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COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

Pasco Community Meeting

Minutes

April 20, 2012

Roll Call

Commissioners present: Lillian Ortiz-Self, Ty Cordova, Ana Maria Martinez, Manuel Reta, Cynthia De Victoria, Ana Ruiz Peralta, Sharonne Navas, Jennifer Ramirez Robson, Rosalba Pitkin, Anita Ahumada

Staff present: Uriel Iñiguez, Marena Lear

Meeting called to order at 6:33pm.

Introductory Comments

- CHA is celebrating its 40th year and having a fundraiser in November.
- CHA's mission is to advise legislators, the governor's office, and state agencies. We try to bridge the gap and empower the Latino community.
- We have one full time director and executive assistant, and 11 volunteer commissioners. We would love to see our commissioner vacancy filled.
- In addition to being that link between the community and state government, we have various projects. We have a parent education program funded by a Gates Foundation grant, as well as two radio programs run by the executive director that brings in other state agency guests. We also serve on numerous statewide committees.
- Our main role is to make sure the needs of our community are being heard.

Introduction of Commissioners

Acknowledgment of sponsors: Columbia Basin College and Taxes y Más



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Welcome from CBC President Richard Cummins

I'd like to thank everyone for being here, welcome. This is a community college, a community asset, and we are in one of the majority minority counties in the state. The theme for the night's discussion is really important and a community college is a great place to have that discussion. This is an engine for social mobility and economic development. We help transform the workforce, and we believe that talking about economic development and education and Latinos participating in the economy is critical. Thank you for being here, and I hope you have a great conversation.

Acknowledgement of panel members: Representative Larry Haler, Senator Mark Schoesler, Representative Terry Nealey, Councilmember Saul Martinez, Councilmember Rebecca Francik, SBA Director Nancy Porzio, Frank Armijo, Franklin County Prosecutor Shawn Sant, Detective Kirk Nebeker, Father Daniel Barnett, Pastor Jesse Campos, Pasco High School principal Raul Sital

CHA Official Business

There was a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded and passed. There was a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting. The motion was seconded and passed. There was no other official business.

Commissioner Cordova shared the public meeting format and protocol. He informed the public and the panelists that each panel member had 5 minutes to speak, and that after each panel there would be time for public comment, wherein each person would have 2 minutes to pose a question or concern to the Commission.

The Chair moved to open to Community Panel Presentations.

Economic Development Panel

All panelists for Economic Development were asked the following question: *What initiatives have been or will be implemented to increase the economic opportunities for Latinos?*

Senator Mark Shoeshler shared the following:

- We sometimes don't use all the tools that are available. Small cities and groups often don't understand programs that can be accessed for grants, and putting these things together is complicated.



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- Another important area to focus on is regulatory relief. We need eager entrepreneurs, and we have to look at what this climate does to small businesses. Many businesses don't have a compliance officer. I look forward to working on this in the next session.

Representative Larry Haler shared the following:

- Ultimate tool for economic development is education. If we are not delivering quality education, we will not have very good economic development. 10 % of our population is less educated now in the U.S. than during my generation. There are 66,000 jobs in this state that we cannot fill because of lack of degrees. Therefore the most pressing issue is quality, fully funded education. There should be no more cuts to higher education, including trade schools and community colleges. Part of our problem is that we've taken money from this to fund programs that have questionable added value.
- I also agree with the senator. I think we need to take a look at how we do our tax breaks, which ones are adding value, and which are just there for economic relief. For example, there are 3 major subsidies for wind farms that don't supply any jobs. We need to be strategic in our tax breaks for businesses that create jobs for everyone in this state.

