
**MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Monday, December 8, 2008
5:00 p.m.
Human Resources
Pinnacle Training Room
7575 E. Main Street
Scottsdale, Arizona**



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- PRESENT:** Enid Seiden, Chair
Jeff Jameson, Commissioner
Kuros Lamé, Commissioner
Linda Simmons, Commissioner
- ABSENT:** Nolan Harrison, Commissioner
Carol Padwe, Vice Chair
- STAFF:** Linda Walton, Staff Liaison
Luis Santaella, Assistant City Attorney
Velicia McMillan, Assistant General Manager, Human Resources
- GUESTS:** John Thaxton, Scottsdale Community College
Randall Leverage

1. **Call to Order:**

Chair Seiden called the meeting of the Scottsdale Human Relations Commission to order at 5:21 p.m.

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

COMMISSIONER JAMESON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 10, 2008 REGULAR MEETING. COMMISSIONER LAMÉ SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF FOUR (4) TO ZERO (0).

3. **Cross Cultural Communication Series:**

Mr. Thaxton heads the Senior Program at Scottsdale Community College (SCC). The program has long offered many classes that are relevant to the diversity issue. He said his experiences living and working among many different cultures, especially in the Middle East, allow him to paint a more complete picture of life abroad than the media typically does. The talks and classes are intended to help eliminate many common hostilities and misunderstandings.

Intercultural issues are also touched upon in the contemporary issues series. A new course offering looks at the past and present of immigration to the U.S. SCC is offering a series of classes on the Middle East, including one that tries to define what terrorism is, and helps to put it into historical and contemporary contexts. Mr. Thaxton is also involved in a panel for the Boomers Program, which focuses on adapting to life in foreign cultures while working abroad.

Mr. Thaxton said he received word recently that SCC's entire Continuing Education Program would be eliminated at the end of the semester, due to budget cuts. He said he plans to continue offering programs privately, but still welcomes the opportunity to work with the HRC on joint efforts. In response to inquiries from Chair Seiden, Mr. Thaxton said thousands of students will be affected by the closure. The Development Office and the Business Institute are also being closed. The associate degree programs get money directly from the State and will remain intact. He said the unfortunate thing is that once a program is closed, it takes a long time to get them started again. His courses at the Boomers Program will take on many of the students and faculty from the SCC program.

Commissioner Simmons said one of the challenges the Cross Cultural Communication Series (CCCS) has faced has been to capture the public's interest. In response to her inquiry, Mr. Thaxton said he has created an e-newsletter, which he sends to around 1,000 adults in the area who are eager to attend talks and classes on intellectual and cultural subjects. He would include information on the CCCS events in the newsletter. Commissioner Simmons suggested that students in the program could be given incentives to attend lectures related to the subject they are studying.

In response to Mr. Santaella's inquiry, Mr. Thaxton said his company is not a non-profit organization. Ms. McMillan noted that Mr. Thaxton retains the same skill set regardless of whether he is associated with SCC or not. Those skills are valuable when it comes to creating a series that is comprehensive, interesting and informative, which is what the City is trying to achieve with the CCCS. Staff has also contacted the Anti-Defamation League and the Asian Chamber of Commerce for their expertise.

Commissioner Simmons said the CCCS can offer much interesting material, but she questioned whether there is a demand for it. Mr. Thaxton said of all the classes he teaches, those on world cultures and diversity draw the best attendance.

Commissioner Lamé distributed copies of a letter he drafted to the five Scottsdale Unified School District high schools, Notre Dame Prep, and to SCC. The letter draws attention to the educational benefits offered by the series. Mr. Santaella explained that according to the bylaws, the letter would have to be sent under the signature of either the Chair or Vice Chair, along with the acceptance of the Commission. Commissioner Lamé could be named as the primary contact.

Chair Seiden suggested the letter be revised to emphasize the diverse background that has built Scottsdale. The current draft makes note of Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy, who are not featured in the current series. Commissioner Lamé explained that he used their quotes to emphasize the power of individual initiative over reliance on legislation to remedy social problems. Commissioner Simmons said the primary reason the HRC conducts the series is to create a more comfortable, safer and better-understood community. She feels that the HRC should focus on encouraging greater understanding, not putting the onus on people to take action. Chair Seiden and Ms. McMillan suggested further refinements that would touch upon

the original thought, while tying it more directly to the goals of the series. Chair Seiden indicated that she would like to send the revised letter out as soon as possible.

COMMISSIONER JAMESON MOVED TO AUTHORIZE COMMISSIONER LAMÉ TO MAKE REVISIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS, AND TO AUTHORIZE CHAIR SEIDEN TO SIGN THE FINISHED LETTER. COMMISSIONER SIMMONS SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF FOUR (4) TO ZERO (0).

