

**Human Rights Commission
Minutes for March 28, 2006**

Present: Nancy Clark, Scott Monson, Peter Jacobs, Liliana Silvestry, Marcel Edoh, and Janet Anderson.

Absent: Stephanie Haedt, John Hagen, Sue Stevenson, and Tricia Wiechmann (city liaison).

Meeting called to order at 6:45 p.m.

The agenda was adopted as written.

Minutes for February were adopted as written.

Committee Reports

1. Essay Contest

Nancy Clark provided the Commission with an update. The essay contest was considered very successful; 93 essays were submitted. Both teachers have indicated that they will participate again next year. The three winning essays will be published in the local papers. Each of the first, second and third place essays focused on a different aspect of the topic: stereotyping, Hispanic issues, and elderly issues.

2. Banner

No update on the banner this month – Scott will create some mock ups for the Commission's consideration.

3. Taste of Austin

No additional update on the Taste of Austin this month. The committee is still exploring the option of doing the taste of Austin in conjunction with Downtown Day in June 30. The committee will continue to evaluate whether the event is feasible and then speak to local restaurants to gauge likely participation.

New Business

1. No new business this month

Other Business

1. Note that all three essays will be published.

2. Thanks to Trish for providing the calendars of multicultural holidays and other designated days and months for use in planning events/newspaper articles.

3. Newspaper Article

April's article will be the winning essays. Scott will write the May article keeping with the May theme of National Older Americans Month.

4. Discussion of tenants/landlord issues

The Commission had a general discussion stemming from Liliana's update regarding a previous tenant's rights meeting. Some topics discussed included:

- Landlord request for video to show renters how to maintain an apartment.
- Landlords not obligated to ask about legal status of their renters according to attorney Brandon Lawhead.
- Commission discussed whether tenant failure to maintain apartments was more of a racial, economic, or educational issue.
- Poverty is a significant problem in the Austin area – an indicator of the magnitude is that the majority (58%) of students at Southgate on free or reduced-cost lunch.
- Increases in fuel, transportation, and housing costs hit low income residents hard and are not factored in to cost of living adjustments.
- Discussion of the transient nature of poverty: speculate on breakdown of people living in temporary poverty who will subsequently reach a middle-class standard of living versus those in chronic poverty.
- Programs addressing poverty in the community are more geared to young children and generally do not effectively target young adults.

5. Weather and Fire Safety issues

Janet brought up the topic of weather and Liliana mentioned fire safety issues. Topics discussed included:

- Getting severe weather information to minority populations.
- Translation will probably be limited to languages of larger minority groups.
- HDTV will open up more opportunities for information to be relayed such as translated weather reports in more languages.
- Janet is working on partnership with Spanish radio station.

Citizens Addressing the Commission

None.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

The next Human Rights Commission meeting will be held on April 25, 2006, at 6:30 PM at the Austin Public Library.

Submitted by Peter Jacobs