



Human Relations Commission

Tuesday, March 16, 2021, 9:00 – 10:30 AM

Location: Telecommunication due to COVID-19 Safer at Home Order

Members Present:

Chair Delia Busby, Vice Chair Stan Friedman, Secretary Candace Woods, Treasurer Alex Morland, Ellen Johnson-Fay, Kim Sannes, Arlisha Lawson

CS City Representatives and Others Present:

City Liaison Catherine Duarte, InsideOut Executive Director Jessie Pocock, City Councilmember Yolanda Avila, InsideOut Representative Tyescha Clark, Councilmember Jill Gaebler

Regular Meeting of Human Relations Commission:

Delia Busby called the meeting to order at 9:01am.

Approval of February 2021 Minutes:

The minutes of the February 16th, 2021 were presented for review.

Motion: Kim Sannes moved to approve the minutes of Tuesday, February 16, 2021 of the Human Relations Commission as written.

Second: Ellen Johnson-Fay.

Vote: The motion was approved unanimously.

Opportunity for Citizen Comment (3 minutes per person):

Carly Hoff, Legislative Analyst for City Council, how different liaisons serve our City Commissions.

Jessie Pocock, ED of Inside Out Youth Services: referenced letter being addressed during conversation in the meeting, offered resources and commentary. Referenced documents on youth suicide (see two documents shared during HRC meeting) in helping us understand why harmful rhetoric is so impactful. El Paso County has one of the highest rates of suicide in the country. Important that we consider how we're addressing this as a community, how we play a role in suicide prevention. Referenced Jill Gaebler's comments that trans girls should not be allowed to participate in sports. Encourages HRC to create a plan to proactively address this issue. Suicide rates among LGBTQ+ is so high because of stigmatization.

Commissioner Check-In:

Vincent Harding was a peer of MLK, Freedom Movement, met Ellen. Ellen shared about her mother's mother and asked others to share about someone in our HRC lives who serves in the capacity as a grandmother (open, loving, and supportive). Delia, Tyescha, Jessie, Candace, Stan, Yolanda, Kim, Alex, Catherine, Carly all shared.

Councilmember Avila introduced herself, encouraging the HRC's critical work. Discussed the disbandment of the HRC during the QLGBT+ controversies. Community relationships need to be elevated in conversation. Highlighted teen suicide rates. Encouraged roundtable discussions in the community as critical to identifying how to move forward as a Commission. Institutional knowledge is really important; as such, she encouraged the Commission members to stay in order to address community needs over the long term. City Council is more conservative, and Yolanda is seeking a more progressive voice in the community. Touched on link between poverty and violence. Thanked us for volunteering.

Chair's Report:

Subcommittees:

- Kim spoke briefly regarding our potential role in mediation for our community. Delia spoke with members of City Council, with Tyescha of InsideOut, and asked how the HRC could help with this situation (refer to letter attached).
- Kim reached out to other HRC councilmembers but noted that others did not respond. Kim offered to reach out again and suggested a sub-committee meeting before the next full HRC meeting.

LETAC: Level of participation in their phone-ins isn't as high as it could be. Asked us to reach out to our networks to help the community engage with LETAC.

City Councilmember Yolanda Avila: Ellen thanked Yolanda for the reminder of the history of the Commission. Ellen referenced a recent column in the Gazette on Community-Oriented Policing that what is needed in CSPD is a change in culture. CSPD is being trained in support of the white body power structure, as distinguished from white supremacy. Ellen appreciated Delia for her trust in coming onto the Commission.

Other Business:

Get Out the Vote Letter to the Editor: Stan drafted a letter encouraging people to vote for their city council member. Ballots have to be in the city election office by Apr 6th. Where would the document be posted? Catherine suggested posting it through City Communications. Carly mentioned sending it to the city's office first, get approval, and then send to city communications. It could run as a Letter to the Editor or as an open column to the city.

Motion: Ellen is moving to send the letter to the city's attorney's office to file the letter as recommended. Kim Sannes seconded.

Second: Kim Sannes

Vote: Motion was unanimously approved.

Inside Out Youth Services Letter:

Candace Woods recused herself from the conversation and left the meeting before discussion began as she is a current employee of the organization.

Jessie Pocock spoke to call accountability to those making transphobic statements. Letter is an invitation to community leaders to advocate for our youth who struggle being seen. Seeks to elevate the voice of those who seek services at InsideOut who identify as Transgendered. Words matter: they create culture.

Ellen thanked Jessie for her thoughts and reiterated the concern over culture. Beautifully written letter. We do it because it's the right thing to do.

Tyescha: Trans people are seeing the most violence in the queer community, particularly black women who are trans. Safe space is critically important. Referenced her own life and partner's life in this movement. We need to close these gaps and create spaces where being trans is ok. Rates of graduation are significantly lower, rates of suicide are 5X worse as compared with other youth. Harmful language fosters violence. JG's comments fostered transphobia, saying it is ok to be violent again transgendered people.

Delia: uncomfortable with the letter as it is "being against."

Kim: referred to Twitter feed. Understands anger from InsideOut. There is harm in those words, especially when you're in a position of power, and the letter is important.

Anjuli: as a conduit between city and people who live here, wondering about our role of the Commission. Is there a role for conversation?

Yolanda: referenced response by other council members and how that was perceived. People who called in at the council, asked the HRC to look at how it was received at the council. Referenced the comments as transphobic. Asked HRC members to look at that council meeting, listen to the meeting, may more validate this letter. For equity and transparency. Letting the broader community know what is going on. HRC is here to represent the broader community.

Stan: The idea that a person's sex is determined by their anatomy at birth is BS. Best friend is transgender. Anti-trans attitudes are shifting for the better. Gender transition regret is statistically scarce. Positive way to approach this with an all-white male city council might be to highlight the bill passed that would prohibit discrimination we're referring to. Perhaps a more forward-looking tone while not supporting current attitudes, talk about progress being made rather than a stronger, negative approach contained in the letter. Words matter when you're a public official, but it should be the entire city government/council.

Tyescha: Goal is not to cancel people out. As a public figure, you have more responsibility. City Council is "super transphobic." This would be a large culture shift, and we need to continue to educate. We want to have an open conversation with Jill Gaebler with the goal of educating. We don't need allies, we need accomplices. We live in a complicit county that allows these behaviors. We can say "this is not ok" or we can continue to be complicit.

Jessie: Thanked commission for being so thoughtful in their responses and dialogue. Jessie sent a separate letter from Jill and waited 3 or 4 days before sending it to the Press. She wanted to give Jill a chance to respond first before speaking out. Sent the letter to all Council Members and heard back from only one (Yolanda). InsideOut wants to be an advocate and resource for our community. Encouraged us to watch the council meeting: it's disturbing. Has been an advocate for equity and access, a long history of work. Encourages us to be bold in our response.

Ellen: Agrees with Jessie. There is a time when the protective use of force is necessary. It is time for us to

Speak out, tell the truth. She is still learning about white body trauma. Encourages listening to Resmaa Menakem's talk. We are complicit, and now is the time to speak out.

Kim: Agrees with Ellen and thinks we should not be fearful. Wants to facilitate dialogue. Use back-up data and facts to add to the letter?

Delia: Proposes that we follow the procedure (act or not act on the letter). Move forward on content later.

Motion: Ellen moves to go forward with the letter as it is and follow up with further action for education as soon as possible.

Seconded: Kim Sannes.

Vote: Approved by five members of the Commission, one against.

Adjourn: Delia adjourns at 10:30am.

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