



STATE OF WASHINGTON
COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

WENATCHEE
Public Meeting
April 2, 2005

Roll Call:

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

Commissioner absent: Gabriel Portugal (excused)

Staff present: Cindy García

Meeting called to order at 10:12 am

Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Lopez-Morton made a motion to approve the minutes from the Walla Walla public meeting. Commissioner Tamez seconded the motion. **Minutes approved unanimously.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:

Economic Development – Commissioner Villareal (Chair):

- Wenatchee Hispanic Conference at the end of February. Attended by 20 start up businesses and existing businesses. Three workshops were done in English and in Spanish for three hours. Spanish-taught classes were well attended.
- Pasco Economic Conference, similar to the one in Wenatchee.
- Working on other quarterly conferences throughout Washington State. Conference will also be held in Mount Vernon in the summer and one in Yakima in the fall.

Education Committee – Commissioner Avalos (Chair):

- Tracking several house and senate bills that are pivotal in Latino education across Washington State. Some bills that are still alive, House Bill 1545 financial aid for part time students – very important as many of our Latino students can not attend school full time because of other obligations. Regarding the drop out rate SHB 1708 – programs that are to encourage students to continue their education.

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House Bill 1579 changing assessment in reference to WASL. Contacting legislatures in respective areas to continue to address the importance of having these senate bills passed.

- Subcommittee attended LEAP conference.

Executive Director Report – Leo Gaeta

Chair Gaeta explained to the public that Executive Director Antonio Ginatta took a position with the Governor's Public Policy Office. Chair Gaeta proceeded to give an update on the recruitment efforts. The job announcement was posted for 30 days and it closed on March 25th. Through the active search, 33 applications were received. A panel has been developed which includes personnel from the governor's office, community members and a couple of commissioners. The panel will screen the applicants and determine who the best-qualified candidates are and then conduct interviews. The decision is ultimately the governors. Governor Gregoire may elect to re-interview the candidates.

Chair Gaeta went on to give the budget report. In the months of January CHA was \$185 in the black and in February CHA was \$1,545 in the black. There is a set biennium budget for commissioner activities. The report for the month of February does not include commissioner reimbursement for some travel that took place in February.

Chair Gaeta updated community members on the legislative session. Since the Education Committee touched on the remaining bills, Chair Gaeta addressed the pending budget approvals. The new budget proposed by Governor Gregoire gives CHA 3 Full Time Employees (FTEs), as opposed to 1.8 FTEs. The senate came out with a budget where CHA is only approved for 2 FTEs. CHA is waiting to see what the house budget approves. Chair Gaeta explained that this is very important for CHA, since four years ago CHA had a staff of 3.6 FTEs and due to budget cuts, staff was down to 1.8 FTEs.

Mr. Jenaro Castañeda stated that it is difficult to get information into the community. OMWBE (Office of Minority & Women's Business Enterprise) has a Latino initiative they are conducting throughout the state. OMWBE is holding workshops throughout the state and marketing to Latino audiences. For example, on the 23rd of April, there is a workshop scheduled, where over 40 people are attending. Mr. Castañeda invited commissioners to attend and share all the information with the attendees.

Commissioner Lopez-Morton asked where the event will be held.

Mr. Castañeda replied that it will be held at White Center.

Chair Gaeta appreciated the offer. He asked Mr. Castañeda on the workshops they are holding, if they will they be rotated throughout the state, or just be held on the Westside.

Mr. Castañeda replied that this particular workshop was occurring because the community members contacted him and said they needed a workshop.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Chair Gaeta stated at the last meeting that commissioners requested forums to communicate with the public. Commissioners have decided to develop a newsletter that will correspond with CHA meetings and will be published every other month.

Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez added that the newsletter came as a result of the last study session meeting. Newsletter will be available via email, posted on website and printed for meetings and distribution. This is a great way to let the community know about the issues in Washington State and what commissioners are doing to address those issues.

Chair Gaeta asked if there were any questions and if this was the medium CHA should be using.

Mr. Uriel Iñiguez asked if the newsletter will be translated.

Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez stated that for now the newsletter is only in English. There is an issue with not having a director and it will be difficult to get it translated, with just one person in the office.

