



HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Thursday, April 14, 2016

Community Meeting Room

Palo Alto Civic Center

250 Hamilton Avenue

7:00 PM

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present: Chen, Gordon Gray, O’Nan, Stinger, Stone

Absent: Alhassani, Savage

Council Liaison: Council Member Wolbach

Staff: Kristen O’Kane, Mary Constantino

II. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Stone made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2016 Human Relations Commission (HRC) meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chen.

AYES: Unanimous. **Abstaining:** O’Nan

IV. AGENDA CHANGES, REQUESTS, and DELETIONS:

None.

V. BUSINESS

1. **Speaker series “An Immigrant Experience in Palo Alto” with Agent Max Nielepko, an immigrant from Poland**

Chair O’Nan: Item 1, I’m very pleased that we have a speaker tonight. I will turn this over to my colleague, Theresa Chen, to introduce our speaker for this evening.

Commissioner Chen: Our speaker tonight is Agent Max Nielepko. I just learned how to say his name correctly. He’s originally from Poland, and he’s working at the Palo Alto Police Department. I was so honored that he could be with us and tell us his experience as an immigrant growing up in City of Palo Alto.

Mr. Nielepko: Thank you for having me. The honor is all mine. I have some prepared remarks I’d like to go through, and then after that I’m happy to take any questions and participate in any discussion.

Chair O’Nan: That would be wonderful. Let me just ask this. Is Agent Max’s mike on? Is everything okay with that? Please go ahead.

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Mr. Nielepko: Good evening. My name is Max Nielepko. First of all, I want to thank you all for the opportunity to speak with you today. I want to share with you an immigrant's experience of moving to Palo Alto. I was born in Poland. My parents and I left in 1986 as political refugees to get away from Communism and to seek a better future. We traveled through the former Yugoslavia and into Spain, where we lived and waited for Visa paperwork to move to a permanent home. Actually, our original destination was Australia. Because things didn't work out and an amazing opportunity presented itself, we came to the United States. After waiting in Spain for several months, the United States issued our family a Visa, and we flew to San Francisco to start a new life. We arrived with little more than the clothes on our back and two suitcases, one of which was of course lost by the airline. Luckily the suitcase that contained a few of my toys, obviously the important one, did arrive and did make it safely. We were very poor in the beginning. My dad was working three jobs at once to make ends meet for our family. When we lived in San Francisco, I remember my mom, who was very pregnant at the time and I would ride the bus across the city to get to her doctor appointments. The bus ticket cost \$1 and was valid for 2 hours. When we couldn't make the return trip in time, within that 2-hour time window, we would actually walk home to save money. To give you an idea of what our financial situation was like, to put it into perspective, you had a pregnant woman and a 5-year-old boy walking miles through the hills of San Francisco to save \$1. Do you know what my mom would do with that \$1? She would actually take me to a Goodwill store and buy me a toy before we came home. I still actually have at home the very first toy I got when we first came to this country. It's kind of in a special spot. After a few years, my dad got a job here in Palo Alto, and we soon heard about the Palo Alto Housing Corporation, now called Palo Alto Housing. We applied, and we were offered an apartment. Having lived in San Francisco and Oakland and other cities, moving to Palo Alto was an amazing experience. My dad's commute was greatly reduced, and we were able to spend more time together as a family. I have always felt very fortunate that I and my two younger sisters had the opportunity to grow up in this community. Some of the amazing things about Palo Alto that we really enjoyed were the schools, I graduated from Paly, and my sisters graduated from Gunn High School; the parks and the open space; the nature that we have here in Foothills Park and the Baylands; and the trees around town, it's truly stunning; the library system, especially with smaller kids the Children's Library was always a favorite destination. Above all, it's the kind, generous, educated, driven and compassionate people that we have in this community. That, I think, really formed the fabric of who we are. We try to, as a family, give back and be involved. Over the years, my parents have volunteered at Palo Alto schools. They have refereed and coached Palo Alto sports teams. They have volunteered at the Children's Theatre and other local programs. After I graduated from UC Davis—go Aggies—I decided to pursue a career in law enforcement. When I was offered a job by the Palo Alto Police Department, I was thrilled that I could work here, so I took the opportunity. I was just so happy I could serve the very community that had given so much to my family. I've worked in Palo Alto now for over 11 years, and I've spent the last 5 years in the Detective Bureau. Through my professional work and through my personal time, I've been able to get involved in our community in different ways. I've found it personally very satisfying and rewarding to be able to work with and give back to Palo Alto Housing through a variety of different ways.. I think Palo Alto is really a unique place in the world. I've been lucky enough to travel and live in several different countries. I really believe wholeheartedly that what we have here is very special. My family and I are very proud to call ourselves Americans, and we are so thankful that we have been part of the Palo Alto

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community. As immigrants, my family felt truly very welcomed as we started a new life here. On behalf of my family, I just want to thank all of you and everyone in this entire community for helping us achieve things that we really never imagined would be possible. That's a little bit about me and my experiences as an immigrant. Really, they've been overwhelmingly positive. I felt that everyone, from our neighbors to certainly everyone from the City, was always incredibly welcoming and helped us tremendously as we grew accustomed to a different way of life. Obviously I feel very thankful that I was able to go to Palo Alto schools and that we had an opportunity to even live here which, without the Palo Alto Housing corporation, we could have never done. That is a little bit about me. If you have any questions or anything, I'm more than happy to talk about those.

Commissioner Chen: I can start the question. One of the things that we heard from the previous immigrants is their language problems because at home they speak a different language. When they came to the United States and they had to learn English, they had tremendous difficulty connecting with people because of the language barrier. I don't think it happened to you, because you grew up here but what about your parents?

Mr. Nielepko: My parents certainly still speak with a very noticeable accent. My dad took some English classes before we came here, when we were still living in Poland and Spain. He knew some very basic English, but my mom and myself, didn't speak a word of English when we arrived. For us, I can't say if it works for everybody, but what really worked well for me is I took about a year before I started school and started just picking up the language. Pretty much my parents just sent me right into school, and it was kind of a trial by fire. Certainly the first couple of months were a little difficult, but I think it was also really good for me in the long run because I quickly learned the language and started doing better academically. That's the way it was for us.

Commissioner Chen: I'm just quite interested in your parents' situation. When they were here at the beginning with little English, how did they find jobs and did they have any difficulty in terms of looking for jobs? How did the people look at them without speaking fluent English?

Mr. Nielepko: I spoke with my parents before coming here tonight. What they shared with me was that they felt that everyone was very welcoming and very accommodating and always tried to really work with them, even if there were some a language barriers.. I think it only really took us maybe 6 months to a year to really become quite fluent in the language. As far as just purely focusing on the language skills, I think it really only took us 6 months to a year to get that going. Some the work my dad was initially doing was more was on the weekends he was literally almost a day laborer and would find jobs to do to pick up some extra money. In the evenings and at nighttime, he would work as a caretaker for someone. During the day, he was working as a librarian at the time, so it maybe didn't require a tremendous amount of language skills and interaction, but it was also a good opportunity to learn it.

Commissioner Chen: Thank you.

Chair O'Nan: Do other people have questions?

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Vice Chair Stone: Yes, I do. Thanks for coming out and sharing your story with us. Thanks for serving the community.

Mr. Nielepko: Thank you.

Vice Chair Stone: What year did you start school here in Palo Alto? What age?

Mr. Nielepko: I was in second grade when I started in Palo Alto.

