

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD
ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2015 IN ROOM 112 THE COMMUNITY CENTER

The meeting began at 7:35 p.m.

Members Present were: Dea Zugby, Kevin Hammett, Jacquie Carrington, Janet Jacobs Parker, Rick Ransom, Jamie Krauk, Sherry Burks and David Moran, Staff Liaison.

Minutes from 1/15/15

Jacquie moved approval of the minutes. Dea seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Rick noted that the minutes were a summary of the meeting and not a verbatim transcript.

Council Referral – Petition to Create an Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

Rick discussed the 2013 EEO report from the City's Human Resources office. David distributed a 2014 EEO summary page. Jacquie stated there were other variables to consider when hiring employees such as qualifications and experience. Rick discussed the "Composition of Workforce" page and stated that racial make-up had improved between 2002 and 2014. He asked if there was demographic data for the community. David responded he could get Census data for Greenbelt.

Jamie referred to page 3 of the Petition and the 8 items the proposed advisory committee might address. She stated that some of these items were related to workforce diversity, while others were more about City services and unity. Jamie believed if there were problems related to hiring, it was not the purview of CRAB. She did believe the City could improve on inclusion related to city services and if CRAB met more regularly this is something that could be discussed.

Rick asked if other board members saw a problem with the workforce not being as diverse as the community.

Kevin stated the representation wasn't perfect, but he did not perceive a problem. He indicated the City must adhere to certain laws and policies related to hiring. Kevin agreed that CRAB would not be the appropriate board to address the hiring/employment issues.

Jamie was reluctant to state there was no problem related to the employment concerns. She didn't feel qualified to agree or disagree with the statements in the Petition related to City workforce diversity.

Sherry didn't think there was enough information to make determinations on the employment issues and did not believe this was part of CRAB's role.

Questions were asked regarding how complaints about City hiring practices were handled and about the Employee Relations Board (ERB). David responded that the ERB handles grievances or appeals from current employees. It was noted applicants could file complaints with the City Manager or various outside agencies.

Jacque discussed Franklin Park and stated that when it was Empirian Village, CRAB held meetings there. She recalled the problems voiced by residents were related to living conditions and apartment management, not City services. David indicated that living conditions in the community had improved with the new owners.

Janet expressed concern and resentment that the petitioners were so critical of the City and CRAB. She believed CRAB had addressed issues of inclusion in the past and would continue to do so.

Jamie favored having CRAB meet more frequently and raised the example of the potential FBI headquarters relocating to Greenbelt. She reported hearing from multiple people who are diametrically opposed to this. Jamie believed it would be a healthy discussion topic for CRAB to have if it were meeting more frequently. David indicated that the City Council was on record supporting the FBI relocation. Rick stated it would be part of CRAB's job to try and ameliorate these concerns.

Referring back to employment issues, Rick observed that in 2013 there were 12 hires (4 white, 6 black and 2 Hispanic). Several board members believed this was a diverse representation.

There was discussion of the News Review. Several members commented that residents have to make some effort to read the News Review and learn about City programs, services and opportunities. It was noted that lots of people don't read the paper or even pick it up from an apartment hallway.

Next, there was discussion of two Facebook threads, one related to the Mishkan Torah incident and one related to a new Franklin Park resident. Jamie indicated that Lore Rosenthal had asked her to share this information with CRAB because Lore believed it highlighted the problem referenced in the Petition.

Referring to the threads, Dea stated that none of us can change the hearts of people. She stated Greenbelt was not Ferguson, MO but did relay a few examples from friends of police stops in Greenbelt that appeared to be based on the driver's race.

Jacque observed that much of the thread discussions reflected the opinions of individuals. She was not sure what CRAB could do to change these individual's hearts and minds.

Kevin relayed an example where a white friend with speech impediment was stopped by Police who thought he had been drinking. He stated that these are things CRAB is hearing and believed

there was a role for CRAB to play. For example, CRAB could have the Police Chief or one of the Captains come to a meeting to discuss the issue.

There was general agreement that CRAB should meet more frequently and discussion of how often CRAB should meet. There was also discussion of meeting at locations throughout the City especially Greenbelt east and west.

Jacquie moved that CRAB meet at least quarterly. Dea seconded. Kevin suggested CRAB members review minutes from other advisory groups to learn what issues they are discussing. The motion passed unanimously.

Jamie moved that these meetings rotate throughout the City including Greenbelt east and west. Sherry seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Jacquie referred back to page 1 of the petition and referenced the Petitioners concerns about the city code. She asked if the City Council was going to make changes to the code. David responded that Council was still considering this Petition and that CRAB could recommend code updates to Council as part of their report.

Rick believed CRAB needed one more meeting to specifically focus on CRAB's response to the Petition. February 19 and 26 were suggested as dates for the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:10 p.m.

Prepared by David E. Moran, Staff Liaison