4. **Revision of the Bylaws**

Chair Seiden tabled this item.

5. **Regional HRC Meeting**

Chair Seiden noted that Commissioner Simmons and she attended the Regional HRC meeting. She said Mesa's Chief of Police spoke candidly about recent events in Maricopa County under the auspices of Sheriff Arpaio. The Regional HRC decided to create an ad hoc committee, drawn from member cities' commissioners, to draft a statement regarding human rights concerns.

Chair Seiden asked the Commission whether it would support a publicized statement emphasizing that the constitutional rights of County residents are not be encroached upon. Mr. Santaella noted that the Commission could not agree to sign onto that statement without the approval of the City Council. Under the ordinance, the primary purpose of the Commission is to make recommendations and advise Council and staff. Different cities may have different ordinance provisions. The Commission cannot sign a policy statement that would bind the entire City, but it can vote to send it to Council for their approval.

Ms. McMillan suggested inviting Scottsdale's Police Chief to share the Department's perspective. Mr. Santaella said the Commission could choose to seek legal advice from the City Attorney's Office before extending any invitations, or determining a course of action. In response to a comment from Chair Seiden, Mr. Santaella said the Regional HRC may have the authority to make a statement, but Scottsdale's contingent does not have the authority to agree on a stance for Scottsdale.

Commissioner Jameson said he feels strongly about this issue, but expressed concern that the Commission's intent is getting lost in all the precaution. This is a dangerous situation for all citizens of Maricopa County. The Police Chief may have ideas to prevent what happened in Mesa from happening in Scottsdale.

Commissioner Simmons said the mayors of several cities have expressed outrage. Cities within the County have to decide how to respond to the situation as a group. The Regional HRC was simply asking to set a standard of action, so that when something like this happens to one sister city, that community would not have to face the matter alone.

Ms. McMillan suggested holding a special meeting to allow the Commission to meet with other City officials, and with legal counsel, to decide how to proceed as a collective body.

Mr. Santaella said the Commission should receive legal advice first, and based on that, could call an executive session to discuss it.

Commissioner Simmons felt the HRC has a responsibility to share its viewpoint with Council, emphasizing that Scottsdale is a city of standards that should support sister communities. Mr. Santaella said there is no question that the Commission could make a recommendation to Council, but it is important that it does go to them first because they are the elected officials. He noted that the Sheriff is also an elected official. In addition to human rights issues, the matter involves political issues, and a specific process should be followed in that case.

Ms. McMillan summarized that the Commission is considering whether to participate in a regional effort to craft a joint statement. Before the HRC can sign onto that statement, it would have to first recommend to Council that the statement is important. Prior to that happening, the Commission may seek a legal interpretation, during an executive session, to understand what the implications of their actions might be. Mr. Santaella emphasized that the decision to seek legal counsel would be at the discretion of the Commission.

Ms. McMillan said the executive session could also be used to discuss with City officials, what the Commission has been asked to do on a regional level. Mr. Santaella clarified that only the legal portion could be conducted during an executive session, the remainder would have to be discussed during an open meeting.

Commissioner Simmons suggested sending a letter to Council advising them of the Commission's intent, and inviting their feedback. The Commission could seek legal advice at Council's direction. She said the Regional HRC just wanted to know whether the member commissions would find value in calling for humane treatment of citizens, according to the Constitution.

Mr. Santaella said the Commission could prepare a letter informing Council of what the Regional HRC is doing, and asking their permission to continue. Ms. McMillan noted that the staff's recommendation is one of the first things Council would likely want to know. Mr. Santaella said the Commission could forward a letter without staff's input.

COMMISSIONER SIMMONS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE CHAIR SEIDEN TO DRAFT, SIGN, AND SEND A LETTER TO CITY COUNCIL TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE REGIONAL HRC HAS REQUESTED, AND STATING THAT IT IS THE INTENT OF SCOTTSDALE'S HRC TO SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS IN MARICOPA COUNTY. COMMISSIONER JAMESON SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF FOUR (4) TO ZERO (0).

6. **Regional Unity Walk**

Ms. Walton provided a brief update on the planning process for the Unity Walk.

7. **Incident Training**

Chair Seiden tabled this item.

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

No members of the public wished to address the Commission.

9. **Chair Reports:**

No report given.

10. **Commissioner Items:**

No items were presented.

11. **Staff Liaison Items:**

No report given.

12. **Adjournment:**

Because one Commissioner had to leave, the Commission no longer had a quorum; the meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

A/V Tronics, Inc.