Vice Chair Stone: What was your experience like going through the school? Did you ever feel any—of course, kids can be meaner than the rest of the community. Did you ever feel different or isolated while in school with your—either in elementary school, middle school or high school, at any level, did you ever feel like you were treated differently because of your experience?

Mr. Nielepko: I would say not at all. I would say actually quite the opposite. I was very fortunate that all the friends that I made, especially in Palo Alto schools, come from such diverse backgrounds. I mean literally every corner of the globe and so many different languages. I think that we definitely—it's not just a word that we throw out there. I think we really do have tremendous diversity in this community. I didn't feel as though I was somehow isolated or different. I felt like all of my friends that I was close with had such tremendously diverse backgrounds that it was more of a binding force for us.

Commissioner Gordon Gray: Do you think it's easier to integrate yourself into the community if you're European versus Asian or African-American? Well, African-American wouldn't be an immigrant. I just wonder because you look like us. Do you know what I'm saying?

Mr. Nielepko: I don't know. That's certainly a great question. I'm not sure that I can speak from experience. I had friends of various backgrounds and ethnicities certainly growing up in school. From what they shared with me, I think everyone was quite happy to be going to Palo Alto schools to be benefiting from everything we have in this community. I certainly hear and read about maybe stories that are different than the ones that I experienced and those that were shared with me by my friends and peers growing up. I have to say that my experiences were overwhelmingly positive.

Chair O'Nan: Commissioner Stinger, do you have a comment or a question?

Commissioner Stinger: I have a question. First, thank you very much for sharing your story. You have a very unique perspective having been here as a child and now working here as an adult. What would you suggest to the Commission, to the City if we were to find another immigrant family, another family applying for a Visa? What could we do to make them have as successful an experience as you've had?

Mr. Nielepko: Great question. When I spoke about this with my parents, the really only suggestion that they had that they felt maybe would have made things even easier or more convenient would be just some a one-stop shop where you could go just for information about everything from housing. For us, growing up we were very poor. We were always

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kind of on the hunt for scholarships and grants to allow especially myself and my sisters to attend summer camps and programs that we otherwise couldn't afford to pay for. Sometimes, working directly with different groups and camps and so forth, you could get those scholarships or grants which would allow us to participate in those things. Sometimes they just wouldn't have the money available. I don't know if there would be a way to just maybe centralize some of those things, just housing and scholarships. Just give people some tools and education where they can go and get some resources to figure out how do you get these things accomplished and what do you do. I don't know if the City has any type of fund or any money that could be set aside to even assist children in the community that maybe whatever background, wherever they come from, that if the parents just financially can't afford something, that it's just a need-based application that folks could fill out and allow kids to go to summer camps and programs and things like that.

Commissioner Chen: Thank you for the suggestion. I really appreciate it. You're saying if there is like a consultant or a counselor for immigrant families that would be great for the adults. Maybe they could help adults enroll in adult English classes. For children, help them apply scholarship or schools and look for opportunities. That'd be great. You almost need an office, a person like a school or a counseling service.

Mr. Nielepko: I think so. I know for us ...

Commissioner Chen: Specialized for the immigrant issues.

Mr. Nielepko: I think so. I know for us we were very fortunate when we were living in one of the Palo Alto Housing Corporation properties. We actually met some wonderful families there. Some of them were native English speakers. I know that my mother would very much rely on some of her friends to help her in writing applications for a scholarship or kind of taking care of things or helping her to understand a letter she received in the mail, if there was vocabulary that didn't quite make sense to her. We developed those relationships on our own. Maybe if there was a one-stop shop where people could go. I think nowadays with the technology that we have, it could be as simple as a website

Commissioner Chen: That's a very good suggestion. That's very good. What do you think about a welcoming event? If the City of Palo Alto has an event to welcome the newcomers every year, would that be good? Does it serve the purpose for new immigrants?

Mr. Nielepko: Sure. I don't think it could hurt.

Commissioner Chen: But is it necessary or not?

Mr. Nielepko: Sure. I think if you had maybe some resources there, and people could almost walk around to learn about some of the things that are available, whether it's immigrants or ...

Commissioner Chen: Newcomers.

Mr. Nielepko: ... just people who have some kind of needs in the community. I think that'd be a great idea.

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Commissioner Chen: Thank you.

Chair O'Nan: I have a couple of questions also, Agent Max. One is I was interested that when your family originally arrived in the U.S., you were in San Francisco. You mentioned you'd also lived in Oakland for a while before moving here. I guess you were maybe in the City and in the East Bay for a couple of years before you finally moved here?

Mr. Nielepko: Yes.

Chair O'Nan: I know you were young, but do you remember a different feeling of when you were in that larger, more urban environment versus when your family got to move here to Palo Alto in the '80s? Was there a different sense that you felt a better safety net; did you feel more welcome here?

Mr. Nielepko: Definitely my perspective comes from that of a child that was under 10. Some of the things I remember are kind of silly, like the park down the street and things like that. I certainly felt more secure in this community. I just felt like it wasn't quite as impersonal, and there wasn't just as much chaos as there was in larger cities. Certainly some of the schools I had gone to prior to coming to Palo Alto were larger significantly and had many more pupils in each class. I felt like the Palo Alto school experience was unique as well. I felt like there was much more personal attention devoted to each student. Those were really the things that I noticed. I think it was more based on my education and my little sphere that I was in.

Chair O'Nan: That's good. I did have another question as well. This is part of the reason the HRC has been interested in immigrant issues. We have noticed a trend that may be a little bit concerning, which is that sometimes new immigrants to the City tend to silo themselves into very isolated communities and not really engage with the wider community. I've heard even from Palo Alto Housing Corp., which you know well, that sometimes, for example, people from Russia will all tend to stick together. They experience some of the things that you talked about. They don't speak English well. They're more comfortable with people from their country who speak their own language. It's to the point that it's difficult to get them to even participate in events or to vote or to really understand some of the other amenities of living in Palo Alto. Your family seems like early on you really just dove in and you really engaged with the community. Here you are today just a prime example of someone who wanted to come back and serve. I'm wondering is there something about your experience here as a Polish immigrant family that you felt might be different from what we're seeing the trends today in, say, the Chinese immigrant community or the Russian immigrant community, where people tend to want to just stay off to the side altogether.

Mr. Nielepko: I think for us it was twofold. I think, number one, certainly the Polish community is just not as large as some of the other communities we have in town. Maybe there weren't quite as many opportunities to pursue that. I think also, the other side of that, our family certainly made a very conscious decision to try to really ingrain ourselves with the fabric of the community and get to know people and really learn about and work very hard to become a part of the community. I know that there certainly were some specific Polish churches and things in the community, just groups and associations that would come together. There were some Polish immigrants that were much more involved in those than