Council member Saul Martinez shared the following:

- Economic Development is so important to this community. We're amongst the top 10 fastest growing communities in the U.S.
- Industrial development is a primary goal to expand our tax base.
- The most vital things to look at in this community are: to be able to provide good wage jobs for our community members, and to stabilize growth.
- A new Pasco processing center has been created which represents 200 M and 1,000 jobs. These have been the catalyst for many new homes. The second economic impact has been on the trucking machinery and service industry which has expanded greatly.
- WA recently improved a grant of 2 M dollars to expand rail service for the Heritage center. This will provide as many as 1,000 jobs. Residents will be able to walk to their place of employment.
- Downtown Pasco attracts shoppers from a 50 mile radius. There is a façade renovation program funded by a federal grant to give the businesses a face lift.
- There are many educational opportunities for Hispanic residents to expand their options for employment. The city is working very hard to rise to the occasion to bring economic growth and industrial development. We'd like to hear ideas from the community at our meetings.



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Nancy Porzio shared the following:

- As director of SBA I am responsible for all of Washington. We are a federal agency and our mission is to help people start and grow their businesses through working closely with partners.
- 3 major programs: lending, technical assistance and contracting. We work with local banks and credit unions to get the funding out to start the business. Most of the bankers here in Pasco are participants in our programs.
- We also have an opportunity for non profits to apply for an intermediary lending program. They can relend money in their communities, up to \$50,000.
- Our technical assistance is done with the help of community partners that provide counsel for people starting their business. All programs are free. Bruce Davis can be contacted at CBC. He can set up appointments with individuals for counseling.
- There is a contracting program called 8A, which is a program for minority-owned businesses. One third of the businesses in our portfolio are Hispanic businesses across all industries.
- We work with individuals to develop their business and introduce them to government contracting. I want people to contact me to hear more about what the problems are.
www.sba.gov.

Public Comments

Cris Beaker shared the following:

- I am with the US Dept. of Agriculture out of Spokane. We have an office in Pasco, and we provide financing for beginning farmers through loans. We also have other farm programs that help with financing and conservation programs. We have local county committees, and we're having elections soon. They are elected farmers, peers. Those committee members hear appeals from farmers. The decisions that we make can be appealed to the local county committee. We recommend to farmers that they vote on their county committees. We have offices in almost every county.

Julian Cipher shared the following:

- I am with the USDA. We are part of the risk management agency. We provide funds for educational institutions to provide workshops on marketing risks, financial risks. We fund centers for Latino farmers and they do workshops.



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Ruben Peralta shared the following:

- (Directed to the legislators) I'm a business owner with American family insurance, and I am also on the school board. I believe education is the way to economic development. There are many school districts producing excellent young people, but they cannot move on because they are not here legally, and many times they were not brought to this country by choice. That is an economic catastrophe. We are going to need that workforce. They get their degrees but then they cannot do anything with it. This is a federal issue. Whatever you can do in your capacities as legislators would be appreciated.

Dora Morfin shared the following:

- (Directed to the city council) I volunteer with the community and I see a lot of struggles – when they're working they have a lot of problems. I know we have certain offices where they can go, but is there a specific office they can go to for complaints? How can the city help our residents with their problems?

Rolando Rodriguez shared the following:

- (Directed to the legislators) Over the last 2 sessions, what bills have you introduced that are there to improve business development for Latinos?

Chair Lillian Ortiz-Self motioned to let the panelists respond to the public comments.

Panelist Responses

Representative Larry Haler shared the following:

- I cosponsored the "passport to college" bill, which did pass. It helps high school students get ready for college, and helps college students continue their studies. In our caucus we introduced 12 bills that were specifically designed to create regulatory assistance and new jobs, irrespective of ethnic heritage. None of these bills got a hearing.

Senator Mark Schoesler shared the following:

- Last year one of the things the Senate insisted on were fixes to the Department of Labor and Industries and Employment Security Department. We had the lowest L&I rate increase, and unemployment rates were flat. Senate bill 6327, which didn't make it out, gave one year for no B & O tax for startup businesses. This would have been a shot in the arm for small businesses with high failure.



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Representative Larry Haler shared the following:

- HB1795 created public private partnerships with all businesses to create a fund to give businesses a tax break if they help students to go to college. This may help those students who are here illegally.

Commissioner Ramirez Robson asked what was being done to create easier access to higher education for immigrants.

