

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

REVISED MINUTES

6:30 PM

March 11, 2011

Animal Control Complex

MEMBERS PRESENT		GUESTS	STAFF
James Anderson	Colin Austin	Tin Lay Nwe	James Spivey
Matthew Hughes	Shannon Jackson	Aung Htun	
Richard Perry	Bryant Colson		
Lori Schweickert	Christine Kelly-Kleese		

NOTE: Barbara Marotto, Lori Lumpkin, Jack Vogt, and Annette Uhlenberg informed staff that they were unable to attend this meeting.

I. MINUTES APPROVAL

MOTION WAS MADE BY SHANNON JACKSON AND SECONDED BY JAMES ANDERSON TO ACCEPT THE FEBRUARY 15, 2011 MINUTES WITH NOTED CORRECTION. VOTE: AYES 8 (Anderson, Austin, Colson, Hughes, Jackson, Kelly-Kleese, Perry, Schweickert); NOES 0; ABSENT 3 (Linger, Rosenbluth, Twomey); EXCUSED 4 (Lumpkin, Marotto, Vogt, Uhlenberg).

II. SPECIAL GUEST: MS. TIN LAY NWE

With the increase of Burmese residents in Orange County, the HRC welcomed the opportunity to hear from members of the Burmese community regarding their experience as residents of Orange County. Ms. Tin Lay Nwe and Mr. Aung Htun attended this meeting to share their personal experiences as refugees to Orange County.

Mr. Htun stated that the preferred reference to their country is Burma and that the majority of Burmese people who immigrate to the United States come as refugees. He explained that due to the martial law rule of Burma, Burmese people have immigrated to various countries all over the globe. Mr. Htun noted that there are high concentrations of Burmese people in the states of Indiana, Minnesota, Texas, and North Carolina. He stated that from his experience, employment opportunities, health care, and education are areas of concern.

Ms. Nwe explained that many Burmese families experience major barriers to health care. She explained that due to low-paying jobs, lack of health insurance, and lack of knowledge about available services, many Burmese families do not receive health care until a person's situation becomes dire and emergency services are required. Ms. Nwe stressed the need for information and education regarding health care and health care services. She stated that the educational systems in Orange County had presented no problems for the Burmese community.

Ms. Nwe and Mr. Htun responded to questions from the membership regarding martial law; possible health fairs; issues of immigration, and cultural events.

It was explained that in its earlier history, Burma was under British rule but is currently under military rule that changed the name of the country to "Myanmar." Holding health fairs to provide information could be problematic due to the seven (7) different dialects spoken by the Burmese people. The majority of immigrated Burmese are classified as refugees and thus there are limited issues regarding immigration status. The Burmese Water Festival is a cultural event at which information could be distributed regarding the work of the HRC and the availability of assistance programs.

Ms. Nwe stated that the 2011 Water Festival is tentatively scheduled for April 23, 2011 at the Dha Mii Karr Yarr Ma Kyoung facility located at 2214 Hwy 54 West; Chapel Hill, NC 27516; 919 537-8019.

James Spivey extended an invitation to Ms. Nwe and Mr. Htun to meet to engage in a discussion regarding possible education and outreach efforts to the Burmese community. He explained that the County Commissioners recently adopted social justice goals and one of those goals was to ensure that all Orange County residents participated fully in the civic process. Mr. Spivey also suggested to Ms. Nwe and Mr. Htun to encourage members of the Burmese community to volunteer to serve on the various citizen advisory boards/commissions of the municipalities and County. He stressed the importance of having Burmese representation on the HRC.

Ms. Nwe stated that she would meet with the Burmese community leaders and follow-up with Mr. Spivey regarding a meeting to discuss possible education and outreach efforts to the Burmese community.

III. SOCIAL JUSTICE GOAL IMPLEMENTATION TOOL

Bryant Colson requested a status report regarding the Social Justice Goal Implementation Tool. Mr. Colson recalled that Tara Fikes, Director, was to share the Tool with the County Department directors and forward the Tool to the BOCC as recommended by the HRC.

James Spivey explained that he would investigate the status of the Tool and report back to the HRC.

IV. SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT APPLICATION PROPOSAL

James Spivey explained that the proposal (enclosed in the agenda packet) submitted to the School of Government and the Institute for the Study of the Americas for consideration to participate in the "Building Integrated Communities Program" was accepted on March 10, 2011. Mr. Spivey stated that Tara Fikes (Director), Hannah Gill (Assistant Director of the Institute for the Study of the Americas), Sejal Zota (Immigration Law Specialist of the UNC School of Government), and he had a conference call regarding the submitted proposal.

Mr. Spivey explained that the intent of this project is to help North Carolina city and county governments engage with immigrants and refugee populations to enhance communication and improve relationships. By participating in this project, city and county governments and diverse community stakeholders will generate locally-relevant strategies to strengthen relationships and outcomes.

With the submitted proposal being accepted, Orange County will participate in this pilot project. Mr. Spivey reviewed the next steps. From the conference call, Ms. Gill and Ms. Zota will plan and facilitate 3 or 4 strategic planning meetings to help community stakeholders (which includes HRC members) identify challenges and develop solutions. Local demographics and an informal needs assessment of what the immigrant community see as barriers will be provided. From these strategic planning meetings, solutions will be developed and implemented.

Mr. Spivey explained that this is an anticipated 2-year process. The first year would focus on identifying challenges and implementing solutions to those challenges. The second year after the implementation of the solutions to the noted challenges, an evaluation of the progress and/or solutions will be administered.

Mr. Spivey explained that participation by and a commitment from the HRC membership is critical to the success of this project. He reviewed what is expected from the participating communities which are to participate in all of the community workshops; to provide logistical support and meeting space and food for the workshops; to identify and recruit diverse, local stakeholders to participate in the program; to be open and willing to entertain change and strengthen systems; and to create and implement action plans on a sustained basis.