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we were. We would certainly pay some visits and be friends with people and maintain those relationships. Again, just speaking only from my family's perspective, we were not overly focused on being involved with that community. I think we were much more focused on becoming involved with just the Palo Alto community. It just had so much to offer. We left Poland because of some of the bad things that my parents had experienced there, just the lack of opportunities on the horizon. Certainly I feel like when we came here, this country and this community just offered us so much and gave us such an amazing future. I feel like certainly growing up and going to school and everything, I felt very much a debt and an obligation to my parents to make sure that I worked hard in school and tried to learn as much as I could and give back. Also maybe part of that too is because I had younger sisters, so I was the first one in my family going through high school and college and everything in the United States. I think for me it was both of those motivations existed to try to do well. At the end of the day, for us it was like we—when we were in Spain, I know my family was trying to—my mom was pregnant at the time, so we were getting to a point where she was nearing her third trimester, and the time crunch was upon us to figure something out. We only had a temporary Visa to be in Spain, and we were in housing that a very kind, local man basically would allow people to stay free of charge, if we were political refugees and coming through Spain. It had a leaky roof, and it was an old building, somewhat abandoned. We had time pressure to really figure out a more permanent solution. My dad went to embassies for multiple countries, Western European primarily, to try to get a Visa for us to come there as political refugees. He was turned down at all of those. He didn't think it would even be possible to come to the United States. The United States was very much looked up to, almost revered in Poland at the time, especially under Communism. When he went there, it was really almost out of desperation, thinking that there was no way that this could happen. He went there, and the U.S. had very pro immigrant policies at the time and issued us a Visa which we were ecstatic about. I think that for me and for my family has always been a motivation. This country and this community gave us so much, gave us so many opportunities and allowed us to realize so many dreams, things that certainly would not have been possible. I still visit my peers in Poland. The scars of Communist rule are very much still there. The opportunities are not there. The economy is still very much years behind, decades behind where it probably should be. For my family, I feel the need to give back and contribute to this country and to this community because of all the opportunities and all the things that we'd always been provided.

Chair O'Nan: That's wonderful. I just want to pause for a quick moment. Council Member Wolbach has just joined us. This is Agent Max Nielepko. He's from the Palo Alto Police Department. He is part of our speaker series on the immigrant experience, talking about his family's experience immigrating from Poland. First he was in the San Francisco area, and then to Palo Alto. Are there some additional questions or comments for Agent Max?

Commissioner Chen: I do have a final comment on that. What do you think, as a community, as a City, how do we do better to reach out to immigrants, especially those in silos? Do you have an idea to help us?

Mr. Nielepko: That's a tough question, again because my family wasn't so much involved in that community. In speaking with my parents before coming here, I asked a list of questions and among them was what really worked well in this community and what did the City do well and is there anything the City could have improved upon or done differently. When we

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were talking about the things that the City did well, I mean they talked to me for 10 minutes going down a list of different things that they loved and continue to love. They still live in town. When I got to what could be improved, I literally got a pause, a silence. I think from our experience—I don't want to just paint a very rosy picture. I'm sure you've heard from others or you will hear from others who maybe have very different perspectives and experiences that they've had. I can genuinely tell you that from my family's perspective and certainly from my perspective, I thought that the City has been fantastic both from the perspective of administratively and the City functions, but even more so the folks in this community really went above and beyond to reach out to us and to get to know us. I think as long as you're receptive to that and you're willing to participate and take a little bit of maybe risk and get to know people, the rewards are tremendous. Our experiences have been fantastic, and we're very, very thankful.

Chair O'Nan: That's wonderful. Commissioner Stinger, did you also have another question or comment?

Commissioner Stinger: I just had a comment. I just wanted to thank you. I thought your words were really motivating. I felt the same way listening to you as when I've traveled and I come back through immigration, and the immigration officer says welcome home. I just take that with real pride. I really am motivated by your story. I hope we can duplicate it for someone else.

Mr. Nielepko: Trust me I'm doing my best out there every day serving the community, trying to do the same. Thank you for your work, and we'll keep doing this as a team.

Chair O'Nan: I also had one more question. My final question would be we've talked somewhat about coming from a different country or speaking a different language. One thing we didn't touch on were class differences, which have also become an issue in Palo Alto. This is affluent community. As you've talked, your family was very poor when you first came here. You were living in subsidized housing provided by Palo Alto Housing Corp. I'm wondering did you experience anyone looking down on you or were you ever made to feel bad about yourself because you weren't a Silicon Valley millionaire family. Those class differences can be a bit subtle. Did you ever feel that way about Palo Alto?

Mr. Nielepko: Certainly I think you become more conscious of those things probably in middle school or high school. There was certainly times when I'd play on a sports team, and everyone was getting a particular type of shoe or something, and we just couldn't afford it. I became aware of those things, but at the same time in a way those experiences made me stronger. I think it's sometimes good not to get everything you want. It's something that I think has served me well. I try to instill that in my children as well.

Mr. Nielepko: The only thing was what I touched on with the scholarships and things like that. Sometimes it was difficult for my parents to get the kids involved in some things because it was just cost prohibitive. I'm not sure what could really be done. We just had to pick and choose what we wanted to do rely on the generosity of some of the leagues and organizations and camps in town to assist us financially. Again, that's where I really say that people in the community really go above and beyond here, and they're so generous. There were many times that either the organization would just sponsor me or my sisters to attend a

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camp or go to Hidden Villa or whatever it was. Also, there were certainly times when individuals would say, "We're going to take care of you." I think that was really the only noticeable, I guess, time when I felt like there was something I was conscious about; it was those experiences. Again, I don't think really in the big picture in the long run that those were necessarily overwhelmingly negative for me. It probably help build my character. I can't say it was something that was really a bad experience.

Chair O'Nan: I'd definitely say as a police agent, you must have some character from all those experiences. Vice Chair Stone?

Vice Chair Stone: Going in a similar vein to that question, as a police officer—I know you can't speak for other officers on the force—how do you think your perspective has been changed not only as nearly a lifetime resident of the City, but also from a different class of the City and with your immigration perspective? How do you think that's changed your perspective from other officers on the force?

Mr. Nielepko: I think for me it really helps to connect with people on a deeper level. It's not just a call for service where you have to do a certain job. I know I certainly always connect when someone is from a foreign country or has lived abroad. That's a place where I often find common ground. We have people that have come here to this community from so many places and people that are so well traveled. I think I've probably at this point traveled to like 25 or 30 countries, and over my life I've lived in five. I find it's easy for me to find common ground with people, because we do have such a diverse community. I think that's an area where maybe it just helps me build a better rapport with someone right away. That's huge because that can lead to a better contact and a better relationship even just on a quick street contact if we're doing something. Certainly in some of the more involved and complex investigations I've had to work on—I've actually been a sexual assault detective for the last 5 years. You get to know people pretty well. I think that building rapport and trust is very important, and it gives me that common ground with a lot of folks. I think it's certainly made stronger professionally.

Vice Chair Stone: Thank you.

Chair O'Nan: Thank you. Does anyone else have a question or comment? Council Member Wolbach, did you have anything you wanted to ask? Thank you so much, Agent Max.

Mr. Nielepko: Thank you for the opportunity. It was a pleasure, and it was an honor.

Chair O'Nan: Please tell your parents thank you as well. We really appreciated hearing their story.

Mr. Nielepko: I will. On behalf of my whole family, thank you to all of you.

Chair O'Nan: Good luck with baby number four.

Mr. Nielepko: Thank you very much. I'll need it.

Chair O'Nan: I feel very inspired to live in Palo Alto now. It was a wonderful presentation.

