



HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
City Hall Calapooia Room  
Tuesday, May 26, 2009  
7:00 p.m.

**MINUTES**

Commissioners present: Jeffery Evans, Marian Anderson, Jodi Nelson, Nancy Greenman, Margaret Martinez, Kim Whitley

Commissioners absent: None.

Staff present: Wes Hare, City Manager; Marilyn Smith, PIO/Management Assistant

Others present: None.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Jeffery Evans called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

April 14, 2009

MOTION: Nancy Greenman moved to approve the minutes; Jodi Nelson seconded. Approved 6-0.

**SCHEDULED BUSINESS**

Business from the Public

None.

Debrief of Annual Report to the City Council

Evans said that he would have liked to have more of the Commissioners in attendance at the City Council meeting. Nelson said that the City Councilors didn't like the report in general. She said that the Councilors had some questions and made some accusations that the HRC wanted to discriminate against people in preferential hiring. Greenman said that there seemed to be confusion regarding hiring quotas and affirmative action. Greenman said that the HRC was scolded for overstepping its charge. Evans said that the Councilors had said that the HRC is doing a disservice to the APD by bringing up police profiling. Margaret Martinez said that she was unable to attend the meeting, but from what she read in the newspaper, it's her impression that the Councilors were afraid of the HRC and not understanding what they are doing.

City Manager Wes Hare said that some of what this group was hearing at the Council meeting may have come from a time before the HRC was formed. He mentioned that this Commission wasn't created unanimously. Hare said that part of the issue may have been due to the disproportionate amount of attention given to the police profiling issue in the report. Evans said that he doesn't know if a profiling issue exists in Albany, but there may be the question of it occurring within the minority population. Evans said that by ignoring the issue, it will likely become an issue sooner or later. Evans said that this Commission is made up of volunteers and that the group took a less than clear mandate and tried to define it as best as possible by following the lead of the citizens. Evans said that for the group to find its way, we needed to walk a fine line. Evans said that he was disappointed with how the City Council meeting went and was considering resigning from the Commission. Evans said that if we are to move forward as a diverse community, we need to cover these issues. He said that City hiring is mirroring what the population is made up of now, but he has noticed the Russian population dwindling and wondered why. Evans said that it appears Albany is "whiter" than other communities in the area, and the question is why. He thinks that the attitude of some of the Councilors could be the explanation as to why. Kim Whitley asked if there were any directives from the Councilors? Evans said no. Hare said that even though it was a difficult meeting for the HRC, Evans handled it very well. Hare mentioned that the Mayor thanked the Commission for their work

and report, and Jim Delapoer reiterated that the HRC can cover whatever they would like to cover and bring those issues before the Councilor's with their suggestions.

Greenman said that the harshest part of things tends to be what remains the clearest. In reality, maybe it was the case that the City Council as a whole was somewhat startled at what the report contained and wanted to move on from the discussion. She said that didn't mean the City Council doesn't support the HRC. Evans said that he felt the Councilors could have called him to ask questions about the report prior to the meeting. If there was an issue with the report, it could have been resolved before the meeting. Whitley said that we can look at this positively. There was an article in the newspaper about the report which means the HRC received publicity. The more citizens that know that this group exists, the better it is for the HRC. Evans said that he is taking time away from his own personal schedule to be a volunteer on this Commission. Nelson said that it felt like an ambush to her. Nelson said that she didn't expect what was said at the Council meeting and that she thought the Councilors would just ask a few questions. She said that it would have been nice to have the full HRC at the meeting. Evans said that the HRC was politicized that night.

Greenman said that what she heard was that the Councilors, in general, want this group to be bringing people together. She said that we should find ways to bring diverse groups of people together and also identify what may keep them apart. Greenman said that she thinks it is possible to do both. Greenman said that we should reflect on this and try to look at this in a positive way. Evans said that he feels sometimes you need to take issues head-on. He doesn't know if there is profiling in this community but feels the issue should at least be looked at; this will do justice for citizens and will also exonerate our police officers if there is truly no profiling.

Whitley suggested inviting the Mayor to attend an HRC meeting to clarify her vision for the group. Evans said that he is not conflicted about what we should be doing. He said that there will always be controversy when there are differences between people. Evans said that he would like to work with the Chief regarding the profiling issue. He is willing to ask the questions necessary to get to the bottom of an issue. He doesn't know how this Commission can fulfill its purpose if it can't ask questions. He wondered if asking a question such as "How are you doing?" would be considered investigating and that he thought that would be absurd. He thinks the HRC did the appropriate thing with the police profiling issue. Anderson said that she feels that there haven't been any clear objectives given. Evans said that the only mandate is that the group isn't to investigate. Nelson said that she felt that the group has spent a lot of time learning what we should be doing and feels good about that. She knows of two minority families in Albany who are leaving town. One family was spit on at a park in Albany. The family tried contacting their City Councilor by mail and phone but received no response from that Councilor. She said that she is ready to face the difficult issues. Nelson said that the collaboration the group has done has been great, and the educational pieces the group has sponsored have gone well. Nelson feels that the HRC is on the right path. Evans said that he appreciates the support from staff, but he feels nothing the group would have said would have been well received because there are members of the Council who don't want this group to exist.

Wes said that there was no direction from the Councilors about disbanding the group. He said that the work of the HRC is still continuing and the group is doing good things. Martinez said that the group should keep going and be productive.

Evans asked where the Commission should go from here. Martinez said that we should contact the Police Chief and have a talk. She said that profiling isn't just about race but also age, etc. Evans asked if we want to be proactive or reactive. Greenman said that we can find middle ground. She said that she was saddened by Jodi's story of the two families. She knows that there are people in this community that would do something like that, but there are also many people in this community that are supportive and want to be a more diverse community. If people come to us with issues, we should look at those issues and tell the Councilors what is going on in the community. This group can be useful to work to create an environment where people from minority groups feel welcome in this community. Hare said that the group can suggest actions to take to the Council. Martinez said that people may not know where to go when there is an issue; the HRC needs to work at getting the public to know we are available to help them.

Evans asked how bold the HRC should be. He asked if the HRC should look for possible issues and seek out people who will have answers. He asked if we should just wait for people to come to us? Whitley said that we want to stay on middle ground. As individuals, we may hear issues come up in the community like Jodi's story, and we can discuss those at our meetings. She said that government is a very slow moving machine and that HRC is still a pretty new group. She said that we have given a report to the Council and we are still here. She suggested the HRC be patient and raise awareness to

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who we are. Whitley said that if this group becomes too political, then the HRC may not be around for much longer. Evans suggested holding a few HRC meetings outside of City Hall. Whitley thought this is a great idea and suggested holding a meeting at the Library or local churches or community centers. Greenman asked if there is money available to provide interpreter services at these meetings if needed. Wes said that we could provide them. Evans asked about a specific survey on the City Web site. Marilyn said that would be possible. Greenman said that if we are going to do a survey on the Web, it would be good to include a schedule of where we will be meeting. Whitley said that she would like to be able to gather information at these meetings. Greenman said that the HRC should formulate a statement as to why we are going to meet in places within the community. Greenman said that it will be good if people are able to share their experiences. Evans wants to be in a position that if people come to the group with questions, he wants to be able to help them and ask questions.

Greenman said that asking the question "What makes Albany a welcoming community and what makes you feel unwelcome here?" will generate comments and that will be a good thing. Nelson suggested having one meeting in each Ward. Evans asked if we could provide refreshments at these meetings. Wes said that could be done.

Greenman said that she would be glad to be on a subcommittee to create a proposal to where we are meeting and why we are meeting. Whitley volunteered to be a part of the subcommittee. Whitley asked Marilyn if she could look into similar surveys that could be used as a template. She said that the plan should include some ideas for distribution of the survey as well. Nelson asked if it would be helpful if we pull together a bulleted list for the councilors to see what we have been doing for the last couple of years. Marilyn said that the City Council gets the monthly minutes of this committee's meeting.

Greenman said thank you to Evans for his graciousness at the City Council meeting.

#### BUSINESS FROM THE COMMISSION

#### NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, June 23, 2009, 7:00 p.m., in the Willamette Room.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Signature on file.*

Diana Eilers  
Administrative Assistant I

Reviewed by,

*Signature on file.*

Wes Hare  
City Manager