



## HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Thursday, February 11, 2016

Community Meeting Room

Palo Alto Civic Center

250 Hamilton Avenue

7:00 PM

REGULAR MEETING

### ROLL CALL:

**Commissioners Present:** Alhassani, Chen, Gordon Gray, Savage, Stinger, Stone

**Absent:** O’Nan

Council Liaison: Council Member Wolbach

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

### ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

None

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

**Commissioner Gordon Gray made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2015 Human Relations Commission (HRC) meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chen.**

**AYES: Unanimous.**

### AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS:

Item #1 Speaker series “An Immigrant Experience in Palo Alto” was cancelled

Ms. van der Zwaag suggested having Item #3 HRC/Council Study Session deferred due to the cancellation of the Council meeting on March 7. The HRC will be on the calendar for the Council Study Session on May 9, 2016 so it can be put on the April agenda.

### V. BUSINESS

#### 1. Speaker series “An Immigrant Experience in Palo Alto”

Cancelled

#### 2. Selection of CDBG Review Committee Members

Ms. van der Zwaag stated the Community Development Block Funds are coming to the City of Palo Alto from the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Commissioners Stone, Alhassani, and Chen sat on a committee last year and made two-year funding recommendations but there is an option in CDBG where grants are revisited for year two allocations with the possibility of new applications. The CDBG committee needs up to three commissioners to sit on a review committee. There will be one meeting and will include reading one new application and a short brief from the CDBG Planning and Community Environment staff member. This is a two to two and one-half hour commitment, and they would like the selection committee to meet in late February or early March and bring the year two allocations to the HRC in March, Finance in April and Council in May. Ms. van der Zwaag stated that she is happy to answer any questions about volunteering to serve on short-

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term one-time subcommittee. Commissioner Gordon Gray asked what the outcome of the subcommittee is. Ms. van der Zwaag replied there will be a review of this year's allocation and the discussion will include looking at continuing year one funding, HUD has more income from loans that were repaid and the review committee may look at funding differently and then the review subcommittee's recommendation will go to the Finance Committee. Commissioner Alhassani added that learning the process was valuable to the commissioners in getting to know the nonprofits that the HRC works with. Commissioner Chen stated that it is very useful to meet with the nonprofits because the subcommittee gets to learn about their situations. Ms. Van der Zwaag stated that the process is different because the nonprofits can come to the evaluation meeting and provide extra information if needed. Commissioner Alhassani asked who the organization is that submitted the application. Ms. van der Zwaag replied that the application is from a housing rehab organization but did not know specifically who the organization was. Vice Chair Stone stated that participating in the CDBG review committee is one of the HRC's greatest responsibilities and it is rewarding to work with the nonprofits because it is one of the biggest areas for the HRC can make an impact. Commissioner Gordon Gray volunteered to be on the review subcommittee. Commissioner Savage stated that she will be traveling during that time but if the dates change she would do it if she is in town. Commissioner Stinger asked if it is an advantage to have someone who has been on the review committee before. Ms. Van der Zwaag replied that it would be an advantage to have someone who had been included in the process but it is not a requirement. Commissioner Savage added that she has served on the review subcommittee but it was a long time ago. Ms. Van der Zwaag stated that she will provide Eloiza Murillo-Garcia the subcommittee's email information.

**Vice Chair Stone made a motion that the CDBG Review Subcommittee consist of Commissioners Gordon Gray, Stinger and Savage. Seconded by Commissioner Chen. Ayes: Unanimous.**

**3. Discussion on planning for the joint HRC/Council Study Session scheduled for 3/7/16**  
Deferred to the April 14, 2016 agenda

**4. Update and Discussion on the topics of future HRC community forums**

Vice Chair Stone reported that the HRC had so much success last year with the Homeless Veteran Summit and the Domestic Violence Forum the HRC wanted to continue the momentum into the New Year by opening up the discussion to any ideas for continuing the series or forums.

