
**MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Monday, October 13, 2008
5:00 p.m.
Human Resources
Pinnacle Training Room
7575 E. Main Street
Scottsdale, Arizona**



PRESENT: Enid Seiden, Chair
Carol Padwe, Vice Chair
Nolan Harrison, Commissioner
Jeff Jameson, Commissioner
Linda Simmons, Commissioner

ABSENT: Kuros Lamé, Commissioner
Richard Woerth, Commissioner

STAFF: Linda Walton, Staff Liaison
Velicia McMillan, Assistant General Manager, Human Resources
Luis Santaella, Assistant City Attorney

1. **Call to Order:**

Chair Seiden called the meeting of the Scottsdale Human Relations Commission to order at 5:08 p.m.

2. **Review and Approval of Minutes:**

COMMISSIONER SIMMONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 8, 2008 REGULAR MEETING. COMMISSIONER HARRISON SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF FIVE (5) TO ZERO (0).

3. **Cross Cultural Communication Series:**

Chair Seiden noted that the Cross Cultural Communication Series received a full-page write-up in the Scottsdale Living section of the newspaper. Channel 11 is taping the series. Hosts are still required for two of the sessions.

Vice Chair Padwe said the session she hosted conflicted with one of the Presidential debates, and only 17 people attended. Chair Seiden read a letter from John Thaxton of Scottsdale

Community College, praising the series. He has suggested that the college work with the HRC on a joint project next year.

VICE CHAIR PADWE MOVED TO INVITE MR. THAXTON TO ATTEND THE NEXT MEETING. COMMISSIONER SIMMONS SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF FIVE (5) TO ZERO (0).

Chair Seiden reported that her session was also sparsely attended, as it was held in northern Scottsdale during the middle of the day. Hopefully, the next event will be better attended. Vice Chair Padwe said last year's lunchtime sessions were filled to capacity. Ms. Walton added that they were mostly attended by senior citizens who tend to prefer southern locations. Scottsdale employees are able to attend lunchtime events. The first lecture was taped in a studio, but Channel 11 will tape the remainder live. A promo spot will run prior to each event.

Commissioner Simmons volunteered for the May 5 session. She suggested notifying the SCC faculty that the lectures would benefit students who are looking for academic credit. Ms. Walton said the universities are being informed about the series. Commissioner Harrison suggested that the lectures might also be of value to students in the Scottsdale Unified School District (SUSD). Ms. Walton said the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) offers a program to Valley high schools. Those students could be invited as well.

Chair Seiden said diversity has never been specifically identified as part of the curricula in the SUSD, though it should be encouraged as the community diversifies. Vice Chair Padwe said the Office of Diversity and Dialogue sends each school a diversity calendar, which marks the holidays observed by various cultures. Chair Seiden noted that schools have largely backed away from any holiday observances.

4. **World Unity Day:**

Ms. Walton said the regional HRC staff liaisons agreed to draw attention to efforts to establish a World Unity Day on November 11. She provided a copy of Sedona's proclamation. Several Valley cities are following their model. Scottsdale has a Cross-Cultural Communication lecture scheduled for that day, which could be tied into the World Unity Day theme. Chair Seiden said the Unity Walk would have been a perfect event for that day.

Vice Chair Padwe questioned whether the event was being used to profit one individual who is selling a CD of the event's anthem. Ms. Walton noted that the funds are going to support a non-profit organization that is dedicated to local and global transformation.

In response to Commissioner Harrison, Ms. Walton said Phoenix is centering its event on the plight of refugees. Commissioner Harrison felt that was a limited interpretation of what unity is.

Mr. Santaella noted that the group's literature makes no claims that it is a 501(c)(3) organization. He suggested that staff be given more time to do research on the group to determine its validity.

COMMISSIONER SIMMONS MOVED TO TABLE THE ISSUE UNTIL STAFF HAS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESEARCH THE ORGANIZATION BEHIND THE WORLD UNITY DAY EFFORT. COMMISSIONER HARRISON SECONDED.

Ms. Walton noted that the HRC would not have a meeting before the proposed November 11 date. The Commission felt it was important to get the full story first, and the observance of the event could wait until next year.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY A VOTE OF FIVE (5) TO ZERO (0).

Commissioner Simmons said if it turns out to be a good vehicle, the Commission should look at the City's other unity themed events to determine whether they could be aligned more closely to it.

5. Strategic Direction for the Commission:

Ms. Walton said a decision has been made to postpone the strategic planning focus group until after the New Year, in light of the upcoming elections and the existing budget issues. She described the intent of the planning process.

"The Scottsdale HRC wishes to reestablish its mission and strategic direction to ensure the needs of the community are reflected. The focus groups would allow the HRC to solicit input from community stakeholders, and the purpose would be to identify diversity issues in Scottsdale to discover how familiar the community is with the HRC and its role, and to use this as an opportunity to promote the Commission."

Ms. Walton said the plan is to have eight focus groups: business, faith-based, education, non-profit, one control group, and three citizen groups. The outcomes of these discussions would be used during the planning process. The commissioners would be invited to make introductory remarks and observe the process. The purpose of the focus groups is to articulate to stakeholders the mission and purpose of the HRC, to engage a representative section of stakeholders, and to solicit ideas on how Scottsdale can continue to foster positive relationships.

Vice Chair Padwe noted that the Chamber of Commerce only represents a narrow portion of businesses in Scottsdale. She suggested the city's largest employers be invited, along with an Airpark representative. Commissioner Simmons said the Chamber does indeed represent the city's business community. Its Economic Development Advisory Council includes a representative from the Airpark, and provides a broad scope of business viewpoints. Vice Chair Padwe noted that the Airpark also has an association, the Airpark Resources Organization (APRO).

Commissioner Jameson asked how focus group participants would be selected once the groups have been identified. Ms. Walton responded that Citizen and Neighborhood Services have conducted many community outreach efforts. They suggest accepting people on a first come, first served basis, and keeping the groups small. Staff would prepare a list of suggestions for discussion at next month's meeting, along with proposed questions for the groups to answer.

Commissioner Simmons said it is about more than just getting community feedback, it is about letting the participants know how the information is going to be used, if it is used at all. She requested more information about the total plan.

Vice Chair Padwe said the HRC has mostly been reactive. This effort would provide an opportunity to be proactive.

6. **Commission Amenities:**

Chair Seiden noted that lighter fare was provided to the Commission in response to a suggestion from Commissioner Jameson. Commissioner Jameson said lighter fare was more appropriate given the time of the meeting. The Commission agreed to continue in this fashion following the November meeting.

7. **Service of Commissioners:**

Ms. Walton addressed participation requirements. The Commission is routinely invited to attend events and meetings beyond the regular monthly meetings. She noted that Chair Seiden recently expressed concern that full participation was lacking. If the expectation is that Commissioners attend these events, she suggested it might be appropriate to incorporate that in the bylaws.

Commissioner Harrison said it would be helpful to have a calendar of events in advance.

Chair Seiden suggested it would be easier to travel to the regional HRC meetings as a group. Commissioner Simmons said her volunteerism fits into a wide range of activities and it is not always possible to attend every event. Chair Seiden agreed, but noted that the same people often attend every event.

Commissioner Harrison noted in the bylaws that Commissioners are not allowed to miss three consecutive meetings, or four within a six-month period. They volunteer knowing what the requirements are. Dr. McMillan noted that the bylaws were created before the full vision of the Commission was established. There is a need to encourage participation in special events and regional meetings, in addition to the regular monthly meetings. The bylaws only address the monthly meetings, and would have to be amended to include the other events.

Chair Seiden felt the bylaws should be amended. Commissioners cannot be expected to attend every event, but it is unacceptable to attend only a few meetings a year. Commissioner Jameson asked whether monthly meetings could be substituted for attendance at other events. Chair Seiden felt it would be too confusing to keep track of that information.

In response to Vice Chair Padwe, Ms. Walton said no current Commissioner is in jeopardy of violating the attendance requirement. Vice Chair Padwe said the HRC is a co-sponsor of the Hispanic Heritage Festival, and the Commission should have a full presence there.

Mr. Santaella noted that as appointed officials, the Commissioners serve at the pleasure of the Council. If a particular commissioner meets the criteria set forth in the bylaws, the Commission could agendize a vote to recommend removal by the Council. Generally, commissions have not strictly followed the attendance standards, and have not recommended removal of a commissioner. Dr. McMillan said the very nature of the HRC is different from other commissions, giving it more leeway to deviate from the norm. She also noted that this item has been agendized, and if the Commission wanted to make a recommendation based on

attendance, it could do so. Mr. Santaella added that it has not been agendized in such a way as to allow a specific recommendation on a specific person.

Chair Seiden asked whether the Commission had the ability to provide input to the Council prior to the re-appointment of a Commissioner. Mr. Santaella responded that re-appointment is at the discretion of the Council. Ms. Walton said that Commissioners could express their viewpoints individually, but not as an entire body.

Dr. McMillan noted that some commissions have ordinances requiring that a seat be vacated after so many absences. It would be easier to amend the bylaws in such a manner, than to put City Council in a position of having to remove someone they appointed. She suggested the Commission should readdress what constitutes acceptable participation.