Senator Mark Schoesler shared the following:

- We take a larger number of 1st generation college students at EWU, and we take a chance on students with low GPA's.
- Some legislators turn their noses up at EWU students because they don't get out as fast. Compare the economics to the family economics of a UW student and compare the GPAs. Decide who needs that education more.

The Vice-Chair directed the following question to the Pasco City Council members:

I commend you on the plans for revitalization. What is your timeline and what communication efforts are being made to the Hispanic community?

Councilmember Saul Martinez shared the following:

- There was a decision to create another organization that has its own committee and gives a yearly report to the council. We want to give at least 2 years in financial assistance to this organization, and that's our timeline to see progress. We're going to our legislators to get some grant money. Once that is accomplished, we will see a much more beautiful downtown.

Commissioner Ana Maria Martinez asked the following question for Councilmember Martinez:

In terms of working within the community, what would you recommend for working with the schools to get future leaders to have the ability to become engaged within the community? What are those opportunities?

Councilmember Saul Martinez:



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- One of the problems with the Latino community is that we're so challenged with trying to succeed that we don't donate a lot of our time to our community. I was able to have a job and get educated. I would encourage business owners to grab these students and get them involved and mentor them. As we work to make this city better, it's an opportunity for the young people to step up to the plate and do their part. The hope is to bring all ethnicities together, so that we can understand one another.

Conclusion of first panel. 10 minute break.

Chair Lillian Ortiz-Self moved to begin the second panel on gang prevention.

Gang Prevention Panel

All panelists for Gang Prevention were asked the following question: *What initiatives have been or will be implemented to increase gang prevention for Latino youth?*

Representative Terry Nealy shared the following:

- There are 2,000 gangs just in the northwest states. It's increased over 300%. In King County alone there are about 12,000 members. Gang issues range across the state, not just our area. There were several bills introduced during this last session, and I'm not sure any got passed.
- HB 2432 promoted local intervention and prevention. The purpose was to authorize the council on juvenile justice to award grants to local projects. It required minimum participation and the right people and places. The core of this bill was to direct federal funding. One of the pushbacks that we heard questioned the bill's constitutionality. We have to balance the rights of the neighbors with gang issues.
- There has been an experiment with gang courts in Yakima, which proved successful. To me the solutions are in early education. If these kids start failing early on, they look for alternatives, and that's why they join gangs. It takes mentoring; the communities need to get together. Parents, peers, police. We shouldn't come down from the state or federal level and tell you what to do. You have to start from the bottom up.

Councilmember Rebecca Francik:



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- I come here as a child of Irish immigrants. We were miners, and then became farmers. We really believed in education. Currently I'm a librarian. I've been on the council since 1996.
- We've gone from having one of the highest crime rates in the state to having a lower than national state average. This is not a Latino issue, this is a human issue. Everyone wants to be safe, your ethnicity doesn't matter. Pasco has community policing. That means that people get to know police officers personally. We have block parties where police officers come around. This has been successful in integrating the police. We've also made an effort to have bilingual officers.
- There is also tough sentencing in Pasco. We've put money into our public facilities and are sending people to jail. We have an aggressive graffiti policy, and rental licensing policy. If you own rental properties, you must be licensed and have safety codes. Our properties are maintained at a certain level. People want their property values to stay high, so this has created an avenue for citizens to take control of their own communities.
- Education is vital. 92% of students at my school are Hispanic and 66% only speak Spanish, but they take all tests in English. It is no wonder then that the kids are failing. We have to find a way to support them.

Franklin County Prosecutor Shawn Sant shared the following:

- We have to educate those that have been affected by crime, and those that are adverse to law enforcement. We've tried to reach out and make sure that people feel like they can report crimes without facing immigration. We work closely with the Northwest Justice Project to ensure people that immigration status doesn't matter and we want people to feel protected.
- Our office is only as successful as how safe the members of the community feel. Victims of crime, despite our efforts, sometimes won't even show up for a trial. It's our goal to get out there to educate people and so they know resources are available. It's up to us in the community.

