



STATE OF WASHINGTON
COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

Lacey Meeting Minutes
March 4, 2011

Roll Call:

Commissioners present: Ty Cordova, Teresita Torres, Lourdes Portillo Salazar, Manuel Villafan, Lillian Ortiz-Self, Ernest Radillo, and Manuel Villafán.

Commissioners absent: Gilberto Mireles, Rosalba Pitken, Ana Maria Martinez, and Juan Garcia.

Staff Present: Uriel Iñiguez, Alicia Luna, and Intern Adam Orozco

Meeting Called to Order at 6:38pm.

The Chair thanked guests for attending and introduced panel members Tom Nelson, Mayor of the city of Lacey, and Dusty Pierpoint, Lacey Chief of Police; Raj Manhas, NTSD superintendent, Mike Hart, Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS) Regional Administrator, and Cathy Canorro Interim Director Office of Minorities and Women Business Enterprises (OMWBE). The Department of Licensing (DOL) representative was invited, but they declined the invitation. The DOL representative arrived later on, and mentioned she was there to answer questions only.

Review of the Agenda

Commissioner Lurdes Salazar made a motion to approve the previous business meeting minutes. Commissioner Ernesto Radillo seconded the motion. There was no other official business.

The Chair moved to ask Commissioner Teresita Torres and Director Uriel Iñiguez to present the role of CHA.

Summary of CHA priorities and local statistics:

- Statewide population
- Thurston Co. Population
- Lacey Population
- Projected Growth in Minority School-age population 2000-2030
- WA State Hispanic Teachers/Student Ratio

210 11th Ave Suite 301A PO Box 40924 Olympia, WA 98504-0924
Toll-Free: (800) 443-0294 Olympia: (360) 725-5661 Fax: (360) 360-586-
9501

www.cha.wa.gov hispanic@cha.wa.gov

- Statewide Graduation Rates
- North Thurston School District Graduation Rates
- HS Proficiency Exam North Thurston School District-10th Grade (Hispanic Students Meeting Standards: Reading, Writing, Math)
- Thurston Co. Felony Convictions
- Preventing Youth Violence and Substance Abuse
- Juvenile State Detention Pop., An Effective Approach(Prevention, Intervention, Suppression)
- CHA Activities (Website/database, director speaks weekly on Spanish Radio, Detail of Annual Report, Legislation, Committees) demonstrates that influence has increased in the state of Washington.

The Chair moved to open to Community Panel Welcoming Remarks.

Tom Nelson, Mayor of the city of Lacey, shared the following:

- The city of Lacey is proud of its ethnic groups, and Hispanics represent a 9.2% of the population, and the city reflects what we see in our community.
- The recruitment of different ethnic groups has been a challenge, but the city is continuing to reach out to these groups.

Chief of Police Dusty Pierpoint shared the following:

- As law enforcement, we need to find different ways to reach out to the community, and we are constantly trying to recruit officers that reflect our community.
- We are doing well in some areas when it comes to diversity, but the Hispanic community is always something we can work on.
- Thurston County has seen a hybrid gang system and domestic violence issues.
- People are afraid of coming forward and addressing violence due to immigration and human trafficking, issues about which law enforcement in Lacey is aware, and not immune to.

Raj Manhas, NTSD Superintendent, shared the following:

- We have the largest school system in this county and the most diverse population: 42% are students of color, and 40% have free/reduced lunch (lower economic level)
- There are 14,000 students of which 12.2% are Hispanic. It's similar to the national average of the nation's demographics.
- We have a long way to go, and mathematics is a huge challenge for all kinds of students. We as a nation continue to struggle, and we as a society need to step up and say math is important. For Latino kids there is still a gap in reading, but it's 10-12 points better than the state average. We intend to reach out to our color communities and form informal partnerships with the Familias Latinas group. There is a lot of work going on in that area.

Mike Hart, DSHS Regional Administrator, shared the following:

- There is a large agency and specific role within the DSHS Economic Services Administration-community services division which covers the area of Lacey to Vancouver, and most of the Peninsula.
- There is a significant budget challenge (5 billion dollar deficit).
- There has been a hiring freeze for at least 1 year, and there is legislation out there that could eliminate programs.

Cathy Canorro, Interim Director OMWBE shared the following:

- A brief overview of the benefits of minority small business.
- Collaboration with partners such as CHA.
- CHA has a weekly radio program, and is developing a Directory of Hispanic Businesses that will go out into the community.
- Right now there are 2,700 firms, and one reason why the relationship with CHA is important is that it covers for less budgeted outreach.
- There are free workshops for all, upcoming opportunities for new businesses, and financial assistance programs.

Community Comments

Commissioner Cordoba began facilitation of community comments and recognized Victor Chacon, former commissioner.

Lisa Heaton, Department of Labor and Industry, shared the following:

- Commissioners will be provided with information binders that include workplace rights issues and safety.
- The commission is utilized as a way to reach out to a vulnerable Latino population.
- Information includes minimum salary, press release, Medicare policy, required information on Social Security Numbers, op-out cross matching, open-close cases, DOL questions, and cross references.

Alicia Cardenas Short, from Lacey, expressed the following:

- Concern for lack of warning signs and public safety signs (such as Tsunami exit routes, swimming for river and lakes) in various languages, especially in Spanish, since the signs are for saving lives.

Jenaro Castañeda, from Cielo Project, made an announcement about a group performance. The money raised goes directly back to the community in all sorts of services, and helps people become economically dependent and self-employed.

Miguel Blanco shared the following:

- He was the first to meet with CHA principal for Blanco Media Group, and he works on assistance from the community to best service the population.
- He develops the Latino business community in Pierce County.
- He invites all to attend the General membership luncheon on March 17th in Tacoma.

210 11th Ave Suite 301A PO Box 40924 Olympia, WA 98504-0924
Toll-Free: (800) 443-0294 Olympia: (360) 725-5661 Fax: (360) 360-586-
9501

www.cha.wa.gov hispanic@cha.wa.gov

Mike Wessells shared the following:

- The Public Library as an institution is under-utilized by the Latino Community, and there are many services that are helpful.
- There are before or after school-age bilingual materials, readable and in audio form, as well as help guides for starting businesses.
- Most helpful would be the promotion of public health in the Latino community.
- The library is the only place where one can utilize some services and identify oneself.

Binda Douglas shared the following:

- Thurston Douglas food bank, a partner of Centro de Vida, serving Hispanic families- move satellite distribution. Open on evenings and weekends, and a bilingual staff is available.

Dr. Victor Chacon shared the following:

- Business owners are encouraged to join OMWBE.
- The division officer and the Senior Director need contact with various communities that are not yet part of it.
- In charge of increasing vendor participation. Contact office diversity to learn more.

Elena Piñón shared the following:

- She would like to know about future meetings. Originally from Guatemala, she came to Washington after Hurricane Katrina. She loves Washington, started a business 3 years ago from scratch, and wants to start an organization for Empresarios Latinos.

The Chair acknowledged Sharon Ortiz, Washington State Human Rights Commission. Ortiz briefly thanked CHA.

Break: 10 minute break, return by 8:00pm

Discussion

Commission moved to discussion of commissioners and panel members.

Commissioner Ortiz Self posed the following question to the superintendent:
Local scores are 10-12% better than state scores; do you attribute this to parent involvement?

Superintendent Manhas:

I am impressed by the involvement with the Hispanic Community, and the use of Spanish language for connecting to staff, as well as Math Night in Spanish, and different things to help students. As a school system we has areas to improve upon, but this area is sensitive.

We need to help all children, create a multicultural committee, and actively work to get communities of color involved with school.

Commissioner Torres posed the following question to Regional Administrator Hart:
Where is the DHS on placing Latinos in foster care with Latinos?

Regional Administrator Hart:

I cannot answer this question, but I will talk to children services administration and can get that information to CHA.

Commissioner Ortiz Self posed the following question to Regional Administrator Hart:
We are hearing of mixed messages on the cash assistance program to parents of children born in the US. Can you tell us anything about this?

Regional Administrator Hart answered that he will tell the regional director to find out what is going on.

Commissioner Cordoba posed the following question to the Police Chief:
Congratulations on hiring a Hispanic police officer; do you have interpreter services for police officers on call?

Chief of Police Pierpoint:

Yes, a 24/7 language line.

Commissioner Torres:

A follow-up question in regards to Human Trafficking.

Chief of Police Pierpoint:

We are better informed on the issue, and know it can happen in any community. There can be 1-2 workers who are brought here for various circumstances.

Commissioner Ortiz-Self posed the following question to the Mayor:

Are there plans for posting Warning Signs in Spanish in the City?

Mayor Nelson:

We have 3 public swimming pools in the county. It is a great idea for swimming. We will consider other areas, and will bring it up to the staff.

Question to Superintendent:

What is your outreach to the Latino community in terms of parent involvement?

Superintendent Manhas:

There is district-wide multicultural committee staff attendance, a recently updated website in Spanish so that parents can connect, and a special section for parents done in Spanish and 3-4 other languages. We have also started working with Familias Latinas which has been helpful. Next week there will be a second meeting to engage parents who don't speak English at all. We've done amazingly well this year in reaching out.

Commissioner Radillo posed the following question to the Chief of Police:
Have you seen any problems with arresting individuals without driver's licenses?

Chief of Police Pierpoint:

We make arrests mostly for suspended driver's licenses. As for people who don't have a driver's license, we don't have a specific number. Suspended driver's licenses don't apply to a particular ethnic group – it is something that crosses all ethnic lines.

Follow-up question:

How will availability of driver's licenses impact public safety or the work that your officers do on the street?

Chief of Police Pierpoint:

It wouldn't have a huge impact day to day. An officer will do a citation and move on. It might be more than two issues, good identification and someone able to drive a good car such as to get a driver's license regardless of documentation status, the individual needs to take a driver's test. We need to be able to identify who they truly are regardless of race.

Commissioner Ortiz-Self question for all:

Is there a grievance process in your departments for non-English speakers?

Chief of Police Pierpoint:

Law enforcement receives complaints from the public and investigates, then shares results with the person that filed a complaint. We handle 2-3 complaints a month. You can call for an interpreter or call the department directly and have an officer who can assist.

Commissioner Ortiz Self, follow up question:

Is the process written in Spanish?

Chief of Police Pierpoint:

No. We have our fair share of complaints and investigate them all, regardless. When coming to the station we find help interpreting and get information from our department directly. We have access to a language line and 1 bilingual officer. Is the process written in Spanish? No, but our website has a Spanish page, and we have domestic violence and fraud pamphlets in Spanish too. We are open to suggestions.

Superintendent Manhas:

In the case of Public Schools, school written responsibilities are done both in Spanish and English. Another point is that we spent time training on how to work with communities of color who might not feel comfortable and creating an open door kind of place where someone can walk in to an office and connect to the people. It is a complex system but we feel it's more of a cultural shift that we are growing and helping our staff become much more familiar and inviting to people of color.

Regional Administrator Hart:

In a Fair Hearing Process, anyone can file for this process and the department notifies in their respective language.

Commissioner Torres posed the following question to Chief of Police Pierpoint and Superintendent Manhas:

Do you have an opinion on issuing an injunction for individuals that are perceived to be in a gang?

Chief Police Pierpoint:

We have seen a slight increase in gang activity, although it's not where it was in the late 90s. At that time there were 600 plus youth who identified with gangs. We've seen a slight increase in those who are claiming gang membership and we haven't seen an increase in the gang violence of the late 90s. We meet monthly to discuss and are more prepared than in the 90s when it hit us. It's not as bad as before and we are better educated as a community. We are working with youth to break down barriers and the Lieutenant has been involved with Latino Youth summit.

Superintendent Manhas:

There's a good partnership between the school district and the police department to eliminate this problem and not see it as a common problem. Another important thing is that thousands of people came to the multicultural festival.

Closing Comments and Acknowledgements

The Chair thanked everyone and gave acknowledgements: thanks were given to the Lacey Community and an invitation to access the CHA website. Thanks were given to all for hosting.

Commissioner Salazar motioned to adjourn meeting. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Torres.

Adjournment of meeting

Meeting adjourned at 8:37pm.