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2. Update and discussion on the topics of future HRC community forums

Chair O'Nan: We're going to move on to our next topic which is update and discussion on topics for future HRC community forums. We are on a roll these days. We've had a number of very, very successful forums, and we're going to debrief a little bit later on the most recent one, which was on implicit bias. I'd like to make sure we keep that momentum going. As we're now into April, if we're going to do other events this year, we've really got to get them organized and calendared. I would like to do an event on mental health sometime later this year. It couldn't be any sooner than the fall timeframe. I've broached the topic a bit with Minka. I think mental health is a really important issue for our community for many reasons. One, it is one of those hidden topics that people are sometimes very reluctant to talk about. Immigrant communities are also sometimes very uncomfortable with speaking out about mental health issues. We are a community that has been very impacted by the teen suicide clusters. That's been the most obvious public expression of mental health problems. Issues like depression, anxiety and more serious illnesses like schizophrenia, they have no respect for gender, class, ethnicity, religion, or language. They affect all of us. They affect all levels and all peoples and all families. I really think it would be a good area for us as the HRC to take the lead on and maybe partner with some of our local health providers to do an awareness event, and make sure that people, especially people in communities that maybe don't know or don't talk about these type of issues, find out that there are resources and that they can be safe and that they can have privacy, but that they can still get the help that they need. I'd like to work with Minka on that later this year. If any of you would like to participate in any aspect of it, whether you want to maybe help with some planning or helping to arrange some speakers or helping with signage, publicity or whatever, I know that Minka and I would really welcome the help. We'll probably start defining that task—mental health is a broad topic, so we may have to come up with something that's a little more focused, maybe either in the form of a question or the way that it impacts our community. I think that we've had a lot of discussion about the teen suicides. While that's still an ongoing, very pressing issue, I want this to be a broader event. We've also had senior suicides and that's something that people don't even know about in this community. We've had people act out, psychotic episodes. There was a man who burned down the Walgreens, because he was mentally ill in our community. There are things that we don't always connect. We sometimes think of them as crimes or outrageous behavior; we don't always understand the mental illness underlying some of that behavior. I really think it's time for us to as a community take a broader look at that and make sure that people understand what mental illness is and that it's something we don't have to stigmatize anymore. That's something that I would like to put on the table. Another thing—I mentioned this briefly at our last meeting—is that I've had a couple of conversations with some colleagues at the Mountain View HRC. They might be interested in partnering with us on some kind of event. Again, that would be a longer lead time, but it might be fun to kind of share the load with another group that's also very community-oriented as we are. Our neighboring communities have a great deal in common. In that case, maybe we want to do something more on the positive side. We've been focusing a lot on serious issues lately. Maybe we could even have more of a celebratory-type event and partner with Mountain View. That's an option. Again, if we wanted to do that, we'd have to think of some things that we might want to focus on and then do some reaching out to our colleagues and see if they're interested, and then start to calendar some of these ideas. They're all going to require months of lead time, so we can't let it go too long. I'd love to also hear from any of you, if you'd like to jump in. Now, you two both have just done events, and you're probably going to be exhausted for another year. I don't know if

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anyone else has something they're passionate about, that they'd like to work on. It doesn't have to be—we've been doing some pretty full-blown events lately. If there's something we want to do that's maybe a little quieter or a more targeted event, I think we're wide open with what we want to do. Unlike our colleagues in Mountain View, we're not tied to the roundtable format that they have, which is a wonderful format, but it is a bit constraining. They have to come up with an issue and then find people on various sides of a contentious issue and do that format every time. We can do broader events, more focused events, larger events and smaller events. I would like us to keep this momentum going that we have when reaching out to the community. I think that we're finding our voice, and I think that we're also being a voice for the community.

Commissioner Gordon Gray: Thank you for that suggestion. I think that's a great idea. I mean, it is a broad area. My husband and I were involved with NAMI for a while, because I have a stepson who's bipolar. They're certainly very active, and they're a good lobby. I did meet with one of the members of the community who some of you know. Her parents own Evvia, Mary Jane Marcus. She's a real social activist. Her thoughts about how the HRC could make an impact are to do something with renters. I know this is something that we're all aware of, but she says renters are really being hit hard in our community. She told me about somebody whose rent was raised \$500 a month. Really staggering things like that. They have to move. It's one of those again sort of hidden things in our community that we hear about, but we're not really in touch with directly. I don't know if that's a potential kind of event, but I think that would draw a lot of people. I do feel like the HRC represents the vulnerable populations in our community.. I do think that we have a role to play there. The other thing that came out of the conversation was what if we did smaller events. Rather than doing these major events which take a lot of production and resources, maybe there are smaller roundtables that we could do in one of the smaller rooms, like the El Matadero or one of the smaller rooms at Mitchell Park. I don't know if that would involve the same number of resources, but maybe that means we could do things more frequently and maybe involve a little less planning. I don't know. That was something that came up that I thought was interesting.

Chair O'Nan: I know that one thing that Commissioner Alhassani and I had talked about, at one point, was he has amazing social media skills. Some of our partner agencies in the community don't really know how to use social media that effectively. Since he did not attend the meeting tonight, I may take advantage of that situation and try to sign him up to do maybe a fair, kind of like a fair where he could help attendees. It would only be, say, our HSRAP agencies or some other local nonprofits. Maybe give them a quick—I don't know—Twitter lesson, Facebook lesson. I don't know. That could be something really fun and really help them out in terms of getting their messaging to a wider community. Something like that might be very well attended, but it would be a smaller, targeted event. If someone like Commissioner Alhassani would have the time and interest to do that, honestly I don't know that he does. If we do have a skill set or something that we could share, particularly with our nonprofits, I think often they're short-staffed, and they don't always have a chance to learn some of these skills. If we can impart anything that we have to them or help connect them to a resource that can help them expand their skill set that might be a very welcome opportunity for them.

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Commissioner Chen: Demographic changes in Palo Alto is a very good topic to talk about, because 10 years ago comparing to the population changes—we have kind of more diversified, had a lot more immigrants. It could be a good topic to talk about, get people involved, breaking the silo, how to do that, etc. It's going to be hard to do, but it's an area that we need to think about.

Chair O'Nan: Every year now, we have a festival called World Music Day which was started by a former HRC Commissioner that has become a really popular event. Part of that was to celebrate the diversity of music from all around the world. I just wonder if maybe we could do something sort of analogous. Have a kind of diversity day where we celebrate the wonderful diversity that we do have here in Palo Alto. We do have that role model. Somebody has an idea and they take it and turn it into a reality. Now, it is a well-established tradition here in Palo Alto. It's every Father's Day now for the last maybe 7-10 years, I think, it's been going on. I've volunteered for it a couple of times, and it's an amazing event. Maybe we could start a trend and do our own community festival, which might be a lot of fun. Yeah, I really like that idea too.

Commissioner Chen: My feeling is the Music Day is rather limited to the musicians and kind of music. It's not that—some people say, "I'm not interested in music;" they wouldn't attend. We'd like to have something that everybody's interested in. Like Ms. Sundas who talk about in last month's meeting, she said community events so everyone could participate. We need to find something that is fun for everyone.

Commissioner Stinger: I have some responses to everything. I feel like there's nothing here I don't like. I feel like a kid in an ice cream shop; all these flavors have some appeal because they're all important. I was thinking about the mental health day. I know the YMCA is beginning to look at their health summit in the fall. This might be a time to make sure that we are doing something that's different, but maybe there's a way to also collaborate and partner with them to make it efficient for the community and productive. I really like the idea of partnering and celebrating some of the positive contributions that different groups make in the community. That would be a really exciting thing. I was fascinated by your suggestion on the renters. Particularly in this regard, if we did a small session with renters more like a focus group to learn from the renters rather than present—not having a mission of awareness or problem-solving but learning what the situation—doing a situation analysis, doing a problem identification. If we could do that prior to our retreat, it might give us some guidance to set our priorities for the next calendar year. There might be other groups in that same vein that we'd like to just get to know better. It would be a different format than the forums we've been doing. I guess then the only thing new that I might add to it is following the implicit bias forum, we've had a lot of people comment and make suggestions. There will be some next steps coming out of that to carry that forward, but we haven't crystallized those yet.

