



STATE OF WASHINGTON
COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

WALLA WALLA
Public Meeting
January 29, 2005

Roll Call:

Commissioners present: Diana Avalos, Ruben Baca, Faviola Contreras, Leo Gaeta, Uriel Iñiguez, Yvonne Lopez-Morton, Lourdes Portillo Salazar, Homero Tamez, Graciela Villanueva-Lopez, and Rebecca Villareal

Commissioner absent: Gabriel Portugal (excused)

Staff present: Antonio Ginatta and Cindy García

Meeting called to order at 10:08 a.m.

Chair Gaeta noted that there would be a change in the agenda. The President of Walla Walla Community College would be given opening remarks, and Professor Paul Apostolides would be making a statement before proceeding with Commission business.

Dr. Steven L. VanAusdle – President of Walla Walla Community College

Dr. VanAusdle extended a warm welcome to the commissioners. Walla Walla is changing as a community. The community college wants to provide opportunities to those who want to learn English, to equip individuals for work life and culture, and to equip natives with the clear understanding of culture so that communication and mutual understanding can occur.

Professor Paul Apostolides – Whitman College

Professor Apostolides spoke to the Commission about interconnecting issues of worker safety and safe food. The vast majority, (80%) of Tyson (meat packing factory located in Walla Walla) workers are immigrants from Mexico. Tyson employees are among the lowest paid in the area. They are particularly vulnerable to mistreatment in the workplace.

Professor Apostolides has researched on the type of injuries sustained by workers on the Tyson plant. Study provided surveys to about 400 workers and included systematic interviews of 20 to 40 workers. The interviews were to clarify personal stories behind the survey in regards to the experience of the workers that were injured at the plant. How the

1210 Eastside St. 1st Floor PO Box 40924 Olympia, WA 98504-0924
Toll-Free: (800) 443-0294 Olympia: (360) 753-3159 Fax: (360) 753-0199
www.cha.wa.gov hispanic@cha.wa.gov

company treated the workers after injury occurred - medical care provided and whether the workers were put on light duty. The most common injuries are due to repetitive motion, hands locking up because of having to stand in the same position by wielding a knife at a piece of frozen meat at high speeds. Most injuries that have occurred are debilitating injuries. Happen at a very alarming rate at the plant in Pasco. Rate is one of this highest in the meat packing industry in the country. The rate of injury in 2002 was 27 injured for every 100 workers. One in four workers had a serious job related injury. Compared to 10 injured per 100 workers in other meat packing warehouses. This warehouse is the worst with a 2.6% average of injury. These are systematic human rights violations.

Mr. Apostolides asked that the Commission encourage Labor and Industries (L&I) to conduct a real investigation of the allegations against Tyson Foods and that the L&I investigator should speak Spanish and interview the workers one on one. Mr. Apostolides also requested that the state re-examine Tyson Foods workers compensation policy. Tyson Foods is self-insured and that creates a situation of direct paying out or not paying out. Also asked that the state provide naturalization and ESL classes in the area. Mr. Apostolides also stated that workers are engaged in a struggle with Tyson to save the union.

Commissioner Avalos asked Mr. Apostolides if there was any kind of dialogue between Tyson and educational entities in the community to perhaps build partnerships and bring ESL classes to the plant.

Mr. Apostolides responded that the Walla Walla Community College does have a relationship with Tyson and they do provide ESL instruction. During the study conducted, most workers stated that they appreciate the services being offered they just can't keep up. Workers get up at 4 or 5 in the morning and work until 2:30 or 3, it's demanding work, it's hard to get off work and go to class. Workers with children have difficulty making the dates and times of classes offered.

President VanAusdle stated that Tyson approached Walla Walla Community College to bring education to the Tyson plant. Many students have earned their GED in this program. GED students were promoted to supervisor positions.