The membership voiced support of and participation in this project. Supportive comments were made in regards to how this project aligns with the BOCC-adopted social justice goals; how participation in this project advances the work of the HRC in the diverse communities within Orange County; and how participation in this project is in sync with the charge of the HRC.

However, caution was urged in regards to entering into this project with the intent of HRC goals coming to fruition and the goals of a "class project" become the reality. Additionally, questions regarding the funding (referenced under the expectations of participating communities) of the workshops were raised.

James Spivey explained that this project is not a "class project" as much as it is an outgrowth of an effort undertaken by the National League of Cities. He explained that cities across the United States are responding to the growing immigrant populations by developing and implementing immigration integration programs. Mr. Spivey further explained that from the conference call, the participating community will define barriers; will propose solutions to the defined barriers; will propose action steps to implement the proposed solutions to the defined barriers; and participate in making an assessment of the

process. In regards to the funding question, Mr. Spivey explained that funding for the workshops/strategic planning meetings will probably be minimal but he would follow-up with a more specific answer.

From additional discussion and through acclamation the following was decided:

- 1) Extend an invitation to Ms. Gill and Ms. Zota to attend the HRC's April 11, 2011 meeting to review this project/process. The membership felt that with the HRC being the lead entity/body for this collaborative effort, they want an opportunity to speak directly to the project managers.
- 2) The April 11, 2011 HRC Agenda will place the School of Government guests (Ms. Gill and Ms. Zota) as the first item of business. This item should not exceed one (1) hour.
- 3) The remainder of the April 11, 2011 HRC Agenda will be a work session for the subcommittees.

V. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

A. ADVOCACY/OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE

As follow-up from the February 15, 2011 meeting, James Spivey reviewed the "to do" list for the Advocacy/Outreach Subcommittee.

Colin Austin suggested that the Advocacy/Outreach Subcommittee meet to review the "to do" list and decide on what the agenda of the Advocacy/Outreach Subcommittee will/should be.

It was proposed that during the April 11, 2011 HRC work session, all HRC subcommittees, except the Advocacy/Outreach, will meet for approximately twenty (20) minutes. After the 20-minute meetings, the Advocacy/Outreach Subcommittee will convene its meet.

Concern was voiced that the BOCC-adopted social justice goals are not on the County website. The HRC asked that staff investigate the procedure to have the social justice goals posted on the County website. It was clarified that the social justice goals should not be posted on a specific department's website but on the County's website because the goals were adopted by the governing body of the County.

B. PAULI MURRAY AWARDS SUBCOMMITTEE

Lori Schweickert, Pauli Murray Awards Subcommittee Chair, will convene this subcommittee during the April 11, 2011 work session period. Ms. Schweickert asked for any information regarding the process and/or procedures used in awarding the award.

James Spivey will forward the materials to Ms. Schweickert.

C. STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST SUBCOMMITTEE

Richard Perry, Student Essay Contest Subcommittee Chair, visited the Department to get information regarding the student essay contest. Mr. Perry informed the membership that he had distributed information to certain teachers regarding possible topics for consideration and seeking their input regarding timing to include the essay contest into their respective teaching syllabi. Mr. Perry also stated that consideration might be given to asking the students to write about the social justice goals.

Mr. Perry will convene this subcommittee during the April 11, 2011 work session period.

D. MEMBERSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE

James Spivey informed the membership that the town clerks for the respective municipalities had been informed that town-representative vacancies exist on the HRC. The Town Clerks and the County Clerk are advertising those town-representative vacancies.

E. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

James Spivey informed the membership that a Nominating Committee should be appointed during the April 11, 2011 meeting. Mr. Spivey explained that the Nominating Committee would develop a slate of nominees for the vice-chairmanship of the HRC. He explained that Mr. Colson's term as chair is about to end and Ms. Marotto will assume the position of HRC Chair.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. SUBCOMMITTEE ROSTER

James Spivey thanked the membership for volunteering to serve on at least subcommittee.

B. HUD ACCESS TO HOUSING FOR THE LGBT COMMUNITY

During the February 15, 2011 meeting, the membership was informed of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) effort to get word out about ensuring equal access to housing for the LGBT community. Information was distributed during the February 15th meeting for review by the membership.

The membership decided 1) that individual responses would increase the numeric input and agreed for individual members to respond and 2) that a response of support be drafted and submitted by the HRC Chair on behalf of the Orange County Human Relations Commission.

James Spivey informed the membership that Jack Vogt is developing a proposal to amend the Civil Rights Ordinance to include *sexual orientation* and *sexual identity* as protected classes. He explained that due to Mr. Vogt's absence, the matter would be scheduled for consideration during a future meeting.

C. LETTER FROM BOCC CHAIR REGARDING HRC WORK

Bryant Colson, HRC Chair, informed the membership that he received a letter from Bernadette Pelissier, BOCC Chair, regarding annual report/work plan submitted to the BOCC about the HRC activities. Mr. Colson explained that the HRC was commended for the work completed during the year of the report. He further explained that the BOCC also voiced concern that no emerging issues were listed.

There was discussion and it was concluded that this was an HRC oversight. The membership requested the HRC Chair to draft a response to the BOCC. The response should list issues that are currently under consideration by the HRC, i.e., the collaborative work with the School of Government, amending to the Civil Rights Ordinance, advocating for women's issues, anti-immigration legislation, etc.

Bryant Colson stated that he would forward a copy of Chair Pelissier's letter to the membership. Mr. Colson agreed to draft and submit a response to Chair Pelissier.

There being no other business, the meeting was . . .

ADJOURNED!!!