Chair O'Nan: Thank you. I too was a renter here for many years before I finally was able to buy a small place. I attended many of the *Our Palo Alto* events a couple of years ago. There was a lot of talk from renters at that time about the lack of affordable housing and the skyrocketing rents. My concerns there for the HRC entering that area again is just that there's so little that we could actually do about the situation. I'm a little reluctant to kind of stir up a topic and then have to tell people we really as a volunteer Commission don't have a

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whole lot that we can offer you. That's what *Our Palo Alto* events kind of turned into after awhile. People were literally sobbing and talking about being thrown out of their apartments and having nowhere to go. There was just nothing that we could do for them. I would like all of our events to somehow have that shred of hope for people, that they're either connected to resources that might be able to help them or they learn about places that they can go for help, like we did with domestic violence, as we talked about with implicit bias and some of our other events. I'm just a little concerned about stirring up a hornet's nest around this very touchy topic and then having to say to people there isn't a whole lot we can do for you right now, except hear your stories and appreciate that you've shared them with us. If we can think of a way to tie this to something that would empower people or educate them or help them in some way, I think then it would be something that we should consider taking on. We do just have to be aware of the limits of what we can do as a Commission in this community. Housing is just a difficult topic right now

Vice Chair Stone: I know we're all excited with, the success we've had over the past year with our groups. I do want to caution us to not get over-ambitious and sort of dilute the new-found prominence we've had in the community by trying to do a little too much. I think we've done a good job over the past couple of years focusing on issues and tackling some very important issues and doing two or three large events that we do very well. I think we should continue with that model since it is working, and we haven't been using the model too long. I love the idea about an event sometime in the fall on mental health and then maybe throw in a couple of smaller events. To now jump off into other areas where, I agree with Chair O'Nan, we probably won't unfortunately be able to have much—I don't want to say we won't have success on it. I think people don't have a very good understanding of what our Commission does, let alone has the capability of doing. I do worry, even though that is probably one of the most pressing issues our City faces right now, I don't know if our Commission is the one to tackle it. I think we should focus in a little more on the success we've been having. I love the idea about trying to do some event and mirror the success that Claude had for the World Music Day. I think an event that celebrates the diversity of Palo Alto through a combination of music and food and dancing and all that could be very successful and a lot of fun. I think that it's the type of event that we could pull off and pull off pretty well and maybe create a tradition like Claude was able to do with the World Music Day.

Chair O'Nan: Thank you for sharing that. I have thought we could leverage some of Claude Ezran's model for World Music Day if we did a diversity-focused event. We also had some really interesting insights from Samina Sundas who spoke to us a couple of months ago. She's doing a Know Your Neighbor Day. A lot of that is helping people meet the American Muslim community. It could be easily expanded to cover many, many of the groups here. The Indo-American community here has the Holy Festival, which was fascinating and wonderful. I think some of the groups that live here are already stepping out and saying, "Here, I want to introduce my culture. I want to share with you where I come from." Maybe it's just a question of us to harness all these resources and bring them altogether and make it a citywide event that everybody's invited to. We might even get the Eastern European community to come out and join us and try to get over some of these cultural and language barriers that keep people isolated from each other. I think that would be awesome. Let's keep all that in mind. If you're interested in working on anything, let me and let Minka know. As I said, we do have to start the planning. We can't just keep kicking around ideas.

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We've got to get some things on the calendar and really start working on them, if we're going to pull them off in a timely fashion. I'll be working with Minka on the mental health event. As I said, we would welcome anybody who's got ideas, suggestions or who would like to be a co-lead or a helper bee even just for a short term or for a specific task. We'd definitely welcome that. I think we need to get our arms around that event a little bit more, but we'll have an update, I think, next time for you. I'll work with Minka on that when she gets back from her break. Does anybody else have any other comments, concerns, questions?

Commissioner Chen: I had one more comment. Sometimes I wonder what the roles of the HRC are. We are not actually a City employee; we cannot do a lot of things. I had experience; I called a meeting; people decided to do, and the ones carry on whatever we have decided. That is the problem. We have to define clearly what is our accountability, who is doing what is and how can we help. Sometimes I would feel I was pretty lonely in terms of what I was doing, because I had no help. I didn't know where to look for help. Maybe that's my problem. For such event, we need to know exactly what, good planning, exactly where to look for resources, how to get help.

Chair O'Nan: I think that's a really good point, Commissioner Chen. I think that's why we may want to, one, reach out to our colleagues on the Mountain View HRC and, as I said, share that load, some of that responsibility for the planning. We would also have to work closely with City staff and not just with Minka, but probably multiple departments if we were going to take over, say, one of the parks or a community center to hold this big event. I mean, that's a big deal, and we'd have to reach out to City Council Members and City leaders and neighborhood association leaders. It would be a lot of work, and we'd have to share that definitely. That could not fall on just one person. We certainly couldn't dump it all on Minka. We are a volunteer Commission.

Chair O'Nan: I know. The Commission need to make sure that the load is distributed and that we don't overburden staff, but that we too recognize that we're a volunteer Commission and we all have lives of our own. There is only so much we can do. We might only pull off one big, ambitious event a year, because it's just too exhausting. I think it's good sometimes to be a little bit ambitious and to push ourselves a bit. My feeling is with enough planning and with enough people volunteering to help, we could pull it off. World Music Day has just become this international event, and it was just a much smaller thing that was started several years ago here in Palo Alto. Things can grow and take on a life of their own too, if there's enough support and enough people. I think we should think about it. Maybe we can even reach out to the County and see if some north county folks might want to help out with an event too. We'll keep all that in mind. I'll talk to Minka. As I said, let us know whose interested maybe in doing what. As these things become set in stone as far as a date and a place, then I think we'll start figuring out tasks and activities and see who might want to pitch in and do what, and we'll move forward. Thank you, guys, for your comments and suggestions. I really appreciate that.

3. Review of the community forum on “Being Different Together, Experiencing Palo Alto, Perception or Reality”

Chair O'Nan: Let us move on then to a review of our most recent, spectacularly successful event, which was Commissioner Stinger's "Being Different Together" implicit bias event. I

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thought it was very well attended. Really appreciated the participation of Council Members Wolbach and Berman who were so kind to open and close that event for us. The panelists were wonderful. With that, I will quit talking and let my colleague give us her thoughts and share her perspectives on that.

Commissioner Stinger: First of all, I also echo my thank you to both Councilman Wolbach and Councilman Berman, and to a lot of people. Pastor Smith, who moderated; our keynote speaker; the panelists; I owe them a huge debt of thanks. I think we all got so much more out of their contribution than we could have imagined. I sort of divided my thinking into three areas. One was lessons I learned from logistics that might be useful to share as we think about going forward. I was very fortunate to have a planning committee work with me. That had members of the community as well as Commissioner Gordon and I and City staff. That helped spread the work, but it also was more fun; it gave me more ideas; it gave us access to more people. I think that might be something we'd want to consider for other forums, to have that planning group. PR, PR, PR. Commissioner Gordon, when you first approached me maybe 60 days before the event, I thought that was way early, but it wasn't in terms of getting ready and thinking about how we wanted to prepare our statements and the target audiences we had and how we were going to approach them. Scheduling that was important logistically. The other lesson I learned was to challenge everything. That was basically a lesson I learned from Minka. Every sentence we put on the table, she challenged. That made the event so much stronger, because we went through a lot of scenarios around the desk in her office and solved a lot of issues there that could have been hurdles going forward. Going forward I suggested that there will be next steps coming out of this. I've had a number of people approach me. Using one of our panelist's statements, Jade Chao said, "Use the other organizations in the community as platforms. You don't need to reinvent everything." A number of organizations have come forward and said they'd like to partner on future events. We're going to put an ad hoc subcommittee together. I volunteered you.

