



~ M I N U T E S ~

City of Redlands Human Relations Commission
Council Chambers, Civic Center Plaza - 35 Cajon Street, Redlands, CA
Monday, September 15, 2014

PRESENT: Ed Gomez, Chair, presiding; Gail Howard, Vice Chair; Carole Coley, Secretary; Commissioners Judith Ashton, Zoie Gilpin, Evelyn Maldonado, Donald Singer, Ronald Venegas, Staff Liaison Officer Elyzabeth Green.

ABSENT: Commissioner Robert Reid

GUESTS: Lori Rhodes, RUSD Superintendent; Neal Waner, Vice President, RUSD School Board

I. CALL TO ORDER

After a quorum was established, the meeting opened at 5:49 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The Commission by formal motion approved the meeting agenda.

III. Approval of the Minutes

The Commission by formal motion approved without corrections the minutes of the July 19 meeting.

IV. INTRODUCTIONS

Commissioners introduced themselves and provided brief backgrounds. Chair Gomez welcomed invited guests Rhodes and Waner. RUSD guests were invited to this meeting to share with the Commission their findings of the cheerleading issue and plans for preventing such instances from reoccurring.

V. PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

a) Redlands East Valley Cheerleader Incident: "Gansta Day"

RSUD Superintendent Rhodes provided a background of the issue and addressed the findings of a special investigative team that interviewed all involved, noting that no instances of intentional stereotyping nor was racial animus intended. She viewed the incident as a 'teachable moment' and suggested that the issue should not be blown out of proportion. Although RUSD has held 'teaching tolerance' workshops in the past, she spoke of additional training perhaps being needed for school personnel to bring light to unconscious biases that may persist. She further noted that the cheerleading squad had realized their error and were cautioned and understood the damaging results achieved by posting 'sensitive' photos to the Internet.

In defense of the students, RSUD Board Vice President insisted that the cheerleaders were not 'racist' and no harm was intended by the gesture. This defense was supported by comments made by Commissioner Howard, who insisted she personally knew all of the cheerleaders and their families.

Officer Green advocated that mockery or glorification of gangs, teenage pregnancy, and weaponry should not be tolerated. She noted that a community support day was held on the REV campus when school reopened that was represented by several organizations in the city (*Note: Commissioner Ronald Venegas represented the Human Relations Commission*). The purpose of this event, she stated, was to let the students attending REV know that they had

the support of the community and were there to welcome them back after summer break. Green felt that the students' spirit had not appeared to have been dampened by the incident.

Concern was expressed by others in attendance. Community activist Mario Saucedo insisted that the responsibility lies with the system and adults, noting specifically that systematic change and, offering his help, more community input was needed. Saucedo was particularly concerned with the mockery alienating gangs as the REV football team travels to other schools. Comments by community member Dr. Hussein regarding treatment he continues to experience were so noted, as were those of Joe Gonzalez.

Because of comments that arose from those who were present about their experiences in Redlands and the generational differences on how these experiences are perceived, some commissioners felt that inimical issues of race, ethnicity, stereotyping, etc., were more deep-seated in Redlands than was suggested through the infamous cheerleader photo.

As a result, Chair Gomez requested that the Social Justice Sub-Committee begin to plan an intergenerational community forum for the entire Redlands community. Dr. Keith Osajima, Professor of Race-Ethnic Studies at the University, who was also present, offered his professional expertise and involvement in facilitating such a forum.

XI. ADJOURN

The Commission by formal motion approved suspending the balance of the agenda and adjourning the meeting at 7:05 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for 5:45 p.m. on Monday, November 17, 2014 in Council chambers unless otherwise notified.

Respectfully submitted by Carole Coley, Secretary
November 13, 2014