Chair Gaeta added that it will be pursued. All of CHAs documents on the web are in English and Spanish.

Commissioner Lopez-Morton expressed appreciation that the Newsletter will be in electronic form, allowing it to be attached and easily distributed among community members.

Chair Gaeta thanked Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez and Executive Assistant García.

Chair Gaeta spoke about two letters that were written. One written to Governor Gregoire requesting a meeting (ADDENDUM 1).

Action Item: Executive Assistant García will place letter on letterhead and mail to Governor Gregoire.

Chair Gaeta read a second letter to the new secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Secretary Robin Arnold-Williams in regards to the Mattawa childcare issue (ADDENDUM 2).

Action Item: Executive Assistant García will place letter on letterhead and mail to Secretary Arnold-Williams.

Commissioner Villareal commended Chair Gaeta and said letters were well written.

Commissioner Lopez-Morton thanked Chair Gaeta for taking the lead on the letters. Chair Gaeta spoke about the Latino Legislative Day. It has been conducted different ways it got to a point where momentum has been lost in the last two years. There has been an effort to work with the Latino/a Educational Achievement Project (LEAP). CHA is entertaining the idea of helping to organize a Latino Legislative Day.

Commissioner Lourdes Salazar stated that CHA should open the discussion on other possibilities on how to conduct a legislative day. See what kind of interest there is in community organizations joining and working together on this.

Commissioner Villareal stated that other Hispanic organizations throughout the state should be included in the planning process. If there is an organization that would want to be involved in the process of putting together a Latino Legislative Day it is very welcomed and they should contact CHA.

Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez stated that commissioners are volunteers. It would be difficult for CHA to host the Latino Legislative day. CHA should engage interest in the community and see what organizations are willing to take the lead. There is no reason why there should not be a Latino Legislative day.

Commissioner Baca suggested LEAP conference is a good conduit to engage in this process.

Chair Gaeta suggested appointing an ad hoc committee to work with LEAP and other non-profits, to see what organizations would be interested.

Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez, Portillo Salazar, Contreras, and Villareal volunteered to be on the ad hoc committee.

Mr. Castañeda asked if volunteers from the public would be accepted on the committee.

Commissioner Villanueva-Lopez replied yes.

Chair Gaeta stated that there would be a report from the ad hoc committee at the May meeting.

Mr. Jorge Chacon said it was about time that Latinos have a Legislative Day.

Chair Gaeta stated that the Commission has had a strong interest in pesticide and its effects on farmworkers. The Commission has worked hard with legislation and other state agencies regarding some of the work being done in the pesticide area. There is lack of enforcement when it comes to cholinesterase testing, it makes good intentions turn to bad examples provided by the Department of Health (DOH). There is a lot of good training occurring, however examples provided from the DOH, there is no clean water or clean facilities available on the field when workers are done spraying pesticides. Pesticide safety is an issue of concern to the Commission, particularly enforcement.

Commissioner Avalos made a comment that these pesticides not only affect the worker, but their children as well. The worker goes home with pesticides and brings them to the home exposing children and other family members. Mothers and children are exposed to this lethal element causing invisible health problems. As an educator, many times we fail to recognize that sometimes the achievement gap is not academic but also an external factor whether it be under nutrition, adequate housing, and healthcare etc. Commissioner Avalos suggested appointing the incoming intern to do some research in gathering the necessary information and engage dialogue with Commissioner Tamez, since he is well versed in what is going on with pesticide issue and knowledgeable with current issues in regards to the hazardous problem that continues to plague the Latino community.

Commissioner Tamez stated that currently he sits on an advisory board for the Department of Agriculture (Dept. of Ag). The pesticide issue is an important issue and a matter that needs constant education to our community. Educating child care providers, workers that work in the field come home and pick up their children before changing, parents get poison on their clothes in their cars and children are becoming sick because of that. Community clinics need to be educated as well, they need to become familiar with the effects of pesticide poisoning.

Action Item: Commissioner Tamez will advocate these concerns on behalf of the Commission and the intern will work on more research so the Commission can learn how to be more effective in advocating for more policy change.

Chair Gaeta added that this is a continual action item for the Commission.

Chair Gaeta informed commissioners that Executive Assistant García inquired with the Attorney General on whether or not the CHA could hold public meetings in faith based facilities. The response that came back was that, yes the CHA could hold public meetings in faith-based facilities.

NEW BUSINESS:

Commissioner Villanueva informed commissioners that after a press conference in Toppenish, Governor Gregoire met with several organizations that serve the Latino community. A task force was appointed to develop recommendations on how the governor can deal with the drought. The drought does not only affect farmworkers, it affects the amount of work available which means there will be less money to pay for bills and healthcare needs. The task force will be meeting on April 11th and will have a recommendation.

Chair Gaeta stated that the Commission will continue to monitor the drought. In the past, relief money has been provided to the farm grower, but none of it trickled down to the actual worker. Farmworkers need to be considered.

Concerns have been raised due to Thai workers coming in and working in the Yakima Valley under the H2A program and working in agriculture-type work. Chair Gaeta added that this has displaced many local workers.

Commissioner Tamez added that the other concern to address the issue of exploitation of these workers. Under this program there is no ability to move from one employer to another as often times these workers are advised they cannot move from one place to another even though they may not be making an adequate wage. Under the federal program, the only way to bring in outside workers is if there is a shortage of workers locally. Many communities have indicated that there is not a shortage. Commissioner Tamez expressed concern that this is an attempt to not look at immigration reform where individuals would be granted some sort of reform for them to become residents and then citizens if that is possible. Some employers have indicated that bringing contract workers is a means of alleviating concerns of contracting illegal workers.

Commissioner Baca added that as a Commission we reach out to the Asian Commission and see what their position is on this issue.

Chair Gaeta replied that at this stage the Commission is just gathering data on the issue.

Action Item: Commissioner Tamez will ask Mr. Joe Morrison of Columbia Legal Services to give a presentation on the H2A program at the next study session.

Chair Gaeta informed commissioners that a request came to CHA as what its stand is on restoring voter rights to convicted felons who have been released from prison.

Commissioner Baca stated that voter right restoration for felons should be considered as a broader discussion. There are many aspects attached to this. One aspect is the impact of crimes in the Latino community is serious drastic effect on our community. Discussion should include the sentencing procedures for crimes committed by Latinos, and attorney access for those going through the judicial process. Ask the question, do Latinos have the same rights in court as non-Latinos?

Chair Gaeta further informed commissioners that the ACLU was the organization that had made the request. Chair Gaeta added that CHA will be requesting a presentation or the data on the issue from the ACLU.

Commissioner Lopez-Morton added that a formal presentation would give a good sense of the disproportional of minorities being incarcerated and what are the patterns and how they relate directly to the issue at hand.

Action Item: Executive Assistant García will request a presentation and/or data from the ACLU by the next meeting.

Commissioner Lopez-Morton informed the public that as vice chair one of the responsibilities is to monitor what terms will be expiring. A few commissioners' terms

will be expiring soon. Recommend that these commissioners request writing a letter to Governor Gregoire to be appointed to serve a second term.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Jenaro Castañeda – Office of Minority & Women’s Business Enterprises (OMWBE)

Mr. Castañeda explained to the public that his role at the OMWBE office is to travel throughout the state and inform the Latino community of the services and agencies available to the community. Target client base is the minority owned businesses throughout the state. Also try to certify minority businesses with OMWBE program so they may participate in state contracts. OMWBE also works with for-profit businesses. Services provided to community are at no cost to the community at least for the time being. Depending on the budget outcome, OMWBE may start charging a small fee for workshops. OMWBE trains business owners, free of charge.

Commissioner Villareal asked Mr. Castañeda if OMWBE assisted business owners with filling out certification forms.

Mr. Castañeda replied that they do, in English and Spanish

Commissioner Avalos asked what type of assistance there is for those Latinos that practice the old world of financing and lack credit or do not have equity and that becomes a barrier.

Mr. Castañeda stated that they still help them. As long as there is a business plan.

Jesus Hernandez & Melissa Hernandez – Wenatchee School Board & Wenatchee School District

Mr. Hernandez introduced Ms. Hernandez and explained they wanted to present the accomplishments made by the Wenatchee School District (WSD). Latino students in Washington State are facing an achievement gap. WSD has felt from that parent involvement and parent development is one of the things that are recognized as being essential in a students’ success. Before setting out to figure this out, about 70 percent of mainstream third graders were meeting standards while only 24 percent from Latino families were meeting standard. What the WSD figured out is that we needed to find a way to build capacity in those parents to be able to do the kinds of things that a typical middle class parent is able to do to prepare their children and to support their children’s education enabling these students to come to school ready to learn therefore making the jobs of the teachers easier. WSD set out to develop strategies to achieve that. One of the main ideas was to stop using socioeconomic status as an excuse. The National PTA has also done research on student achievement and pointed out that it is not so much the socioeconomic level of parents that will determine the support the child will have. Families poverty excelling in schools as well, and there are affluent families who are not doing the right things and kids not doing well in school. WSD incorporated the parent

development program. The parent component is part of the things we are doing in our district to address the achievement gap. It is important to have well trained professional development teachers and parents having students come prepared to work.

Ms. Hernandez said that one of the goals is to have children come to school prepared and ready to learn. That cannot happen without ensuring parents have the opportunity to learn the skills and learn how the system works. Parents who are informed about how to best advocate for the children they are going to know what kind of laws to track and what kinds of questions to ask. All of this is facilitated in collaboration for kids. That is our goal to get kids ready to learn taking into account that not all parents have the skills to prepare children, so they are given that support. The program that is implemented in our district is in Spanish. There are ten parent/family advocates working in our district parent development program. The parent/family advocates make the connection between school and home and are bilingual. Just as we know that every child is different, every parents needs may be different. We work with families that have recently arrived; they don't know where the local clinics are or how to navigate within our school system. WSD had 120 parents that have gone through the first round of passport to success.

Commissioner Avalos asked how long the sessions were for and what the funding source for the program is.

Ms. Hernandez replied that the sessions are seven weeks long and funding comes from the school district.

Commissioner Lopez-Morton asked what the percentage of Latino students is for the district.

Ms. Hernandez replied that it is 33 percent.

Commissioner Avalos asked what percentage of the teaching staff are Latinos.

Ms. Hernandez stated that the district is doing better in recruiting more bilingual staff.

Commissioner Avalos asked if the district human resource department has a plan to recruit and retain minority staff.

Mr. Hernandez replied that there is nothing extraordinary but it has been improving. Principal Mike Ranza has made a commitment to fill two vacant positions with bilingual teachers. The current percentage of Latino staff is seven percent.

Commissioner Avalos asked what types of training Caucasian teachers receive to understand Latino students.

Mr. Hernandez replied that there is quite a bit of training. Mr. Hernandez added that one of the WSD schools is a dual language school and are working on developing the understanding of how language works.

Ms. Hernandez stated that within the last year the WSD has hired close to 20 bilingual/bicultural staff.

Mr. Chacon acknowledged the efforts of Mr. and Ms. Hernandez for the work they have been doing to better the education of Latino students.

Steve Hyer – Washington Business Week

Mr. Hyer is the executive director of the Washington Business Week Program (WBW). The WBW is a youth program which started in 1976 to teach high school students about business and enterprise. Making an effort to reach out to different communities throughout the state. The WBW is one week long in the summer in different parts of the state.

Each week there are about 250 diverse students. The goal is to teach those high school students to business get them to learn to communicate with each other and to celebrate diversity and the differences in each other. Students are put in teams. Each team has a business that they will help build. The team consists of 12 students and a mentor. Mr. Hyer requested the assistance of the CHA to recruit more Hispanic students and adults to be mentors. Typical enrollment of Hispanic students in the Program is 1 to 2 per cent.

Cheryl Hanks – Department of Health

Ms. Hanks handed out packets of information to each commissioner in regards to their county of residence. The packets contained information on reports from DOH to local providers and local health departments on pesticide exposure in the area.

Chair Gaeta reminded the public the next CHA meeting is May 13th & 14th in Sunnyside.

Commissioner Lopez-Morton publicly thanked Antonio Ginatta for all of his hard work during his tenure as executive director of the CHA and presented him with a gift certificate and a plaque.

Commissioner Villareal motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Tamez seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned 1:06 p.m.