras will be available toward the end of this fiscal year. The department will reach out to the community to make sure they are aware that the city is adopting this technology.

Lieutenant Perron stated that the police department began using social media in March 2012. Currently they are using Facebook, Twitter, Nixie, Next Door, Flickr, YouTube and their own free mobile app. Social media allows the community to see the information that the department wants them to see because the news focuses on negative things and being pro-active allows the public to see who the officers are as people and the type of work they do on a daily basis. If the police department can provide the younger generation a way to interact with the police department, to ask questions or complain about community issues then maybe they will be comfortable to tweet or send a private message on Facebook.

Chair O’Nan asked what type of issues people are bringing up via social media? When you have a community that is tech connected, people expect a high level of a response, responded Perron. They receive reports on social media such as traffic issues or municipal code problems.

Lieutenant Perron showed a 2-minute news clip that aired on the CBS news last December, which featured a Palo Alto Police cruiser with five cameras that point in all directions and every car can record in a 270-degree field of view.

Lieutenant Perron stated that two officers started the “cops love lemonade stands” campaign so parents can ask a police officer to drop by their child’s lemonade stand. . On June 1 the department posted on Next Door and on June 6 a hash tag was created *#cops love lemonade stands*. The department has received close to 100 requests from parents to visit their kids.

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On March 6, 2016 there will be a Train-the-Trainer, a two-to -three day class on Fair and Impartial Policing with national experts taught by Sandra Brown, a former Palo Alto Officer. The Fair and Partial Policing was highlighted in the President's 21 Century Policing Task Force. The department is inviting all agencies in the county and extended an invitation to the HRC.

In regards to the body cameras, Commissioner Stone asked what type of policies the police department is looking into to, not only ensure privacy (because they automatically go on once the lights are activated), but how police are going to make sure during the heat of the call or alteration that officers will turn it on in time. Lieutenant Perron replied that Palo Alto officers have it engrained in them and a substantial percentage of officers have been using the cameras since 2007 and many officers have not worked in law enforcement without having to use the camera in their daily routine. The officers want that video to back them up in an event of a complaint from a member of the public. The new system has a lot of automatic triggers to turn on when the siren sounds, air horn sounds, or a back car door is opened. Another benefit is that it records video to a 40-hour buffer so the last 40 hours that the car's ignition has been on, even if the officer has not elected to create a recording; the department can go back and carve out any information from all five cameras within that 40-hour period. Commissioner Stone asked what about the body camera? Lieutenant Peron replied that the body camera policy itself governing their use is very similar and the camera will be used predominately by the traffic team who will be trained. There is not an automatic way to turn them on but one of the potential benefits of the new body camera system made by Watchguard allows a seamless integration with the car system when the automatic system kicks on, the body camera also is activated. The new system needs to be tested because it is a brand new product. Chief Burns stated that legislation is going through the state regarding body cameras and that will help design a policy.

Commissioner Stinger asked whether Police have explored programs addressing the needs of seniors such as scams, street safety, mental health issues and other needs. Chief Burns replied that the department could do a better job on customizing programs for senior driving because seniors become safer drivers with the right education and awareness. The department has provided a presentation at Avenidas about fraud but the department struggles with connecting with seniors because many are not engaged in social media. The Office Emergency Services has a two-hour emergency fair twice a year at Avenidas for seniors with disabilities and is well attended. The challenge is that they reach the seniors at Avenidas but are not reaching the seniors who are staying home. All of the crime alerts still go out to traditional media but the department encourages seniors to have their kids or grandkids follow the police department on social media so if there is something that they need to know that their family will pick up the phone and inform them. Ms. van der Zwaag asked what ability the department has to provide the messages in languages other than English. Lieutenant Perron replied it is an ongoing challenge for the police department because it is limited to English.

Commissioner Alhassani asked what the Police Department's biggest concerns are in keeping the community safe. Chief Burns replied that on a day-to day basis they are focused on daytime burglaries and this year they are down 43% over last year. The nature of the job is to think of the worst case scenarios which are child abduction or active shooter, and the department has protocols, trainings, and problem solve on how the department can improve. The department has preplanned trainings and countywide protocols with a coordinated response.

Chair O'Nan asked in light of the many black men and women who have been targeted by police departments in other parts of the country, has the department looked at what has happened nationally

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and provided guidelines and trainings so it does not happen here. Chief Burns stated that it starts with the people the department hires, training, supervision, feedback, discipline and policies. The department has an early identification system we track all high-risk low-frequency incidents; use of force, accidents, citizen complaints, cases that do not get followed by the DA, and pursuits. They are reviewed thoroughly and the question is asked “did the officer do it right or do it wrong” and was it a thinking mistake or of the heart. The department intervenes early on personal problems and wants to find out what is going on. There is a low level of discipline to get them back on track, provide additional training or personal leave. The department has a good view of each officer and how they perform in the field.

Officer Perron stated that there is transparency and openness in which the department communicates. The department has community meetings when there is a crime trend. Palo Alto PD will never decline to comment to media. He made a personal promise to the press to be accessible and if something were to happen the department would answer questions in a timely way.

Chair O’Nan asked whether Palo Alto Police feel they have a strong relationship with the district attorney. Chief Burns stated that the department has a satellite office at the DA’s office on Page Mill Road. District Attorney Jeff Rosen is an outstanding attorney and very ethical, and the department would go to him if there was a problem. The department has a police auditor whose job is to look at the police management group and ask did they really evaluate, investigate, analyze and respond to whatever the officer did and hold them accountable. Palo Alto is the only agency in Northern California with an early identification system, independent police auditor and a mobile audio video system.