Commissioner Gordon Gray: Thanks for letting me know.

Commissioner Stinger: We could still within the dictates of protocol have another Commissioner join us and help sort through and prioritize the ideas that are on the table. I'd like to leave that as an open suggestion for preparing to come back to the Commission next month with some ideas. I have so many things I want to say, but it would take me 2 hours to go through all the important comments we heard. We just heard so many lovely words, cultural humility, listen, and make mistakes and a lot of good lessons about how we interact with the people in our community. I think everybody left feeling like they'd learned something important. I'll turn it over to the Commission.

Chair O'Nan: I agree. I really enjoyed the event. I enjoyed the panelists. I saw so many people nodding in agreement when the speakers were talking. Even little kids who were there were fascinated by some of the things that they saw and heard. I really also like the phrase "cultural humility." That's going to stay with me, I think, for a long, long time. Does anyone else here want to share his or her perspective on having attended that event?

Vice Chair Stone: First of all, I congratulated you at the event, and I congratulate you now. It was absolutely incredible.

Commissioner Stinger: Thank you.

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Vice Chair Stone: It was wonderful. The speakers that were there, they were all inspiring. I truly loved it, not just as a member of the Commission but as an observer. It was such a great event. I know someone commented on this at the event. I don't think I've been to anything in Palo Alto that was so—we're a diverse community, but I don't think there's ever been a room that I've been in that was as diverse as that room. That was pretty incredible, seeing all of the different people in there from all walks of life, from everywhere. Age groups, nationalities, religion, you name it, I think we had it. That was pretty cool. It was fun. I bragged about it afterwards too. My girlfriend's Mexican and she lives in Union City. She always jokes around with me that I'm on this Commission trying to fight for diversity. She goes, "Palo Alto, you guys aren't diverse at all." I told her afterwards, I said, "You should have seen that room. We are a diverse community, and I am very proud of it." I thought it was just great, fantastic, well done. It was definitely one of the proudest I've ever been serving on this Commission was sitting at that event that night. Well done.

Commissioner Stinger; Thank you. That makes me really pleased.

Commissioner Chen: Congratulations, that was a very good forum. I learned something amazingly. All those panelists gave us in-depth information about implicit bias that could have happened to me. I learned a lesson from it, and I also learned how diverse the community is. Jade Chao was talking about the Project Cornerstone and how many different kinds of nationalities, and languages. I was amazed. Thank you for the opportunity for us to learn and to get involved.

Commissioner Gordon Gray: What was very useful to me was to bring it down to the personal level. It wasn't broad demographics or lots of statistics. It was down to the conversation. I thought it was really productive. I'm trying to remember the term that Dr. Brown used, micro aggression. Things that I'm not aware of, but now things are like popping up everywhere. I'm seeing it. There's actually an application for implicit bias. I don't know if people know this. This is like a new app, phone app. If you are in an interview and—the woman who was interviewed was African-American. She was applying for a software engineering position. She had an MBA from Stanford. Not computer science, but she had an engineering degree from Stanford. They said she wasn't qualified, and she said she knew it was because she was African-American. She developed this app which basically deletes all the names. It's just like that story about the orchestra additions; it's a similar idea. Things like that are popping up, and it's called implicit bias. I just thought that was uncanny. Anyway, I'm seeing it in other places. There's an organization I found out about called Civity. I don't know if you know about them. We could talk offline about it. They train people in having conversations with people of differing points of view. It's all about that, implicit bias. It's popping up. You unearthed something that—we all know that this exists, but there's now many opportunities is what I've seen.

Council Member Wolbach: I was just going to say, first, thank you for taking time to confer and sit down and just chat with myself and Council Member Berman prior to the event, several days in advance of the event, so that we could hear your thoughts about the logistics, especially since we were going to be speaking at the very beginning and the very end, and also about the content. I thought that was very useful just as a logistical note for future events. I don't know if you had an opportunity to do that with the moderator or all the panelists. I think probably speaking for Council Member Berman and certainly for myself,

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having the chance to speak with the organizer in advance was very useful. Thank you for that. Also I just want to say thanks for having the chance to make the closing statements. Hopefully I did all right. I know Council Member Berman was thrilled to have the chance to make opening comments as well. I really appreciate that opportunity. Again, as everybody else has said, well done to everybody who participated, but especially to Valerie.

Commissioner Stinger: Thank you.

Chair O'Nan: Thank you so much, Council Member Wolbach. Again, we're very grateful for your support and for your participation in that event. This was quite a great event. We're so proud of Commissioner Stinger. Our two newbie Commissioners have both done an excellent job pulling off these events. They're a great team. Thank you both. If you want to jump in on any other future events, please let us know.

4. Discussion of the site visits to Human Services Resource Allocation Process (HSRAP) agencies

Chair O'Nan: The HRC is chartered with overseeing the grant process to the Human Services Resource Allocation Program, popularly known as HSRAP. We recommend allocations which then go to Council, and Council can then either take our recommendations or reject them or change them in some way. This is one of our key responsibilities on behalf of Council. What we like to do every year or two is visit our agencies. This is not an audit. This is not checking up on them. This is a chance to go and educate ourselves more about what the agencies do. When we review their grant applications, we have a better sense of what the needs are and what's going on. I think it really helps us to become more informed and make better choices when we make our funding recommendations to Council. Also, if we become aware of serious service gaps, that's something that we can also raise to Council when those allocations come up. Staff has put together two lists for us. It looks like one is an old list from some time ago.

Chair O'Nan: , What I would encourage people to do is visit an agency or two. If everyone could maybe try to commit to doing two over the next few months, these would have to be completed, I think, before the fall, because then we will get into the budget cycle where we will be reviewing the HSRAP applications. It wouldn't be appropriate for us to go doing site visits while the funding process is underway. If you are interested in visiting an agency, what you can do is sign up to be the lead Commissioner. Minka can help provide the contact information. What you typically do is email that person and say, "I'm on the Human Relations Commission. We'd like to just come by and learn more about your agency." Remember, under the Brown Act, up to three people could go to visit an agency. I said this is just to educate ourselves and become more informed. I've visited several of the agencies over the years, so I'll probably target some of the ones that I haven't had a chance to get to know yet. If there's an agency that's just of particular interest, then please feel free to either jump on board either as the lead Commissioner or as one of the other Commissioners. If you're not the lead, though, you will have less input probably into the date and the time of the visit. It may be that you'll have to piggy back on the arrangements that someone else has made. If your schedule is tight or you have limited availability, you might want to go ahead and sign up to be the lead and make your own arrangements. The other thing I would ask is that we not have multiple groups all go to the same agency, because that gets to be a bit much

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for them. If there's a group going say to visit Life Moves then probably one group should go and not burden them with being tour guides through the agency on multiple occasions. I don't think we have to figure this out now, but take this sheet home and perhaps for yourself if there are two or three or even more agencies that you'd like to visit.

