

MINUTES

Eugene City Council
McNutt Room—City Hall
777 Pearl Street—Eugene, Oregon

June 30, 2010
Noon

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Mike Clark, Betty Taylor, Jennifer Solomon, George Poling, Andrea Ortiz, Chris Pryor, George Brown.

COUNCILORS ABSENT: Alan Zelenka.

Her Honor Mayor Kitty Piercy called the work session meeting of the Eugene City council to order.

City Manager Jon Ruiz noted that Fire/EMS Chief Randy Groves was taking the oath of office as interim chief in Springfield on July 1, 2010, at Springfield Fire Station No. 3. He stated that he would provide additional details of the ceremony as they became available.

A. WORK SESSION - Annual Meeting with the Human Rights Commission

Holly LeMasurier of the Equity and Human Rights Center briefed the council on the most recent meeting of the Eugene Human Rights Commission (HRC). She said many of the most recent work plan accomplishments of the HRC were described in her staff memorandum included in the agenda item summary materials. Ms. LeMasurier reminded the council that it had approved the HRC's two-year work plan in February 2009. She further noted that Equity and Human Rights staff had briefed the council in November 2009 regarding the priorities of both the commission and the City's Equity and Human Rights Program.

Ms. LeMasurier introduced HRC Chair Linda Hamilton.

Ms. Hamilton introduced the commissioners present: Toni Gyatso, Mat Beecher, Iva Boslough and Melissa Mona. She further acknowledged the contributions of the remaining HRC members, support staff, community partners, and council liaison George Brown.

Ms. Hamilton anticipated that the HRC's annual update to the council would involve a reaffirmation of the commission's goals, a discussion of the commission's highlights, and a question and answer period with the City Councilors. She stated that the HRC was a highly motivated and unified group that was fully committed to improving human rights for all persons in the City of Eugene.

Vice Chair Melissa Mona stated that, as part of its goal to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the commission, the HRC had been highly proactive in coordinating with various advocacy groups and community members devoted to human rights concerns. Ms. Mona noted that the HRC continued to explore proactive approaches to important emerging human rights issues as part of its Advocacy and Response work plan area.

Ms. Mona commended Eugene Police Department Chief Pete Kerns for his collaborative efforts with the HRC and said he had been very helpful to the work of the commission.

Ms. Mona stated that the HRC continued to work with the Civilian Review Board. The HRC had also conducted a very productive meeting with Police Auditor Mark Gissiner earlier in the year. The HRC continued to explore a variety of other conflict resolution opportunities in the community and continued to investigate ways in which the commission might take advantage of human rights resources in the community.

Mr. Beecher provided information regarding the Community Anti-Hate Crime area of the HRC's work plan. He reported that the commission had had the opportunity to work with the Eugene Police Commission and its Education & Outreach Subcommittee on a collaborative project in December and January in response to a number of issues that had emerged involving hate and bias crimes in the community. He stated that the HRC had participated in several weekend meetings with various community members and human rights group representatives to provide information regarding the prevention and response to such crimes. He further stated that the HRC's Anti-Hate Resolution had been drafted as part of those meetings and subsequent discussions.

Ms. Kerwood provided an overview of the contributions of the HRC's Accessibility Committee. She further noted that the Accessibility Committee had worked in a number of community outreach areas involving accessibility, including elements of the City's Envision Eugene plan. She noted that she served on the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Advisory Committee.

Ms. Kerwood reported that the Accessibility Committee had reviewed service dog issues and the manner in which the various animal control policies of both Lane County and the City of Eugene might be better coordinated.

Ms. Kerwood stated that the Accessibility Committee had fielded a number of helpful suggestions from community members regarding the placement and installation of audible pedestrian signal devices throughout the City.

Ms. Gyatso described how the HRC had supported the creation of the Human Rights Summit event and noted that it had been intended as a collaborative effort with the Community Coalition for the Advancement of Human Rights. She further noted that the planning for the summit event had involved over sixty representatives from various human rights groups. Ms. Gyatso briefly reviewed the goals of the Human Rights summit: 1) to increase awareness of the human rights framework and its local relevance; 2) education efforts describing the City of Eugene and Lane County's efforts to improve human rights in the community; 3) encouragement of discourse regarding ways in which the human rights framework in local government and community groups; and 4) to encourage the City of Eugene to move forward as a "human rights city" while developing a broader human rights community.