Detective Kirk Nebeker:

- Due to an initiative that passed last year, the Pasco police department is in the process of forming a proactive team. We had a lot of success in the past with huge drops in crime.
- There is a gang prevention team being formed with even more people and it will have a huge impact. We try to be very proactive. The question is always, "what do we do?" It can't be answered quickly.



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- Our job is to enforce the laws and create deterrents. Even though we do have gangs, it is safer than other areas close by. We try to be proactive. We want the public to know that if someone wants to know more about gangs, we have area resource officers available to address these questions. When we all work together, we can achieve a lot.

Father Daniel Barnett shared the following:

- 25 – 30 % of Pasco is active in the church. 85% of attendees are Hispanic. There is incredible diversity. As a pastor, I speak as a representative not of the whole Catholic Church, but of my parish. The Catholic Church's response to gang prevention is multi-faceted. We bring a common philosophy in approaching the issue.
- There are two principles that I find most important when looking at this issue: dignity of the human person and importance of the family. We're trying to strengthen families, because this is where it begins. It begins with empowering the parents and educating them on cultural differences. Gangs are a symptom of a deeper problem which stems from the breakdown of the family. It's important that this topic be related to the economic development issue. We have to focus on strengthening the families so that they can be home with their kids.
- Families need practical help. Youth programs, parenting classes, food bank, immigration services. We would like to explore more possibilities to collaborate with schools and the police department.

Campos:

- Teen Challenge is a faith-based recovery program established in 1958. We have 3200 centers in the world. There is an 86% success rate for those that graduate. We started through working with gangs in New York City. I have a passion to help this community.
- We do have a problem. We have over 30 gangs in the TriCities alone. I agree that we need to educate our children. It takes a community to help a community. When 82% of the active gangs are Latinos, Latinos need to stand and help each other. I believe that if we pull together we can make something positive happen. It takes collaboration. We started a program called FIRME. We believe mentorship should take a relational approach. We are working with over 50 people who got out of gangs. Strength and experience are the most important things in our young people's lives. Social economics do make a difference.

Principal Raul Sital shared the following:



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- The Pasco school district has addressed the issue in four parts:

1 – Safety/Suppression. We have a security team that is well trained to understand what a gang looks like. We identify all the gang members in our building. We know who they are. We let parents know in our parent meetings. If we have a gang member we bring the parent in. Our school board is very supportive and creates policies to make sure that we do not have gang members in our buildings. We have a gang specialist on staff who keeps gang member information. Our security is trained in non-violent intervention. We know that kids can only learn when it's safe.

2 – Prevention/Education. Solution based. We enforce what the school board says.

3 – Intervention. We create intervention teams that address these pieces. Address every kid, do home visits, find out the real issues. We create solutions. We need resources to continue these interventions. We have partnerships but we cannot fund this alone. It's working because the Pasco school district has the highest graduation rate in Tri Cities schools.

4 – Reentry program.

Public Comments

Catarina Lanez shared the following:

- I want everyone to know that the gang problem starts in the schools. I live in Kennewick, and I have problems with my grandchildren. They haven't graduated. My student's teacher yelled at him for playing alone instead of with the other kids. What we need to do is keep children in school, not suspend them, because then there is more danger that they will get involved with gangs. My grandson was expelled for taking a toy, a **BB gun** to school, and I am worried that now he will get involved in worse things because there are no programs to put him in.

Evangelina Mendoza shared the following:

- I have a son who is 16 years old and he's always suspended from school. I also would like there to be something better than suspending them from school, because they don't make good use of this time. Right now he is in juvenile detention.

Ruvine Jimenez shared the following:



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- Hispanic access to childcare is becoming more and more limited. The state childcare services office is not as accessible to agricultural families because it is only open from 8am to 2pm, and sometimes it takes 15 – 20 minutes just for someone to respond. Field workers can't afford to take this much time on the phone.
- People also have difficulty applying due to lack of language ability. These families don't have the same access to daycare as those who speak English and work in offices.
- This has a lot to do with the gang issue, because if our children can't be taken care of adequately, they take to spending time with gang members. Often children either stay alone at home, or they're taken to the fields to work. Daycares are closing everywhere, and this affects our economy. There are kids to care for, but it seems that the state does not have the manpower to manage the needs of all its families.