Chair O'Nan: Why don't you identify—put your name under either lead Commissioner or if you want to be a tagalong. You don't have to be committed to anything right now. This is just to get a sense of who might want to do what. Once we have that sense, whoever wants to be the lead can start reaching out and making arrangements. It could be in the near term or in the farther out term, but I think we do have to wrap up before the fall, before the RFP process starts

Commissioner Gordon Gray: What is the process once you go there? I know you make arrangements with somebody. Is there an expectation of how long you stay? Do we have questions we bring?

Chair O'Nan: Typically we get a tour guide. The agencies often show people around. They show potential donors; they show board members. Some of them have visitors fairly regularly. They typically show us their facility. For example, at LiveMoves we met some of the clients who were there. We saw some of the shelters that they run. We literally piled into a van and drove from site to site to site because LiveMoves had has multiple places that they wanted us to see that were all under their management. Other agencies are very small. I've been to the MayView Clinic for example. There's maybe an exam room, and there's a lab, and there's not a whole lot else. It's a small facility. We talked a lot with the CEO at the time who talked about the mission, the clientele and the demographics of who they serve. We learned a lot about the clinic. It's been there since the '70s, so it's deeply entrenched in the community. Its work has changed over the years because, as we've been discussing, Palo Alto has changed and different types of people have come into the community. Even people who maybe in the past were able to get care at PAMF or one of the other providers, some of them can no longer afford to go there. They're now turning up at the clinic because it's a lower cost clinic. Some of these folks have chronic conditions like asthma or diabetes, and they have nowhere to go to get care. It's very, very informative and interesting to go and find out what's happening in the community. These folks are right on the frontlines. They are directly serving people in need. You learn a lot when you go. I think we spent several hours when we were at LiveMoves, because we did see multiple facilities. Some of the visits can be much quicker. You can set some boundaries around that. If you have limited time, you can say, "I'm going to come by. I've only got an hour. I'd love to just tour the facility and ask some questions." Questions often arise after you've been there, after you've seen. I don't typically prepare questions before I go. Based on what they tell me and then what I see, I always have tons of questions, but that's me. I'm going to go ahead and pass this on.

Commissioner Stinger: As part of the HSRAP process, do we have a binder with mission statements, functions? Is there anything that we should read and prep so that we're not asking redundant questions?

Chair O'Nan: No, I don't think we have a binder like that. No, I don't think it would be redundant. Mission statements are sometimes not all that illuminating frankly. Sometimes

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they're kind of broad.

Chair O'Nan: A lot of times you can read that a facility houses families in need, so you know what they do. When you go and you meet the kids playing in the playground and you talk to the mom who's trying to find a job because she's trying to support three kids by herself—we were taken to the apartment of one of the families. They gave permission. Just seeing how they had a bed and a chair and a table and that was it, I think the mom had basically fled an abusive situation and this was a safe place that she found for herself and her children, that's all they had. We saw volunteers from the Palo Alto Women's Club come. They did this massive clothing drive. They were just dropping off bags of clothes. They had somehow rounded up tons of clothing for the children so that when they went to school they would have things to wear. It was just this incredible coming together of the community. You could read about that and yet never fully appreciate it until you actually went there and saw people. It's a very, very good experience. I always come away just shaking my head in amazement at what our partner agencies do. Do you guys know what all the agencies do? Should I run through that quickly so you'll know a little bit better what their—are you familiar with them all?

Chair O'Nan: Abilities United is a countywide agency that serves a lot of Palo Altans and particularly children with developmental delays all the way up into adults. They work a lot with autistic adults who also need job training and so forth. We have Adolescent Counseling Service, which is in our schools, helps teenagers with all kinds of mental health issues. We have Community Technology Alliance. They run the program, the software that's required to track homeless people throughout the county. They do a lot of other interesting things. Downtown Streets Team, I'm sure you're all very familiar with—it's famous. They clean the streets here, and they help people transition from homelessness into employment. Dreamcatchers, one of our newer agencies, helps underprivileged children in the schools. It was started by a Stanford undergraduate who is now a Ph.D. candidate, an amazing, amazing woman. Life Moves helps the unhoused here. La Comida is the great subsidized lunch program for seniors in the community. MayView Clinic was the clinic I was just talking about, that is a low-cost clinic for the community. Momentum for Mental Health also works with mostly the unhoused on the mental health side. Palo Alto Housing Corp. is subsidized housing for people in need in the community. Peninsula Health Care Connection works closely with Life Movesto provide mental and physical health care for people who come into that facility. The Senior Adults Legal Assistance provides all kinds of legal counseling for seniors throughout the county but also here in Palo Alto. Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a very old agency. I think it goes back to the 1930s. It does a lot of work with Palo Altans who are losing their vision. Not even all seniors, but many younger people due to glaucoma from diabetes are now losing their vision at an earlier and earlier age. They're a wonderful organization. Youth Community Services, famous in Palo Alto for providing all kinds of community service opportunities for young people. That's just a quick summary of what they do. I'm going to see a verbatim transcript of that description, so I hope I got everything right. They're all just wonderful agencies, and I think that whichever ones you visit, you'll learn a lot. As I said, if everybody can maybe think of two that they might want to visit, go ahead and sign up. If you don't feel like you can commit now, we can circle around with Minka and Mary later on. I just wanted to put that one out there.

VI. Reports from Officials – Chair O'Nan

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Chair O'Nan: Let's move on to kind of our final chapter. First, I wanted to talk briefly about giving reports here in the report section of our meeting. We do Commissioner reports. At that time, Commissioners are just welcome to speak up on anything that they've done, an event that they've attended, someone they met with, for example, that pertains to their human relations work. We'd like to ask that you keep your remarks brief. Maybe to a minute or two, and then move on. Let someone else give a report or move on to Minka's report. We do feel like some of them are getting a bit long and detailed. Since the rest of us weren't there, it can be a little bit exhausting to listen to a long, long debrief on some of these events. If you have a Commissioner report, really urge you to share it, but to share it succinctly. If it's something that you want to talk more about or if you want to have a discussion around something you've learned, then let's put it on the agenda and make it an agenda item for next time.

1. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Stinger: This is actually in the category of a spinoff of the implicit bias forum. Kiwanis speaker series is sponsoring two events with the CEO of the Islamic Networking Group. One is a program on Thursday, April 21st, and the other is a program on Wednesday, May 11th. It's a chance to—the purpose of these social/cultural events is to help us to start to achieve a higher level of cultural understanding with our Muslim neighbors. It's a great opportunity to have community participation in the sense of a conversation that we talked about at the forum, and specifically to learn about a group in our community. I'll share this with anybody who's interested.

Vice Chair Stone: I think the day after the implicit event I got stopped by a young man, a teenager on the streets of San Francisco, asking for donations for the group called Hip Hop for Change. I asked him about it, and he explained what this group does. Basically what they do is they're trying to combat not only racism within their community but also this notion of rap music and hip hop and trying to fight, I guess, some of the older—I don't know—an older generation's thought process and biased views against it. They're really trying to use hip hop as a way to inspire young people to rethink their notions about race. It seems like a great group. They're pretty new. I gave him my information and told him to have the director reach out to me, and maybe they could come and talk to our Commission. I have not heard back from them, but I think it's something that leadership can discuss and maybe look out and reach out to them and maybe have this group, if they're in line with what we've been discussing, come out to talk to us. I think it sounds very unique and sounds like a new, fun approach to this very deeper conversation we've been having. Who knows? Maybe we'll be able to have them actually perform if we end up coming up with an event later in the year, be able to have them perform at something like that.

