Human Rights Commission (HRC)
Meeting Minutes
April 1, 2021 via Zoom

Attending: Ravi Koil; Alma Ogweta; Pedro Vazquez; Margaret Brownlee; Stephanie Weaver; JadeRose SanGiovanni; Amy Berry; Jill Barkley-Roy; Colleen Jones-Turner
Absent: Erick Giles; Milan Nevajda; Jodi Mezzanotte

Meeting called to order at 7:05pm. Chair Pedro Vazquez facilitated the meeting.

- Pedro advised that member Adele has resigned.

- City Budget Subcommittee: Pedro noted this meeting was intended to address the opportunity for the HRC to give comments on the City budget to the City Council on April 6, the night of the Public Hearing on the budget, and to advise on work to that end by the subcommittee for HRC final recommendations. He noted that the budget can be seen as a moral document as to what the City leadership values and invests tax payer money in funding. He thanked the Council for providing the HRC a voice in the budget deliberations. Pedro added that Adele and Erick had been part of the subcommittee but were unable to attend this meeting.

  Jill provided observations on the two City departments that she reviewed as a budget subcommittee person, Sustainability and Transportation. She noted that Sustainability has a line for interns to be paid and asked if interns are paid throughout the City, which Stephanie confirmed is generally true (although not required by law for a City). Amy explained that in the Police Dept they have had interns who are unpaid but do get college credit for their work. Jill expressed support for the Sustainability Dept in general.

  Jill noted that the Bus Service includes money for technology investments and sought further details on those and also if bus passes are provided for those who may be economically challenged. Discussion followed including to note that under Social Services the free bus pass program is administered and funded in that department budget for $10,000. Members generally expressed interest in enhanced free service and distribution of passes through other locations including the Community Center, Boys and Girls Club, at schools and at churches.

  Pedro advised he had done a comprehensive review of the prior year budget in order to consider the FY22 budget. He noted the FY22 budget is impressive as it reflects the Council goals. Through the goals, climate change, diversity, housing, health, advocacy and fiscal responsibility, Pedro advised there is an equity focus — and then funding is applied to achieving the goals. He gave examples including the funding of a new service through an outside vendor to do outreach to under-served populations, resulting from the Police Serve Review Working Group. He noted the pedestrian improvement funding as a benefit to kids, the Clean Air case legal funding, the increase in Sustainability


funding in the form of wages for a prior year position which will now be funded for a full year. Lastly, he noted the increase in the Social Services budget, also related to a position that will add service for those in need. The various items generated comments and support.

Pedro also noted the various cuts that had been made to achieve a lower increase on the tax rate, in particular the positions not funded as well as cuts in the PD and Fire budgets. These also generated some discussion and comments, with further explanation of the Police Service Working Group conclusions and recommendations, which are now reflected in the budget. Lastly, he noted that the HRC budget was proposed to be fully funded.

The issue of how much time Pedro spends on HRC business was noted by Margaret and discussion followed about the amount of work being done reflecting the need for a paid position to support the HRC. The ordinance notes that if the City hires a Diversity and Inclusion Specialist, that position would assist the HRC. Stephanie suggested that the HRC needed one to two years of sustained and successful efforts to demonstrate the ongoing need in order to substantiate the need for a position, which was generally supported by the members.

Discussion followed about the budget process and how the HRC might get involved to engage the community more in the budget process and how tax payer money is spent, including a budget scorecard or other communication tool. This was noted as a future HRC project that is aligned with City goals.

A question was raised about certain GA denials processes by Alma that Stephanie noted was not a budget related matter but an issue that she would follow up on.

The idea of requiring departments to do community outreach was raised by Margaret with various ideas discussed on what that might look like by members. Amy noted many of the examples given by members are existing efforts that are not displayed in the budget but do happen, such as Coffee with a Cop, the National Night Out at RedBank, the Open House at Central Station, the Junior Police Academy, the Camp Counselors – many of which have been on hold due to COVID.

The group then moved to what the message from the HRC to the Council should include, which had been noted by Stephanie as specific items as discussion was taking place. Roll call votes were taken on the following, with all items unanimously supported except as noted:

- Paying Interns 100% of the time
- Exploring free bus service and/or enhanced access to passes
- Funding as per the proposed budget the vendor based outreach efforts (Amistad/Home Team) that was resulting from the Police Service Review Working Group's recommendations; Margaret and Alma abstained
- Funding as per the proposed budget the Pedestrian improvements
- Funding as per the proposed budget the legal fee increases for the Clean Air efforts
- Funding as per the proposed budget the Sustainability Dept
- Funding as per the proposed budget the Social Services Dept

- **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Sascha Braunig, Sawyer St, asked about the increase to the Social Services budget; she commented that the outreach planned via the recommendations from the Police Service Review Working Group was not as broad as the Cahoots model in terms of providing comprehensive mental health assistance; she suggested that the Council positions be paid more so that work as Councilors would attract people who might otherwise be unable to take on the work.

- **CLOSING COMMENTS:** Ravi noted HRC is in its first year and the opportunity to look at and comment on the budget highlights all the great things the City is doing and noted citizens should be proud. Amy noted an upcoming opportunity for a Police Executive Research regional effort upcoming on Fair and Impartial Policing, which is open to 1 PD member and 1 community member, on May 11-12. Pedro noted that school superintendent search was complete and the individual offered the position Tim McAnee (sp) was a highly qualified educator and author.

- **FINAL MOTION ON WHO WILL PROVIDE THE BUDGET MESSAGE:** Ravi made a motion for Pedro to represent the HRC on 4/6 at the Council meeting, which was seconded by JadeRose provided Pedro wanted to do this, which he did confirm. No formal vote was taken but unanimous support was noted.

  Jill moved and Colleen seconded to close the meeting.

  **Meeting adjourned at approx. 9:30pm.**

  **NEXT MEETING:** 4/8, 7pm, via Zoom