Rocio Ramos directed the following question to the city council members:

- We have a lot of kids here joining the soccer program through the YMCA, but we're getting charged a lot because the city is charging the YMCA a lot of money to use the soccer fields. I want kids to be busy so they don't have time to think about joining gangs. When the city is charging us so much for soccer programs, it's hard for the parents to use this resource.

Jesus Romero shared the following:

- I'm in the education program at WSU, and soon I'll be looking for a job in Pasco school district. I have a passion for working with gang members and all kids. I've heard through other students that they're going to be cutting funds for these schools. If there's anything legislators can do, it is to ensure that more funds are provided. Students are getting into gangs because teachers cannot connect with students. Teachers need training and programs to help them connect with their students.

Diana Vasquez shared the following:

- I have a senior and a sophomore in high school. I want to thank the school district for the extracurricular activities it provides. My theory is that kids should be kept busy and tired. I have had the opportunity to put the kids in sports from an early age and instill the desire to challenge themselves. I notice that sports are great in high school, but below that is where we're having problems. We need more funding to get kids involved from an early age.



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Josefina Mendez shared the following:

- I have looked for ways to entertain kids, and seen that there are not a lot of things available in the schools. Kids need to be occupied, and sometimes parents don't have the means to pay for extracurricular activities. When I have time, I volunteer to help people with their children so that they wouldn't get involved in gangs.

Elizabeth Jimenez shared the following:

- I currently attend Delta High School. I came from Stevens Middle School, and we were known as one of the lowest performing schools. It was a huge transition. Delta gives you extracurricular requirements, so students are kept very busy. Now our budgets are getting cut, but these programs should be kept because they are keeping a lot of students off the streets.

Jason Aguilera shared the following:

- I want to agree with what so many people have said: the problem starts in the family. It's hard to tell parents not to work and to be with their kids. I've been blessed with loving parents, but there are a lot of kids that don't have that. We need more programs that give kids the attention they need, without costing the parents.

Guadalupe Cortez shared the following:

- I live in Kennewick, and there are no programs here like the ones in Pasco. I've tried to educate my kids on the resources available, but it's been very hard for my family. I'm a care provider, as well as a provider for my own children. I took my kids into juvenile detention because I knew they were trying to get into gangs, but I shouldn't have had to do this. There should be more programs in Kennewick.

The Vice-Chair moved to end the public comment section and continue with panelist responses.

Chair Lillian Ortiz-Self shared the following:

I'd like to thank the community for your heartfelt messages. We advocate strongly for the measures that have been discussed. One of the things we're hearing from the community is the need for academic success – when students are not succeeding in school, they turn to other options. What collaborative efforts are being done with our school systems to close the achievement gap?



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Panelist Responses

Principal Raul Sital shared the following:

- Intervention – every student is assigned to a counselor and intervention specialist. I am responsible for 68 seniors as a counselor. We keep an eye on grades, attendance, what classes they're taking, etc. We team up with Gear Up to fund trips to colleges. We provide tutoring after school. We also have Saturday school, SAT academy and AP academy. Every student has help available.

The Chair posed the following question to the panel:

What initiatives are being created in order to start more extracurricular activities in this area and create collaborative efforts between agencies and the school system?

Councilmember Rebecca Francik shared the following:

- City council does not get involved in daily school operations; however we recognize that we need good schools because we're trying to attract employers that will hire our students. If you're going to build new homes in Pasco, the money will go towards schools. We also collaborate with police department in several areas. All city parks and school playgrounds are shared.

Representative Terry Nealy shared the following:

- We all understand that we need more funding. The problem is that there's been a severe deficit – the money just isn't there. My suggestion is to look for other methods for collaboration besides funding. Public and private entities can combine to leverage the funds. We can't depend on the government as we have in the past. You have to look in other areas, and that will ultimately be very effective.

Commissioner Sharonne Navas shared the following:

- I heard throughout the evening the issue of fully funding education. I think that not only do we need to create collaborative relationships with private funders, but we need to look at what we can do as a community to let legislators know that they need to stop defunding education. Programs are no longer there as they were for older generations. It's a sad state



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of affairs. I would like to ask Pastor Campos what he needs from our legislators and our community to ensure the success of programs like Teen Challenge.

Pastor Jesse Campos shared the following:

- We want to provide a safe haven for kids. Sometimes children don't want help, and then we lean on the enforcement to help suppress. In education we're trying to partner with the schools so that students feel safe. We need resources, places to meet, vehicles to pick students up.

Commissioner Ana Maria directed the following question to the police department:

- I would like to know what the recidivism rate is. Also, I understand that there are trainings to better understand gangs, but can you talk about cultural competency that's happening within your organizations? This is a little different than looking at gangs more broadly.

Prosecutor Shawn Sant shared the following:

- In regards to recidivism, it depends on what areas we're looking at. We see that if we don't take early intervention with juveniles, communication with parents, etc., we see the kids coming back through the courts. We have more information on recidivism rates when it comes to drug use. There is a board called the Circle of Hope which funds individuals to help them go through the drug program.
- Recidivism among gang members is harder to measure. We understand that without early intervention, kids will become more prominent gang members. We really need to get families involved and get them to recognize gang warning signs. I'm working with the Pasco school district on a reversion program. The school district has been really open in recognizing the cultural needs, and they had made an effort to be available off hours. As we come up with these programs, we need to educate the families, and we need to make sure all the kids are safe while keeping them in school. We need ideas from the community. I do have a gang deputy who's going to a training to be educated in cultural competency. It helps law enforcement to be able to identify needs and keep our community safe.

Councilmember Rebecca Francik shared the following:

- There was a question about utilizing fields for extracurricular activities. If you are a person who has voted against taxes, that is the reason the city is charging you more. The money



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that's not being paid in taxes is coming from some things like parks. We are doing a lot more in charging fees for users. I don't think that's a great way to do it, but that's what has happened in this no taxes environment. When you go to those ballot boxes think carefully about those ramifications. This is really a direct result of citizens saying they don't want to pay taxes.

Detective Kirk Nebeker:

- Our department does carry out certain trainings for cultural competency. I just went to some recently. But law enforcement cannot be a replacement for a family or a counselor. Once in a while a kid opens up and we can provide counseling, but those moments are few. I deal with the effects, not the cause, so I'm limited in that regard. But we try to do the best in what we have control over.

Commissioner Manuel Reta directed the following question to Principal Raul Sital.

Can you tell us a little bit about the reentry program?

Principal Raul Sital shared the following:

- We remove students for gang attire and other choices, but we don't leave them out. We have an intervention team and then we meet with the juvenile justice counselor. We find out what the student needs and start from there. Then we put a plan together and he checks in checks out every day. Each teacher ranks the students with a number system. We go through this every day. We have had a lot of success. If the kid needs more, we require Saturday school. They can get community hours for going to Saturday school.

Chair Lillian Ortiz-Self motioned to conclude the Question and Answer period.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Chair Lillian Ortiz-Self made the following recommendations:

- I recommend that Kennewick parents connect with Commissioner Peralta and have meetings about building a collaborative effort to solve those issues.
- We as a commission clearly hear the need for more funding are more after school programs. We worked really hard in the last session and we will continue to do so. Your local commissioner will continue to work with you.



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- I want to commend the city of Pasco and all of our panelists. It wonderful to have all of you sitting here until 9:15 on a Friday night. We know that the task before us is huge, and that collaboration needs to continue, with parents at the table. We need to make sure that every program has parents at the table.
- On behalf of all of us we want to thank CBC and Taxes y Mas for supporting us. We want to thank our panelists. We want to thank the Pasco community. I want to thank the commission staff and all our commissioners.

Motion to adjourn.

Motion seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.