Chair O'Nan: They should definitely be at World Music Day.

Vice Chair Stone: Exactly, exactly. This doesn't give much information, but I could pass it around. This is what he gave me.

Chair O'Nan: Thank you. Are there any other Commissioner reports?

Commissioner Chen: I went to this event called *Youth Speaks Out*. It's an exhibit at the Art Center. There's been an opening reception on March 25th. I saw performances especially by a young lady from Gunn High School. Her name is called Ronnie who had a ukulele sing

Approved

along. It was very impressive. There was another man and boy who had written a poem and then recited that was very impressive. I think this is a good chance for them to express themselves and then be accepted into the community, for what they are, who they are. I think this is a very good chance for that. Thanks for City of Palo Alto had this location built out for people to do that.

2. Council Liaison Report

Council Member Wolbach: Yeah, a couple of things. One, the Finance Committee heard and I believe accepted the Community Development Block Grant recommendations for this committee. I relayed that there was frustration among the committee about the need to make some cuts. I hope that I fairly represented what I heard here, because we didn't really have minutes available to review at that time. My sense was that this committee did its best to try and be fair with budgetary restrictions. Also, at a recent Council meeting just a few weeks ago, we did give staff direction to—just going back to the affordable housing which has been a key area of interest for this committee for some time. We did give staff direction to start exploring some—at least come back to us with feasibility of what it would take as far as staff time to do some exploration of some innovative housing ideas including potentially smaller units of housing decoupled from the cost of parking and things like that. It's a complex issue obviously, affordable housing and affordability of market rate housing. We did give some, I think, interesting direction to staff. Hopefully we'll get some more ideas about how to add more housing, particularly affordable housing, in Palo Alto coming out of those recommendations. One other thing. I think several members of the Commission might be interested, including two who are not here currently, which is relating to use of surveillance and data gathering technology by government agencies, specifically by City agencies such as the Police Department. I was actually lead author on a Colleagues Memo that we just submitted along with Council Members Berman, Scharff and Schmid, that will be coming to Council for a first glance and then probably sent to Policy and Services Committee. That'll be coming up on April 25th, in about a week and a half. It suggests that the Policy and Services Committee and the City as a whole consider adopting an overarching policy regarding technology that might have a surveillance application. When any City department, whether it's the Police Department or, Planning Department, keeping track of how many—trying to track pedestrians or bikers or whatever, any time a City department picks up a new technology that might raise concerns about surveillance or privacy, that we ought to have a standard operating procedure prior to implementation to establish use policy, a data retention policy, a data access policy to ensure that we're doing our due diligence to preserve privacy and address those concerns in the 21st century. I know that Santa Clara County is also considering something currently. One of their committees was discussing it today, something similar for County-level agencies that would parallel this. Just something to maybe keep an eye on if you're interested in that sort of stuff.

Chair O'Nan: Thank you, Council Member Wolbach. Did anyone have any questions or comments?

3. Staff Liaison Report

Ms. O'Kane: I have something very brief. You should have all received an email from Rob de Geus, who's the Director of Community Services.

Ms. O'Kane: About the May Fete Parade. If you're interested in being a VIP at the May Fete Parade, then just let Mary know, and she'll get that set up and arranged for you.

Approved

Commissioner Gordon Gray: What day is that?

Commissioner Chen: May 7th. I read email.

Ms. O'Kane: That's all I have.

VII. CALL FOR AGENDA ITEMS (May 12, 2016)

1. HRC Chair and Vice Chair election
2. Planning of future community forums

Chair O'Nan: Do we have—let's talk about our tentative agenda for the next meeting. The biggest thing on the agenda right now is that the Chair and Vice Chair's terms are expiring. We will need to have an election. The Commissioners who are interested in stepping into leadership, just bear that in mind. The next thing, I think, is that we'll probably want to follow up on our planning for the community forums. I will hopefully have updates by then on the mental health event that I'm hoping to start planning with Minka. If any of you is interested in getting on board with either something that I'll be planning or that you'd like to plan, make sure you contact leadership so that we know what's going to be coming up, so we can put you on the calendar as well. Are there any other topics that we should raise for next time?

Commissioner Chen: I have a question regarding the Council study session on May 9th. Do we need to work on it a little bit further?

Chair O'Nan: No, that was canceled.

Chair O'Nan: Council has so much on the agenda for May 9th that they just can't spend an hour doing HRC stuff. It may be that we won't have a chance to meet with Council until after our retreat in August. It may be into the fall before we finally get a chance to talk them. There's just unfortunately—it is what it is. I would have liked to do it before the summer, but we have to take the timeframe that we can get. If you have May 9th on your calendar, you can delete that. Minka will let us know when we do get rescheduled. Are there other things that we want to talk about for next time?

Commissioner Stinger: One of the comments made at the forum was that we need to address housing displacement to maintain diversity. Councilman Wolbach just mentioned the direction to City Planning staff. I wonder if there's some role for the HRC either to write a Memo of Understanding or to ask if there's something we can do that's appropriate to our resources, if we can have somebody from the staff here to give us an update that we can respond to.

Chair O'Nan: I would suggest send an email to Minka and ask her those questions, so that we can try to figure out what staff might be able to do to help us frame that issue. I'm not sure exactly how to frame it as an agenda item.

Commissioner Stinger: It's something I care very much about. To the extent that we could even add an opinion piece, I would like to suggest that.

Approved

Chair O'Nan: The Commission has sent resolutions and sometimes a bit on the symbolic level. Council generally likes us to send more practically oriented pieces. That's not to say that we can't weigh in with an opinion piece. That could be very powerful. I think that's something we need to know how to frame it as an agenda item, and again I don't know quite how to do that. Maybe Minka and Mary can help us figure out how to do that.

Commissioner Stinger: Thank you for understanding.

Chair O'Nan: Definitely follow up with Minka. Leadership will talk to her, and we'll figure out a way to get that on the agenda. Is there anything else that people would like us to consider for next time?

Commissioner Gordon Gray: If we have an idea for a speaker, somebody we like, should we just submit it to Minka?

Chair O'Nan: I think right now we're still doing our immigrant experience series. Would this be something that's on topic with that series or is this a different type of thing?

Commissioner Gordon Gray: I'm interested in this person who started this organization called Civity. As follow-on to the implicit bias conference, I think it would be a very interesting talk. Yes, it's not exactly in line with the immigrant experience, but it is tangentially.

Chair O'Nan: I think we probably would want to have one speaker per meeting. If we take a hiatus from the speaker series, then yes, definitely. If we do line up someone for the immigrant speaker series, then we might have to figure out when to work in the other speaker.

Commissioner Gordon Gray: Why don't I ask her? If May's available and she's available, then we'll fill that slot. You want to just say that you'll abdicate for May?

Chair O'Nan: I would say why don't you send the speaker's name and contact information to Minka, and then Minka can coordinate for us. She and Mary have to kind of run the agenda and know who's going to actually be speaking.

Commissioner Gordon Gray: I would call this person first. I don't even know if she's interested at all. I'll call her, and then I'll say our staff person will get in touch with you if she's interested. That's how I would want to do it.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair O'Nan: If there's nothing else, then I think we are adjourned. Thank you all so much for your participation.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm