

Austin Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes, **April 24, 2017** (City Hall conference room)

Present: Jessica Swanson, Andre Goodlett, Lia Culbert, Miguel Garate, Raquel Imbert, Trish Wiechmann (City Liaison)

Absent: Jason Baskin (*J. Swanson chaired*), Shawn Martin, Adam Pulchinski, Richard Lemons
Citizens visiting: Dan Mueller

Commissioner Swanson called the meeting to order w/quorum at 6:31 pm.

- 1) Adopt/Amend Agenda – A. Goodlett moves, R. Imbert second. Unanimous pass.
- 2) Approve March Meeting Minutes – A. Goodlett moves, L. Culbert second. Unanimous pass.
- 3) Citizens Address – No comment
- 4) Treasurer's Report – To-date \$235.09 spent. New expense of \$72.00 for childcare at 4/19 community conversation. \$4,264.91 remaining. (\$500.00 earmarked for Taste of Nations – see below).
- 5) Welcoming Report Group Discussion – Community Conversation Recap: Jason did a great job facilitating, by all accounts. Turnout estimated to be approximately 40-50 attendees. Fruitful discussion at the end where identified barriers were presented to the group for the purpose of generating possible solutions/actions. One noted issue was that attendees were largely the “usual suspects” – an established segment of Austin who are majority Caucasian and already involved in similar efforts.
 - Discussion around the idea that commissioners need to get out and lead by example by attending events, services, etc. at minority population social centers, such as festivals, churches, etc. We can increase our own understanding, and really meet people where they are at. After gaining trust with leadership in various communities, then “Human Rights Ambassadors” can invite those individuals along for subsequent activities and events, thereby fostering better interaction between groups.
 - Discussion around better leveraging connectors
 - Discussion around potential Cultural Festival – like Taste of Nations, but bigger. Streets blocked off, vendors, etc. Could be a draw for others from surrounding areas, and broaden minority populations’ exposure in the community.
- 6) Taste of Nations Support – 11:30-13:30 at El Parral Ballroom this Saturday 4/29. \$300 previously approved, and an increase to \$500 was passed 5 to 2 by email vote since the last meeting.
 - M. Garate elaborated on how the event functions: M. Garate is the only person on the committee, and is performing most or all planning and coordination tasks himself. He gets as much sponsorship as he can, and then offers \$30 to each student who wants to provide some food, and to some non-students who are interested in participating. Many go over \$30 by using personal funds. Some participants offer to use their own funds exclusively. El Parral was chosen because they only charge a cleaning fee, so it is a very inexpensive venue. The entertainment has to be brought in from outside, and Incarnacion Church offers a whole group of performers from the cities for about \$400. Miguel personally went to Cedar Valley and various nursing homes to arrange for

transportation to and from the event so that those residents could attend. There will be approximately 30 tables with food set up. The Austin TON event is always the Saturday after the Taste of Heritage event in Albert Lea.

7) Sub-Group Progress Reports

- Increasing Access
 - M. Garate and R. Lemons met and have been working on compiling a list of services. Discussion that it should be compared with a list from SEMCAC.
 - M. Garate shared feedback from Sudanese students at Riverland, who listed 5 things that could be done to help their community:
 1. Mentors for civic engagement (how to navigate city government or otherwise get involved in the local community)
 2. Mentors for middle school and high school aged youth (particularly with regard to how hard work can translate into real opportunity for success)
 3. Better and more accessible/targeted services for those from war-torn environments who have experienced or are still experiencing trauma
 4. Complete, current, and accessible list of local area events
 5. Better advocacy or representation related to workplace grievances (many feel that jobs are lost when they shouldn't be, etc.)
- Gender Roles/Sexual Violence – no report made
 - Committee will screen films and brainstorm dates for a film series. Probably best to wait until after summer, although planning should continue
 - Need to identify “experts” who would be willing to be present for Q&A or participate on a panel

Meeting adjourned at 7:43pm. Next meeting Monday, May 22, 2017 (back at Library)