David Tobias, Human Resource Manager at Tyson Foods stated that the educational program was started at Tyson. Citizenship classes are offered, 500 people take and participate in the classes. The classes run from 10 am to 5 pm. Many team members come in before a shift or stay after a shift, some come in during their lunch hour. Mr. Tobias addressed some of the issues brought up by Professor Apostolides. Mr. Tobias stated that Tyson cares for their team members. There are a number of safety programs, including a safety committee of 60 team members and six full time safety instructors. Tyson foods used to be IBP, the turnover was 80%, and it is now at 30%. Many improvements have been made to the facility. De-certification of the union is not an issue Tyson brought up. Members themselves have stated they no longer want to be represented by the union.

Mr. Apostolides responded by telling Mr. Tobias that he has heard from a number of workers that Tyson was very much involved in the de-certification issue.

Commissioner Iñiguez stated that the research of the company is based on safety. What has prevented investigations to proceed from the Human Rights Commission?

Mr. Apostolides responded that investigation is the role of the state, can't speak to that.

Commissioner Tamez added that there needs to be more involvement from the self-insured section of L&I. L&I investigated the plant in the past. Commissioner Tamez has found Tyson to be open and willing to participate in what can be done for the benefit of the workers. Someone needs to address the high rate of injuries.

Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Iñiguez made a motion to approve the minutes from the Tacoma public meeting. Commissioner Tamez seconded the motion. **Minutes approved unanimously.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:

Education Committee – Commissioner Avalos (Chair):

- Researching some of the best practice and proactive programs throughout the state. One that consistently comes up is the Navigation 101 model adopted by Franklin/Pierce school districts. OSPI and state legislature are endorsing Navigation 101 as being one of best practices not only for Latino students but also for all students to help address the drop out rate. Education committee will be endorsing this program as well.

Economic Development – Commissioner Villareal (Chair):

- The Economic Development Committee will focus on working with small businesses by putting on quarterly conferences throughout the state. First conference will be on February 26, 2005 in Wenatchee from 8 am – 1 pm. Spring conference will be in Pasco. Summer conference will be in Mount Vernon. Fall conference will be in Yakima. Dates for these conferences have not yet been determined. A steering committee from the respective communities will be formed to put together the conferences.
- Working with Representative Mary Skinner to put together a small business incubator in Yakima County.
- Working on a joint commission economic development committee to work on joint efforts.

David Cortinas of the Tri City Chamber of Commerce stated that incubators currently exist in the Tri-Cities area. Wanted to know who was helping coordinate the spring meeting in the Tri-Cities area.

Commissioner Tamez responded to Mr. Cortinas that he was tasked with the planning of the spring conference and would be contacting Mr. Cortinas soon.

Executive Director Report – Antonio Ginatta:

Stated that the Commission on Hispanic Affairs (CHA) is a state agency under the Governor. CHA has a staff of 1.8 and that commissioners are volunteers. At one time the CHA had 8 full time employees, with grants and state funding. When Governor Locke left office, his budget returned CHA to 3 full time employees. With 3 full time employees, CHA would have more of a legislative presence. Reality is the state budget is at a \$1.8 billion deficit for this biennium. Cost cutting will occur. Governor Gregoire will have her own budget out in mid February. CHA does not know where it stands in this new budget. Executive Director Ginatta stated if members of the community felt CHA could continue, they should make a phone call or write a letter.

Mr. Cortinas stated that he has followed CHA for 25 years and since Executive Director Ginatta has come on board there have been some really positive things happening throughout the state.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Chair Gaeta stated that the topic of meeting format has been discussed in the past and different ideas have been discussed to improve meeting participation. One of the ideas is to hold public meetings where the community meets. One idea is to hold public meetings in churches.

Commissioner Baca made a motion to receive an opinion from the Attorney General in regards to holding Commission meetings in a faith-based facility. Commissioner Lopez-Morton seconded the motion. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Action Item: Executive Director Ginatta will request the Attorney General write an opinion on holding public meetings in a faith-based facility.

The Commission is co-sponsoring the LEAP conference this year. This year, there are two meetings that require commissioner participation on the same dates: the LEAP conference and the small business conference in Wenatchee. What commissioners would like to do is look at the possibility of allocating resources for both of those conferences. Chair Gaeta asked commissioners if a discussion needed to take place on who will be participating in what conference.