Commissioner Chen asked if there is a homeless person on the street what is done. Chief Burns replied that it is not against the law to be homeless. If they are not breaking the law, we encourage officers to see if they can help. The department is working on a resource list for the homeless. Downtown Streets Team and the Opportunity Center provide a tremendous service and try to steer them there.

Council Member Wolbach stated that one of the Council’s priorities this year is the Healthy City/ Healthy Community and a big part of that is paying special attention to the at-risk groups in the community such as the youth, disabled, homeless and seniors and the Council appreciates that the police department is paying attention to each group, have programs in place and are looking for input to expand senior services.

### **3. Discussion on the Planning of a Domestic Violence Awareness Event and Other Topics in the Continuing Series - Chair O’Nan**

Chair O’Nan stated that she wanted to discuss the upcoming event. Commissioner Gordon Gray is interested in raising community awareness of domestic violence. October is domestic violence month so a date is being set for mid-October. There will be a panel of experts and one of the panelists is a woman who founded a network called Women of Means-Silicon Valley and what this network does is help women who on paper are wealthy and married to powerful men but are kept prisoner in their own home often not having access to their assets, afraid for themselves and their kids and trapped in abusive relationships. This network helps women understand their rights and get access to legal and financial representation. The forum is also going to explore how to better serve the immigrant community and help them understand their legal rights in terms of family violence. Teen violence will also be included in the event due to the upsurge in dating violence between young people. If there is time, we

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may also tackle elder abuse. Mayor Holman will be the moderator and they may ask Chief Burns to be a panelist.

This will be the first in a series of events that will model Mountain View's Civility Roundtable. They feel people are not aware of serious problems in the community and one of our roles as the HRC is to be a voice for those who are marginalized.

#### **4. Update on the Homeless Vets Subcommittee – Commissioners Alhassani and Stone**

Commissioner Alhassani explained that he had a few updates. The date is Friday, October 2 in the El Palo Alto Room at Mitchell Park Community Center from 12 to 5 p.m. A few edits were incorporated into the agenda. They are working with new census data which indicates there are 683 unsheltered individuals, 24 families and 63% of the unsheltered are vets. Santa Clara County has the highest unsheltered homeless in the country.

#### **5. Discussion on the Annual HRC Retreat – Chair O’Nan**

Chair O’Nan reported that the HRC Retreat is scheduled for Wednesday, August 19 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. A midmorning snack will be served as well as lunch. Chair O’Nan stated that Council Members Wolbach and Berman will be invited. The Commission will be reviewing past accomplishments and future priorities, align subcommittees, discuss new project ideas, and a new direction for the coming year.

## **REPORTS FROM OFFICIALS**

### **1. Commissioner Reports**

Commissioner Stinger reported that she attended a Community Forum on July 6 at the University Zion Church which was moderated by Pastor Smith which 130 people attended. Council Member Berman addressed the crowd. There were two objectives and one was healing after the Charleston church killing and a more significant portion of time was dedicated to moving forward. People spoke and had ideas and many of them were addressing implicit bias. One of the best ideas was a film *White Like Me* which was a starting place for dialog. The film talks about pre-biases, how groups assemble in neighborhoods and adapt bias. There will be a second Forum on July 20, and Commissioner Stinger stated that she would like to task to work with the pastor and the assembled group and bring back to the retreat some ideas.

Chair O’Nan stated that she attended the closing ceremony for Youth Community Service’s summer camp. During the camp the participants made videos, performed skits, helped the homeless, pulled weeds and all came out with a group of new friends. The participants acquired a strong awareness that there are people less fortunate.

Chair O’Nan reported that the Palo Alto Housing Corporation has an entrepreneur leadership program, and they have popup stores where they sell their handmade goods. They will be selling at Whole foods and the Episcopal Church at Waverley.

### **2. Council Liaison Report**

Council Member Wolbach advised that Council is on break until August 17. Council took action to set aside \$14.5 million toward the purchase of the Buena Vista Park and some county funding has been reserved. The funding will help open a strong positive dialog which is part of the affordable housing crunch and resolving the quasi-judicial rule that the city could not talk about policy issues prior to

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negotiations kicking off. Now the negotiations can begin. Supervisor Simitian of the county and the nonprofit Caritas are well positioned to be involved and the city has stepped up to do their part as well.

Council Member Wolbach reported that the discussion is moving forward regarding accessory dwellings which is part of the affordable housing issue. The City Manager has identified a Citizens Advisory for the Comprehensive Plan update.

### **3. Staff Liaison Report**

Ms. van der Zwaag reminded the commission that there is no regular meeting in August.

She also reported that there will be a commission recognition event on September 12 at Mitchell Park at noon and that commissioners should have received a “save the date” for that event from the Clerk’s Office.

Also, an invitation will be sent out tomorrow as a reminder of an event on October 16 sponsored by the Community Services Department as part of its technical assistance series for friends’ groups and nonprofits. Andy Goodman will be speaking, and he is a renowned lecturer on storytelling which will help nonprofits further their cause.

On Monday, July 27 6:30 to 8:00 pm. in the El Palo Alto Room there will be a meeting regarding the rail coordinator safety improvements which will include information about the new fencing, shrub and tree removal and the piloting of an intrusion detection system which will be part of Project Safety Net’s complete suicide protection strategy.

### **CALL FOR AGENDA ITEMS (August 19, 2015)**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

1. The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.