



~ M I N U T E S ~

City of Redlands Human Relations Commission
Redlands City Hall/Council Chambers - 35 Cajon St. Redlands CA
5:45 p.m. – Monday, August 31, 2015

~ SPECIAL MEETING ~

PRESENT: Ed Gomez, Chair, presiding; Carole Coley, Secretary; Commissioners Gretchen Andrews, Swathi Balaji (student), Judith Ashton, Donald Singer, Ronald Venegas; Council Liaison Paul Barich, Staff Liaison Officer Chris Mead.

ABSENT: Gail Howard, Vice Chair; Commissioner Evelyn Maldonado

I. Call to Order

After a quorum was established, the meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m.

II. Approval of the Agenda

The Commissioners opted to move down from its formal setting into a more congenial circular formation to join in with the approximately 15 citizens, including an educator from Redlands East Valley High School, known community activists, and concerned citizens who had come to join in the meeting's discussion. Afterwards, *the Commission by formal motion* approved the meeting agenda.

III. Approval of the Minutes- July 20, 2015

The Commission by formal motion approved without corrections the minutes of the July meeting.

IV. Public Comment

This portion of the agenda was incorporated into item VI below.

V. Action Items

None

VI. Presentations/ Discussions

A. *Black Lives Matter Movement/ Inland Empire Chapter*

At its July meeting, the Commission formally moved to hold a special meeting to discuss the Black Lives Matter movement with the purpose of such meeting being to get an understanding of the movement, its purpose, and what instigated the national movement.

Prior to introducing representatives from BLM, Chair Gomez recounted the Commission's efforts to bring the City together after a shooting of young black teens by teens of Mexican descent, which was perceived by many in the community as the result of racial tension.

Representing the BLM Inland Empire Chapter were Simone Hall, Broderick Dunlap, and Matthew Young, all of whom eloquently and thoughtfully spoke about African Americans, particularly men, historically being unfairly profiled and becoming the victims of police brutality, including unjustified shootings and being targeted by hate groups. The movement, they stated, was spawned and grew as the result of the Michael Brown shooting in Ferguson, Missouri and the fact that the rate of these incidents happening to African American men is disproportionate.

They declared that BLM is now a movement that has attained global status, with established activities going on in Canada, South America, Dominican Republic, Asia, the Caribbean, and countries in Europe. They cited as a major BLM goal working to change the inequality of justice system, noting that it is skewed to protect middle-class whites and the rich.

The group also cited that their local focus is to educate the public on BLM, dispel the myths and misunderstandings about BLM that abound in African American and white communities and to be a voice for women, transgenders, and others whose voices are most likely to be stifled. They stated their specific goals as overall black liberation; breaking away from racially systemic systems of institutions, calling for the criminal justice system to be more equitable and fair, educating communities, ensuring that African Americans know their history, working with the educational system, working to solve issues in African American communities. They significantly noted that BLM has no hierarchy and that each group operates on its own, collectively selecting their own issues and goals.

They stated that negative police activity in the Inland Empire is often overshadowed by incidents in Los Angeles and, thus, gets little or no news coverage. Cited was a fatal police beating in Moreno Valley because the driver refused to get out of his car, and other incidents that involved fatal shootings of mentally ill African American men, the Taisha Miller killing in Riverside, and an incident in the High Desert that involved a man who was bi-polar that the District Attorney allegedly called a criminal. Several incidents were cited.

In closing, the BLM group is demanding that police and communities understand reasons why there is an historic distrust, particularly by African Americans, and should work with BLM rather than discredit the movement.

BLM representatives noted that they see the Redlands Human Relations Commission as an ally working with them to reach goals that are considered mutual by both entities.

B. *Race Forums*

Based on goals set by the Commission in January 2015 and the conversational discussion held at tonight's special meeting, the Chair instructed the Social Justice sub-committee, chaired by Commissioner Coley, to seek out community members willing to serve on this sub-committee by hosting two forums on race with the first in January and the second in February. Coley stated that a full SJ sub-committee meeting will be held at a designated date in October.

C. *Other Ideas for Race Discussion, i.e., Films, Speakers, etc.*

Those attending the impending Social Justice sub-committee meeting will be asked to bring ideas of location, specific date, topics, speakers, recommended media, etc. Commissioners were asked to submit their ideas to the sub-committee.

VII. *Adjournment*

Due to the lateness of the hour, the balance of the agenda was suspended. Chair Gomez thanked the guests for their attendance and participation in the evenings discussions.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m. with the next meeting scheduled for Monday, September 21, 2015 in Council Chambers unless otherwise notified.

Respectfully submitted by Carole Coley, Secretary
September 7, 2015