Commissioner Lopez-Morton asked Chair Gaeta to explain what LEAP stands for, for the benefit of the meeting attendees.

Chair Geata explained that several years a non-profit organization developed called LEAP, the Latino/a Educational Achievement Project, headed by Ricardo Sanchez. LEAP has done a great job working on issues for Latino high school students to access

higher education. LEAP was essential in helping pass HB 1079, the resident tuition bill. This bill allows students who do not have immigration documents to attend college after graduating from high school and then pay the in state tuition rate. Before the bill was passed, students without legal immigration status, immigrant Latino students who were long-term residents of Washington, had to pay out-of-state tuition rates, which made it impossible for students to attend higher education institutions.

Commissioner Iñiguez moved that the director seek funds for commissioners to participate in both conferences. Commissioner Baca seconded the motion.

Commissioner Lopez-Morton stated that two commissioners would be attending the LEAP conference but would be funded by other organizations. Commissioner Tamez asked to make sure there are enough funds for both the LEAP and economic development conference in Wenatchee.

Commissioner Villareal seconded the motion. **Motion approved unanimously.**

NEW BUSINESS:

Commissioner Contreras motioned for a date change for the Wenatchee meeting be changed from March 11 & 12 to April 1 & 2. We discussed partnering up with other events in the community to try to have more participation. The Wenatchee Mariachi Festival is that weekend. Commissioner Avalos seconded the motion.

Commissioner Iñiguez suggested someone contact the Mexican Consulate to see if they will be able to make the change as well.

Chair Gaeta clarified that the Commission had looked into holding joint meetings with the Mexican Mobile Consulate. Three meetings have been coordinated; the Wenatchee meeting is one of the three. The motion is to coordinate with the Mexican Consulate to see if we can change the date as well. If the Mexican Consulate cannot change the date will it impede the Commission from making the change?

Commissioner Tamez replied no. Commissioner Tamez made an amended motion to change the Wenatchee meeting date and it will be consulted with the Mexican Consulate office. Commissioner Avalos seconded the motion. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Action Item: Executive Assistant García will make changes to calendar. Executive Director Ginatta will contact the Mexican Consulate office to discuss the change.

Commissioner Portillo Salazar motioned for study sessions to start at 1 pm and end at 5 pm.

Chair Gaeta stated that the study sessions have been set up from 3 pm to 6 pm in order for more commissioners to participate. Chair Gaeta asked commissioners to identify challenges in moving the meeting time earlier in the day.

Commissioner Avalos commented that it has been researched in the past and the reason for the current meeting time is because of the availability of flights. She suggested adding an extra hour to the study session and have it end at 7 pm.

Chair Gaeta asked the Executive Assistant what challenges there would be in getting commissioners to meeting locations, travel wise.

Executive Assistant García informed commissioners that it is difficult to find flights into the smaller communities, such as Walla Walla. Flight times are set and are not flexible and may not accommodate the time change.

Commissioner Iñiguez motioned for study sessions to be scheduled from 2 pm to 6 pm. Commissioner Lopez-Morton seconded the motion. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Commissioner Iñiguez presented a certificate of appreciation to the Commission from the Thurston County Mesa Redonda.

Commissioner Iñiguez motioned that commissioners and Executive Director Ginatta seek an audience with the Governor and with newly appointed officials to discuss the issues impacting the Hispanic community. Commissioner Avalos seconded the motion. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Commissioner Lopez-Morton motioned that when meeting with the new agency directors, to get a head count on how many Hispanics are represented in the agency. Commissioner Baca and Commissioner Tamez seconded the motion. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Mr. Cortinas commented on Commissioner Iñiguez motion. Stated that a list of 20 Hispanic names have been forwarded to the Governors office for consideration in her Cabinet. Mr. Cortinas has not heard back from the Governor, he will be sending a follow-up letter. Hopes the Commission will also follow up on this letter

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Cindy Gregoire & Javier Hernandez – Garrison Night School Program

Ms. Gregoire explained that Garrison Night School is a place where there is opportunity for adults to further their education. Students can attend two to three hours, Monday through Thursday. Very successful program - Federal Way is now looking at implementing a similar program in their district, as well as the Vancouver School District.

History of the Garrison Night School Program and courses offered:

- Began in 1994 with 45 parents, 3 teachers, 2 days per week. School population is 29 percent Latino, most US born, and some immigrants. Many of the kids in our schools speak Spanish. Many parents speak Spanish and want to learn English so

they can communicate with teachers to help children with homework and become more acculturated and become part of our community.

- 1996 partnership with Walla Walla Community College.
- Goals: Stronger parent support at home. Assist their children with homework in Spanish or English. Whole family adopts the concept of becoming a learner.
- Increasing skills in English.
- Higher standard of living for graduates of program.
- Motivating citizenship.
- Traffic safety instruction offered.
- Huge influence that the home and family play in student achievement.
- GED classes.
- Beginning, intermediate and advanced ESL.
- Computer skills.
- Citizenship classes.
- Spanish/English language exchange.

Mr. Hernandez added that he started the program along with his brother, Salvador. Mr. Hernandez realized that Hispanic students were behind in education and struggled moving ahead when their parents could not help their children with schoolwork.

Ms. Gregoire stated that after two years a partnership was formed with the Walla Walla Community College. Walla Walla Community College is responsible for enrollment, provide most of the salaries for teachers, and Garrison provides the childcare. Other supporting agencies are the Blue Mountain Action Council which pays the registration fees for students, and WorkSource continues to pay unemployment benefits while student are enrolled in the Night School program.

Courses: GED, beginning ESL, intermediate ESL, advanced ESL, introductory composition skills, ESL for traffic safety, and citizenship classes. There is also a Spanish/English language exchange. Students are paired up with monolingual English/Spanish speakers and learn each other's languages.

Commissioner Avalos asked if there was a conflict with the schedule for parents to attend.

Ms. Gregoire stated that classes begin in November and run until March. It seems to be the best time to run classes. Adults can come from 5 pm to 8 pm or 6 pm to 8 pm.

Commissioner Tamez asked Ms. Gregoire if the program includes any information on parenting skills and discipline. CPS agencies have a concern about how Latinos discipline their children. This is an excellent opportunity to teach people how to deal in crises and conflict.

Executive Director Ginatta officially recognized Javier Hernandez. Mr. Hernandez was a great contact for the Commission in Walla Walla, as currently there is no Walla Walla

commissioner. Mr. Hernandez was very open to working with the Commission and taking us on a tour of the farm labor camp.

Executive Assistant García also recognized Cynthia Selde for her help in organizing the meeting.

Cindy Gregoire & Jackie Martinez – Walla Walla School District Language Acquisition

Ms. Gregoire stated that the achievement gap begins before children enter kindergarten. Something happens or doesn't happen from birth to five that causes the achievement gap to be very apparent.

Ms. Martinez stated that the Tri-Cities has started a program reaching to parents of newborns. Currently in Walla Walla there are teachers going out to the childbirth classes and speaking to parents. Unfortunately, that only taps into the English-speaking parents because this particular teacher only speaks English. Looking to get funding for someone who is Latino or speaks Spanish. Kids of poverty are read to and spoken to less. Garrison Night School program can help narrow the achievement gap. Currently has a Head Start program. Most of the instruction is done in English. Latino kids do get one hour of Spanish literacy. Kids need to be taught in their native language. A third issue of concern is gang activity. A structure exists in gangs that are not understood. Structure needs to be provided for these kids so they don't feel the need to seek it elsewhere and provide positive choices for these kids.

Ms. Gregoire added that the Commission can advocate for funding for real solutions. State level discussions on having the WASL in Spanish, if the Commission can comment on the issue and support it.

Commissioner Baca stated that when the commissioners visited the labor camp, it seemed very isolated. Has the School District been able to connect with the labor camp in terms of transportation resources?

Ms. Gregoire responded that the labor camp is within the College Place School District. Does not know what they are doing.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Hector Rodriguez – Thanked the college for all its work in the Hispanic community and the Commission for holding a public forum in Walla Walla. Garrison Night School is a great program, but it only runs for a pre-determined amount of time. The community needs a year-long program.

David Cortinas – Editor, La Voz. Ever since Tyson bought IBP they have made a difference in the communities that they serve. 1,800 employees work there. If the union continues to operate out of Tyson foods, there is a possibility that Tyson will close down.

A lot of workers get paid very good wages. They get raises constantly. Realize that there are some issues, and strongly recommends that the Commission looks at the accusations made earlier because this company that has taken a bad situation and made it into a good situation. There are union representatives that are corrupted and they are Latino representatives. Took over five years ago and they are corrupted so badly that they formed another union within the union. Maria Martinez has been reprimanded for her dirty tactics for the way she has been negotiating with Tyson Foods and with Smith Frozen Foods. These two plants have a lot of Hispanic people working. Community can't afford that union representatives that are corrupted to force companies and jobs out of this area.

The Tri-Cities area has two commissioners. Homero Tamez and Gabriel Portugal. Mr. Cortinas expressed that he is upset about the representation of Commissioner Portugal. Mr. Cortinas publicly asked for Commissioner Portugal's resignation from the Commission. Mr. Cortinas stated that Commissioner Portugal has been very negative in representing the community and dividing the community and is not a positive Latino leader. Maybe his seat can be used for Walla Walla.

Clarissa Salazar – Ms. Salazar addressed the Commission on farmworker issues. Ms. Salazar is very concerned that the hard working people in farmwork are being mistreated and their human rights are being violated. Ms. Salazar requested the Commission make sure there are more L&I investigators and that farmworkers are well represented in the state. Also requested the Commission look into health insurance access for Latinos. A lot of Latinos are not eligible for Medicaid or any other type of health benefit.

David Tobias – HR Manager at Tyson Foods. Mr. Tobias stated that he felt it was fair he address some of the concerns brought up by Mr. Apostolides. Tyson Food wages are as competitive or higher as the same industry in our area. Safety and L&I: Tyson's rules and regulations are monitored by L&I and are just as great or tighter than the state insurance. Tyson Foods does not have anything against organized labor. In 2003 Walla Walla Community College took 60 of our team members including some union members to monitor safety issues. The union has not wanted to participate in the programs that Tyson's offers such as the ESL/citizenship classes, accounting, welding and other similar programs.

Chair Gaeta stated Tyson has been a subject of discussion. As a Commission, CHA will look at the information that has been provided and establish the facts. Quite often commissioners are not experts in some of the fields presented. What CHA needs to do is research on how best to proceed.

Benjamin Enriquez – Mr. Enriquez has a problem at his home. Mr. Enriquez wife is sick and needs surgery and has come to seek assistance.

Chair Gaeta asked Mr. Enriquez if his wife has medical insurance.

Mr. Enriquez answered that the insurance will only cover 80% of the expenses.

Commissioner Tamez informed Mr. Enriquez that he has spoken to Carolina Padilla and has already requested that Executive Assistant García obtain some information for him.

Victor Chacón – Director, Multicultural Studies. Mr. Chacón realizes that many of the graduating high school seniors who come to him are not prepared to take college level 100 classes. Being positive with the release of HB 1079 law, two years ago, has permitted large numbers of students' access to college when they did not exist before. Walla Walla Community College provides considerable support to new students. Given that, the students, because of language barrier, economic barriers, and feeling that they are integrated, come with concerns. They fear they can't complete and that they will be in school for one or two quarters. From the standpoint of the commissioners, access is coming. However, retention and completion due to curriculum has not arrived. Multi-ethnic curriculum is not represented.

Commissioner Avalos stated that Terri Bergeson has asked the state legislature for \$1.5 million to develop culturally responsive/relevant tools, working with equity team at OSPI to develop those tools and to identify staff at OSPI to serve as technical assistance and resources for school districts in the state.

Vince Reyes – Counselor and Teacher. Mr. Reyes stated that school districts need to be more inclusive with parents. Make sure the school district is speaking the parents' language whether it is Spanish/English. Parents have mentioned that they get flyers from the school district and they do not know what they are for.

Meeting adjourned at 12:55 pm