Commissioner Stinger stated that the HRC is moving forward for a forum on March 30 called "Being Different Together Experiencing Palo Alto Perception or Reality" focusing on subconscious and implicit biases. The committee has vetted and offered invitations to a moderator and keynote and are ready to lock that down. Commissioner Gordon Gray has kindly offered to help in finding supportive organizations from the community and would appreciate some help from other commissioners if they know of organizations that have good diversity training so she can reach out to them. Commissioner Gordon Gray asked if the organizations that are being solicited need to be local. Commissioner Stinger replied that she would rather have local groups. In her ideal world it will be a panel representing different aspects of how we interact; spiritual, business, civic or the school arena. Facebook, Apple and Google have diversity trainers, but they are without Palo Alto zip codes but have Palo Alto employees that are involved in our community. Commissioner Stone stated that he had a law professor that taught about jury law but had large discussions on implicit biases and how that impacts jurors, police officers, and lawyers and the entire judicial system and asked if that something you are looking for. Ms. Van der Zwaag stated that at this point names are

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being gathered, different voices are being weighed to get a good balance of diversity for the panel.

Commissioner Gordon Gray stated topics for a forum could be health and wellness which is tied to people who have the least advantages and the topic of children discussing childcare and children with special needs. Neighborhood associations could be a topic focusing on what do they do and what do they need; what is working and what are some of their initiatives? Community programs called Time Banks where people get credit for their services and maybe there are programs that help people who have challenges and are underserved. Ms. van der Zwaag asked if the commissioners were thinking about something that is informational for the HRC rather than having a community forum. Vice Chair Stone stated an idea germane to the previous year's affordable housing series this new push that Palo Alto Forward is making in creating affordable housing with some solution for teachers, firefighters, police officers, and other city employees who cannot afford to live in Palo Alto but give to the community. Commissioner Alhassani added the HRC could have educational sessions about different options on how to get affordable housing to the area. Palo Alto Forward is holding two events with the first one on February 25 where Stephen Levy is giving an economic update on the area and on March 3 the discussion will be about Lilypads which are secondary units and could be an option to adding more affordable housing. Commissioner Savage stated that she had two suggestions for a speaker series or community forum. Firstly, what is the City of Palo Alto doing about cyber threats or threats to the community cyber wise. Many organizations have threat assessors who continually assess. She asked if the City has such a thing and is it something the City should be worried about? The other idea is human trafficking because we see people on the corner selling boxes of strawberries or grapefruits. It is important to bring attention to the issue. Ms. van der Zwaag stated that the leadership team is now looking at having mini-speaker series with two or three sessions.

## **VI. Reports from Officials**

### **1. Commissioner Reports**

Commissioner Chen reported that she has been working with Micaela Hellman-Tincher from County Supervisor Joe Simitian's office in terms of a welcoming event at the City of Palo Alto. Commissioner Chen stated that she visited Judy Kleinberg at the Chamber of Commerce and she suggested that the HRC write a statement, and that she will be glad to meet with the committee. Ms. van der Zwaag added that she, the County Supervisor staff, and Claudia Keith met last week for an initial conversation to discuss what is feasible with timing and staffing but when there is an update will have the HRC be involved.

Commissioner Chen reported that she will attend a Chinese New Year celebration on Sunday, February 21 from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Mitchell Park Community Center.

Commissioner Alhassani reported that former Mayor Nancy Shepherd introduced him to an organization called Vets in Tech located in Palo Alto which is for veterans who want to take courses to be entrepreneurs. Vets in Tech asked to be updated when the HRC is having their next event and would like to bring ideas to collaborate together especially since data shows that unemployment is one of the issues why veterans become homeless.

### **2. Staff Liaison Report**

Ms. van der Zwaag reported that the Comprehensive Plan went to Council on February 8 where there was a long conversation with comments from members of the public which included services to homeless individuals and the real need to add permanent supportive housing and not

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just temporary shelters. Mayor Burt was looking for a more streamlined document and advised staff to go back and make it streamlined to a workable document for the future and taking out names that are now partners but may not be partners later.

The next Element to go to the Community Advisory Committee is the Transportation Element. The Element and revisions are currently up on the City's website so commissioners can review the Element and go to the CAC to speak as individuals.

## **CALL FOR AGENDA ITEMS (March 10, 2016)**

- a. Discussion of Joint Study Session in May
- b. Speaker series
- c. Update from the CDBG Subcommittee
- d. Update on March 30 forum

## **ADJOURNMENT**

1. The meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm