

# HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

## MINUTES

Thursday, January 22, 2009

Members:

Lee Bixson  
Craig Blomberg  
Arthur Clinton  
Nico De Anda-Scaia  
Najme Minhaj (Chair)  
Justin Kudo (Vice Chair)  
Ann Privateer  
J Jesus Leyva (Alternate)

Ex Officio Members:

Saraf Nawar (Student)  
John Pamperin (Faith based)  
Rahim Reed (UCD)  
Lt. Tom Waltz (Police Dept)  
Vacant (ASUCD)  
Pamela Mari/Mel Lewis

Council Liaison:

Stephen Souza  
Lamar Heystek (Alternate)

Staff:

Kelly Stachowicz, City

**I. Roll Call and Approval of Agenda**

*Members Present: Blomberg, Clinton, De Anda-Scaia, Kudo, Minhaj, Leyva, Privateer, Pamperin, Nawar*

*Members Absent: Bixson, Privateer (after 7:30pm)*

*Agenda was approved by consensus.*

**II. Approval of Minutes –**

*Privateer moved and Kudo seconded the approval of minutes. Passed unanimously.*

**III. Public Comment –**

*There was no public comment.*

**IV. Commissioner Communications and Announcements**

*Privateer reported that the forum on the Middle East held earlier in the day at International was a good learning experience, with about 100 people in attendance. Blomberg explained that the format, with three speakers (all scholarly experts in their areas) made presentations and allowed for question and answers. The event was well-structured.*

**V. Council Communications and Staff Announcements**

*Councilmember Souza reported on his visit to Washington DC for the presidential inauguration, which was extremely inspirational and gave people a feeling of common purpose.*

*Stachowicz announced the upcoming Celebration of Abraham event.*

*Lt. Waltz recounted two incidents:*

- 1) A partygoer used the "N" word and was punched. Alcohol was involved. This was sent to the District Attorney as a hate incident.*
- 2) Racial epithet was put on a doctor's door sign. The doctor blamed his/her former spouse, but there was no evidence regarding the perpetrator. The incident has been labeled a Hate incident.*

*Lt. Waltz agreed to explain policies and definitions for hate crimes, hate incidents, etc. at a future meeting.*

## **VI. Discussion/Action Items**

### **A. MLK Event**

*Commission discussed the MLK Celebration. Positives include the music, the march and the students. Commissioners suggested they felt the event needed better publicity (website, Davis Media Access, etc.). Overall, the comments from the public have been very positive.*

### **B. Community Forum/Middle East**

*Stachowicz explained the City Council direction for the Commission to consider a community forum to address issues related to the recent upheaval in the Gaza Strip. The Commission took public testimony on the issue:*

#### Public Comments:

*Robin Weener reported that there is general tension in community. If Commission chooses to proceed with a forum, think about ways to minimize differences of opinion. I-House forum was excellent because panel of experts. Questions whether a forum is a good idea because city must be unbiased.*

*Gail Ruben said she did not support a Council resolution. Look to the Human Relation Commission's mission statement for guidance. Forum for shouting match will just cause more divisiveness. Reported that anti-Semitism has increased. Suggested a community picnic.*

*George Ruchs said the community has more than 2 sides.*

*Michelle Reardon asked the Commission to consider the option of doing nothing. Perhaps other, more appropriate venues than City of Davis to address the issue. Perhaps the Commission should articulate to the Council what is already taking place. If Commission chooses action, she would recommend dialogue with skilled facilitator. Suggested an event where people do something kind for others to get to the commonality of religion. Gave example of tree planting. She explained that she is afraid and does not want to make the situation worse.*

*Martin Ruben stated that a well organized group of students has manipulated the process. The Mumbai candlelight vigil was positive because everyone had a common focus. If Commission does anything, get people together for positive time. Ruben also expressed concern about possibility of violence and harassment on campus. Hopes any HRC action will promote tolerance.*

*S. Glaserman stated that an educational forum would be okay but cautioned that there is a wide political spectrum on both sides. Can't solve problem, which itself creates divisiveness. There are crises all over world that affect residents - why deal with this one?*

*David Segal explained that the I-House "Israeli" representative was not necessary representative of all Israeli perspectives. Commission would need to make sure that any panel is balanced. What about other human rights issues in Middle East (i.e. woman, gays, etc). Suggested an event/forum not specific to any conflict.*

*Gila said the conflict is about politics. Because you can't bridge this, we need to have events not focused on politics, such as an ethnic food festival.*

*Joel Haas said he is interested in a "general" event to establish personal relationships. There would be no need for a panel discussion.*

*Martin said the focus needs to be on healing the community and setting expectations of tolerance.*

Commission Discussion:

*Minhaj said the idea is to unify a diverse community. The purpose is to calm down the people. Education is the best way to live in harmony and respect. Suggests looking at I-House format or anything to minimize feelings of hatred.*

*Clinton suggested an approach to a forum to include a moderator, a neutral historian, the Jewish and Palestinian points of view, and questions/constructive comments on "what Davis can do," Feels need to be proactive.*

*Kudo expressed concern that a forum would beget violence but was inspired by success at I-House. Also concerned about perception if Commission doesn't do anything. May be valuable to copy I-House format. World conflicts are internalized in Davis. Any action should be about preventing such violence in Davis.*

*Leyva proposed an educational panel.*

*De-Anda recalled the Capture the Flag/immigration incident on campus. Is goal to educate people in Davis? Or is it to calm the waters? Perhaps Commission should host a “meet and greet” and outline acceptable behavior.*

*Kudo moved that the Commission hold a forum modeled after the I- House forum and focus on how to reduce tensions between Israel/Palestinian conflict. Kudo withdrew motion.*

*Clinton suggested that maybe we shouldn't do anything like a forum. Any talk about the tension causes more tension. Need positive event.*

*Blomberg said Commission should respond to City Council that Commission is a monthly community forum in and of itself.*

*Stachowicz mentioned the Vanguard's offer to assist the Commission.*

*Clinton suggested the Commission go back to the idea of regional outreach meetings. Leyva suggested a general community event. Blomberg recommended an event not associated specifically with the Gaza issues, such as Davis Diversity Days, Cultural Foods, etc. Pamperin thinks it is time for a social event.*

*Kudo suggested a forum on how to reduce conflicts (specific to Middle East conflict)*

*MOTION: Kudo moved and Clinton seconded a motion as follows: “We believe a community forum would be more divisive than helpful. Ask City Council to plan activities aimed at unity to ease tensions in world community.”*

*SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Kudo moved as follows: We believe at this point in time, a community forum will be more divisive than helpful. The Commission will continue to plan activities to bring Community together. Kudo WITHDRAWS MOTION.*

*SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Blomberg moves and Leyva seconds the following motion: “The Human Relations Commission doesn't believe a community forum would be constructive. The Human Relations Commission will organize special events as a means of bringing people together.”*

*SUBSTITUTE SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Kudo moves and and DeAnda seconds the following motion: “Rather than hold a community forum that may not be in the best interests of the community we suggest social and service events aimed at fostering community.” The motion passed 5-1, with Minhaj dissenting because he preferred a forum.*

*Clinton announces he felt uncomfortable because he did not have enough information and because of pressure from the public previously in attendance. Suggests that he wants to reconsider his vote.*

VIII.      **Adjourn- 9:40 p.m.**