Commissioner Jameson suggested that some provision should be granted for anyone who has compelling reasons for an absence. Sometimes missing a meeting is not a matter of personal choice. Mr. Santaella said some commissions allow for excused absences, with the Chair deciding whether the excuses are valid or not. He said there is room for the HRC's bylaws to be improved. Staff could review them, and provide an updated version for the Commission's consideration.

COMMISSIONER HARRISON MOVED TO TABLE THE ISSUE IN ORDER TO PROVIDE STAFF WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW AND UPDATE THE BYLAWS. CHAIR SEIDEN SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF FIVE (5) TO ZERO (0).

Commissioner Simmons said the HRC has recently become more focused on defining what the Commission is about, rather than on individual agendas.

Chair Seiden noted that Mr. Gendron had to suddenly resign from the HRC for personal reasons. She asked the Commission whether it wanted to recognize Commissioners who leave in good standing before their terms are completed. Mr. Santaella suggested that a general policy be established which could then be applied to Mr. Gendron. Ms. Walton added that distinctions could be drawn depending on whether the Commissioner in question was in their first or second term.

Commissioners Simmons and Harrison felt that recognition should only go to those who have finished their terms. Commissioner Harrison said an exception could be made for those in good standing who are forced to resign because of a situation that is beyond their control. Ms. Walton said staff would develop a proposal as part of the bylaws revision.

Mr. Santaella suggested that a Commissioner who leaves at the end of a term be recognized. Commissioner Simmons suggested that recognition come at the end of each term. Any term not completed, would not be recognized. In response to Dr. McMillan, Commissioner Simmons said common sense should apply when extenuating circumstances force resignation in good standing. Ms. Walton acknowledged the possible fiscal impact of recognizing commissioners at the end of each term.

8. **Arizona Ballot Initiatives:**

Commissioner Jameson noted several November ballot initiatives that could impact the Commission's work. Proposition 105, for instance, could have a big impact on school funding, taxation, and municipal operations in the future, and possibly affect people with disabilities. If approved, it would require that any ballot initiative pass by a majority of registered voters, not just those that vote. It essentially means that any non-vote counts as a no vote. Chair Seiden noted that Colorado just overturned a similar law, because nothing was getting done.

Commissioner Jameson reported that Proposition 102 addresses marriage and could intrude on people's rights. In response to Dr. McMillan, Commissioner Jameson said he wanted to draw attention to the initiatives, not tell anyone how to vote. Commissioner Simmons said voters have to read the initiatives carefully, because they often hide things that have consequences that are directly opposed to what the voter supports. Chair Seiden said the initiative on immigration is very confusing, and it is hard to know what its ramifications are going to be.

Commissioner Jameson said another initiative would prevent the state from ever allowing a universal health care plan. Mr. Santaella reminded the Commission that it cannot take stances on any particular ballot initiative, nor should a Commissioner take an individual stand on an initiative during a meeting. Dr. McMillan added, however, that nothing precludes Commissioners from raising awareness of diversity issues during a meeting. Mr. Santaella clarified that Commissioners are encouraged to avoid any appearance of impropriety. That is left to every Commissioner to define.

9. **Chair Reports:**

Chair Seiden asked the HRC to begin thinking of candidates who would make good Commissioners, and to encourage them to apply. It takes time to go through the application process, and there will be vacancies next year.

Commissioner Jameson asked whether the HRC would be expanded. Mr. Santaella responded that the Council would have to approve such a change, and the trend has been to keep the Commissions smaller. Larger groups tend to have participation and quorum issues.

10. **Commissioner Items:**

Vice Chair Padwe said the Hispanic Heritage Celebration was a huge success.

11. **Open Call to the Public (A.R.S. § 38-431.02):**

There were no public comments.

12. **Staff Liaison Items:**

Ms. Walton reported that the Diversity Leadership Alliance is having a conference on October 22. Scottsdale has secured a table at the luncheon.

There will be an orientation for new commissioners on October 23. The Anti-Defamation League's annual dinner is on that same night, and Scottsdale has seats for this event.

The City of Phoenix is hosting the same representative from the Department of Justice who spoke to the regional HRC last month. Scottsdale's HRC has been invited to attend the discussion on critical diversity-related issues that Valley communities face.

On October 30, the Hispanic Heritage Community Celebration is having its appreciation luncheon.

Following the November meeting on the 10th, the Mayor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities will have a recognition event. The HRC is invited to attend and support that effort.

Mesa is hosting the next regional HRC meeting on November 19.

The Martin Luther King celebration is scheduled for January 9. The Planning Committee has suggested that the HRC play a more active role in the program itself this year.

13. **Adjournment:**

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

A/V Tronics, Inc.