Ms. Gyatso noted that the attendance and participation for the Human Rights Summit events had far exceeded the HRC's expectations.

Ms. Hamilton opened the HRC's presentation to questions from the council members and asked how the HRC might improve its communication collaborative efforts with the Eugene City Council.

Ms. Hamilton noted that the HRC members had proposed a council and commission "buddy system" and noted that further details regarding the proposal had been included in the agenda item summary materials.

Mayor Piercy thanked the commissioners for their presentation and said that they had been very helpful in reviewing various human rights issues in the community, including those issues relating to accessibility.

Mayor Piercy looked forward to the discussion regarding the Anti-Hate Resolution that had been developed by the HRC.

Mayor Piercy hoped that the HRC might provide ideas and suggestions on how human rights concerns might be effectively incorporated into various downtown development strategies.

Mr. Poling arrived.

Mr. Pryor appreciated the work of the commission and said that its goals had corresponded well to the council's own visions and goals statement. He believed that the council in its discussions had often relied on the information and experience provided by the members of the HRC.

Mr. Pryor stated he intended to be more diligent about being a "good buddy" to the commission in the future.

Mr. Clark thanked the HRC members and concurred with Mr. Pryor's previous statement.

Ms. Ortiz hoped that the HRC's Accessibility Committee might work to ensure that the City's assisted listening capabilities were adequate for City Council meetings and other City meetings.

Ms. Ortiz noted her concerns regarding recent difficulties the HRC had encountered involving various communications within the group and a member whom the commission had ultimately voted to remove. She further asked how the commission typically worked with members who dissented from the prevailing opinions and perspectives of the group. In response, Ms. Mona said that the commission member to whom she had referred had been removed on the grounds that the individual had not met the commission's reasonable expectations of conduct. She said the individual in question had not respected the working setup of the commission and that his removal from the group had not in any way been based on his opinions or beliefs.

Ms. Hamilton added that the individual's conduct and behavior as co-chair had reflected badly on the HRC. She and other commission members would be willing to discuss the matter in greater detail with the council if it wished.

In response to the comments of Ms. Mona and Ms. Hamilton, Mayor Piercy noted that the council intended to review the uniformity of the City's policies with respect to the manner in which those policies governed the City's various boards and commissions.

Ms. Ortiz appreciated the HRC's accomplishments over the past year but noted that she had often not received sufficient notice of HRC-related events and discussions.

Mayor Piercy agreed with Ms. Ortiz's previous comment and suggested that more sufficient notice from the HRC might allow the council to better understand the benefit of the partnership efforts between the two groups.

Ms. Ortiz hoped that the HRC members would not interpret the council's lack of attendance at HRC meetings and functions as a lack of support for commission and its goals.

Mr. Brown suggested that as the council's liaison to the HRC he had sometimes been remiss in bringing the council's attention to those various areas of concern that might involve the HRC.

Mayor Piercy said that she and the council members planned to be more diligent in their attendance and participation with the HRC but further hoped that the Commission would not hesitate to communicate with the council as the HRC's work plan progressed.

Ms. Hamilton responded to Mayor Piercy's previous comments regarding HRC input on downtown development strategies and stated that Chief Kerns had invited her to participate in various discussions of how the downtown area might be improved.

Mr. Beecher asked what forms of communication the council members wanted the HRC to use as they moved forward. Mr. Pryor suggested that the HRC might use emails, telephone communications and any other regular communications channels so that no important information would be missed by the council.

Mr. Clark left the meeting.

B. WORK SESSION - Hate and Bias Incident Response and Anti-Hate Resolution

Ms. LeMasurier offered a presentation entitled "Responding to Hate" and noted that the council had requested that the City's Equity and Human Rights division provide updates on how hate and bias response protocols enacted by the City had affected human rights concerns in Eugene.

Ms. LeMasurier generally described how the City had applied a number of best practices to its clear and strong leadership commitment to the preservation and improvement of human rights for all citizens of Eugene. She noted that the coordinated Hate and Bias Incident Response plan and the Anti-Hate Resolution would serve that commitment.

Ms. LeMasurier briefly discussed the ways in which the Hate and Bias Incident Response Plan was expected to benefit the City. She believed the plan could easily be adjusted to serve the needs of other local agencies working to preserve and maintain human rights.

Ms. LeMasurier reported that the Hate and Bias Incident Response Plan had been developed as one of the primary action items of the Equity and Human Rights division's Diversity and Equity Strategic Plan. She further noted that the specific action item had been recommended by the City Council's Community Committee on Race.

Ms. LeMasurier briefly discussed the general definitions and characteristics of hate and bias crimes in relation to the guidelines described in the Hate and Bias Incident Response plan. Included in her discussion, Ms. LeMasurier clarified that the Eugene Police Department did not normally respond to complaints of non-criminal hate activity and that such instances were typically left to other forms of community response.

Ms. LeMasurier briefly commented on the roles of community and government responses to instances of hate and bias activity. She maintained that the role of facilitating sensitive responses to such instances could be shared by local leadership and the community. She described several ways in which the role of the City Council and City leaders could be defined in relation to the guidelines described in the plan.

Ms. LeMasurier cited three separate and recent hate and bias incidents in the community as well as the various response methods that had been employed.

Ms. LeMasurier referred to the public outreach that had been conducted during the development of the plan as well as the various community response priorities that had been identified. She described the various hate response plan resources that had been most helpful to her in identifying the best practices for the plan. She commented that the plan had primarily focused on the three areas of notification and coordination, assessment and response, and education and outreach with respect to instances of hate and bias activity in the community. She elaborated on each of the three areas for the benefit of the council.

Ms. LeMasurier identified the key partners that had participated in the April 2010 Anti Hate Public Forum which had contributed to the development of the plan.

Ms. Gyatso discussed the manner in which the Equity and Human Rights staff working in conjunction with the HRC had developed the draft Anti-Hate Resolution. She further noted how similar resolutions had been adopted in a number of other cities.

Ms. LeMasurier described the manner in which the Equity and Human Rights staff had coordinated with EPD staff on the development of both the Hate and Bias Incident Response and the Anti-Hate Resolution.

Chief Pete Kerns described in greater detail the EPD's contributions to the development of the Hate and Bias Incident Response and the Anti-Hate Resolution. He shared statistical data regarding hate and bias crimes in the community and noted that the level of such reported incidents had briefly dropped in 2009 only to rise again later on. He commented on the yearly training that many EPD staff had received regarding bias crime reporting and further noted that representatives from the Southern Poverty Law Center had contributed to the training efforts.

Chief Kerns discussed the priorities of the EPD with respect to the reporting and response procedures involving hate and bias crimes. He further commented on how those priorities had dictated responses to two recent separate hate crime incidents in Eugene.

Ms. LeMasurier stated that the HRC and its support staff recommended that a discussion and more detailed review of the Anti-Hate Resolution be scheduled on a future council meeting agenda and further that the proposed resolution be placed on a subsequent City Council Consent Calendar. She noted that the resolution would still officially be considered a draft until it had been further reviewed by the council.

Chief Kerns, responding to a question from Mayor Piercy, described how graffiti in the city had been typically classified as either a property crime or a hate/bias crime. He further maintained that the EPD's collaborative efforts with Equity and Human Rights staff had helped make the process of such determinations more accurate and effective.

Ms. Ortiz noted that she was glad to see how the resolution had been developed and agreed that it needed to be placed on a future council meeting agenda. She noted her concern that the levels of communication regarding recent incidents of hate crimes in the North Eugene area had not been sufficient.

Mr. Pryor discussed his perceptions of how hate crimes occupied various active and inactive realms of public awareness. He maintained that the inactive realms represented a fertile breeding ground for intolerance in the community.

Mayor Piercy commented on the importance of embracing diversity in the community and suggested that rather than placing the draft Anti-Hate Resolution on a future council Consent Calendar that the council review the resolution openly before the community as part of the regular council meeting agenda.

Ms. Ortiz discussed her perceptions of how levels of intolerance in the community had developed over long periods of time.

Ms. Taylor noted that it was important to preserve the rights of individuals and further noted her disturbance at the HRC's willingness to remove a member on the grounds that he had expressed his beliefs inappropriately. She further noted that in the 1940s she had written an article for a national publication about the dangers of being "intolerant of intolerance."

Ms. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Poling, moved to place the proposed Anti-Hate Resolution on the next City Council meeting agenda. The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

Mayor Piercy responded to Ms. Taylor's previous comments, saying that civil rights legislation was primarily designed to acknowledge the rights of groups.

Ms. Ortiz maintained that the proposed Anti-Hate resolution represented a positive step toward providing improved law enforcement in the community.

Mayor Piercy adjourned the work session meeting at 1:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Forrest

Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Wade Hicks)