



STATE OF WASHINGTON
COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

Othello Meeting Minutes
June 22, 2007

Roll Call:

Commissioners present: Ruben Baca, Víctor Chacón, Jorge Chacon, Ty Cordova, Ninfa Gutiérrez, Yvonne López-Morton, Rosalba Pitkin, Lourdes Portillo Salazar, and Gabriel Portugal

Commissioners Absent: Félix L. Negrón

Staff Present: Uriel Iñiguez and Alicia Luna

Meeting was called to order at 6:40 PM

Chair Lopez-Morton welcomed the community of Othello and invited guests. Meeting was turned over to host Commissioner Gabriel Portugal.

Commissioner Portugal acknowledged the following panel participants:

- Steve Dunnagan, Othello Chief of Police
- George Juarez, Othello Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Ehman Sheldon, Othello City Administrator
- Ray Antonsen, Regional Administrator, WA State Division of Alcohol/Substance Abuse

Roll Call: All present except Commissioner Negrón; absence excused by Chair Lopez-Morton.

Meeting was conducted in English; majority of participants were bilingual.

Introduction of Commissioners and Staff and acknowledgment of past CHA Commissioner and Chair Leo Gaeta who was present at the meeting!

Chair Lopez-Morton asked Commissioners for review and acceptance of the agenda. Commissioner Chacón moved to accept the agenda; Commissioner Gutierrez seconded the motion. Vote resulted in all yays; the motion carried.

Chair Lopez Morton went over the meeting protocol. She began with a CHA PowerPoint presentation which included:

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- CHA's Mandate
- CHA's Accomplishments
- Commissioner Activity & Public Meeting attendance
- Goals for 2007-2008
- Washington's Hispanic Population & Adams County Hispanic Population

Commissioner Victor Chacón with the assistance of the Education Committee members covered the Education portion of the PowerPoint which included the following:

- Washington's Definition of Basic Education
- Equal education should be a priority for all schools
- WASL Scores Graphs both for Othello and for the state (Low income and ethnic groups are struggling)
- Promote Parental Involvement in Schools
- ELL Learners and the importance of special care so that they can also learn; affirmation of language is also important in the equation of Basic Education
- Bilingual Education; a program that assists a teacher in teaching ELL students
- Graduation Rates by Ethnicity and Higher Education

Commissioner Chacón asked the following questions:

- What was the school districts plan of action?
- What goals did they have?

Commissioner Portillo Salazar covered the Justice and Equity portion of the PowerPoint which included the following:

- Juveniles referred to Prosecutors; 15% were Hispanic
- Minority Youth age 10-17 in detention; 33.3 percent Hispanic
- Detention Population during 2004; 13% Hispanic
- Adams County Juvenile Arrests: 223 Hispanic/34 found guilty

Adie Simmons, Governor's Office of the Education Ombudsman presentation included the following;

- Office has been in existence for only 8 months; its purpose is to help families and students succeed
- Parent and Student Rights; School Enrollment, Attendance and Truancy, Behavior Issues, Home Schooling, are some of the issues that they address
- Resolving Conflicts with Schools; Mediators (good environment for kids to learn) and the goal is to insure that students have a year free of conflict
- They provide simultaneous interpreter in several languages
- Family Involvement versus Parent Involvement
- Interested in hearing success stories that they can implement in other schools
- Basic Rights of Parents; WA does not have a bill of rights. They've seen very good models from other states but as of yet none is in place
- Law says that a child who is 8 years of age has to be in school
- Currently looking at school policies in all districts and identifying the gaps to insure compliance
- Brochure is due out soon on "understanding the school system" which will include school policies
- Current tests are not designed for kids that are bilingual

Ray Antonsen, Regional Administrator, Contract Manager for the WA State Division of Alcohol/Substance Abuse

- Contracts with the County to bring Chemical Dependency Prevention, Domestic Violence, Youth Violence, and Substance Abuse programs to treat youth
- 20% of the budget is spent on Prevention
- Contracts with different agencies for language access services
- In great need of bilingual Counselors; people do go through the training get their certification; however, leave to go work elsewhere for better wages
- Transportation for treatment is a major issue; people going through treatment do not have a license

Ehman Sheldon, Othello City Administrator thanked the Commission for inviting him to participate in the panel and speak. His comments included the following:

- City Administrator for over 30 years in Washington State
- Commission is focused on their issues
- Thanked the Othello community for participating in the public meeting
- Othello's population is over 50% Hispanic with 1 Hispanic currently serving in the City Council
- There are four vacant city council positions; however, only 1 Hispanic running
- Hispanics rarely attend city council meetings
- Encouraged Hispanics to vote, run for office, and have their voices heard

Steve Dunnagan, Othello Chief of Police shared the following comments

- Othello's Police Department includes: 15 officers and 6.5 Dispatchers
- More than 50% are bilingual and several officers speak Spanish
- Currently managing a RUED Grant for Alcohol and Substance Abuse
- Enforcement includes partnerships with; Health care providers, schools, prevention specialists, and local businesses
- Compliance checks are done in stores
- Sending 2-3 Hispanic Students to a Leadership Conference in Florida; they will be taught healthier choices. They in turn will come back this summer and advocate for healthy habits/choices thereby setting the foundation so they enlist other student involvement in this endeavor.
- Gangs are creeping up; kids that have been identified as gang members (by attire or tattoos) are sent a letter with the opportunity to come and meet with the officers and rectify if there has been misunderstanding
- Graffiti issues are being addressed by Juvenile Prevention; kids on probation do the clean-up of the graffiti
- Suggestion by the Chief Dunnagan: Increase Hispanic teachers by going to colleges and recruiting students to do a secondary language especially Spanish since it is high demand

George Juarez, Othello Superintendent of Public Instruction shared the following:

- Othello is doing great; however, there is still room for improvement
- 80% of students in the Othello School District are Hispanic
- Parent Advisory Committee; 60 to 100 Hispanic parents involved
- Lots of parent nights; math nights; WASL Clubs, etc.
- Developed an Education program on learning English, computer skills, etc.
- Has Bilingual and dual language programs
- Very difficult to find Hispanic teachers; went out of state with little success

- Reading is the core of all learning but perhaps we are spending too much time on reading and not enough on math, science, and social studies
- His District requires all teachers to acquire the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation and Protocol) certification; for the improvement of academic achievement of English learners

Questions for the panelists are as follows:

1. Commissioner Baca: Does the school officer play a great part in addressing the gang issue?

Chief Dunnagan: Yes and we are still using the DARE program.

2. Commissioner Baca: How did your department come up with the criteria for flagging or identifying gang members?

Chief Dunnagan: Colleagues in the intelligence field put the criteria together for us.

3. Commissioner Baca: Did I hear you say that you have a Community Interaction Council?

Chief Dunnagan: We have a Community Mobilization Unit (CMU) that consists of 14 members and a parent representative. We meet once a month and it is a very active and responsive effort.

4. Someone stated that the church should be involved in this process.

Chief Dunnagan: We do have a Minister in the CMU. We also have one woman in the police force with the possibility adding one more.

5. Leo Gaeta: Do the undocumented have access to substance abuse contracts and or other resources?

Ray Antonsen: Substance Abuse contracts are for indigents, the low income and for folks that have medical coupons. SeaMar has outpatient and inpatient treatment available for the undocumented.

6. Father Ramirez from Royal City: 50% of those he serves have alcoholism, drug addiction, and domestic violence issues; why are there no family and or marriage counseling being offered?

Ray Antonsen: Contracts will only pay husband and wife or a family for conjoined counseling. On the mental health area; you have to be on Medicaid in order to receive these services. Other avenues are: Catholic Services, Lutheran Services, UGN monies, etc.

Adams County Community: Anger Management counseling to address Domestic Violence is limited due to lack of counselors; however, working at getting more providers.

7. Leo Gaeta: How many Hispanic certified teachers does the Othello School District have?

Jorge Juarez: I do not have the numbers but will get the information for you.

8. Cecilia de Luna: What are you doing to help students of Mixteco families integrate in school?

Jorge Juarez: We have newcomer centers; however, overall we are not doing a good job in helping these students. Sometimes we do have parents who volunteer to translate/interpret.

Ehman Shelton announced that the new Community Pool would be opening July 1st and invited the community for the grand opening.

Leo Gaeta shared the following:

- Large congregation of Mixteco families in Othello, Royal City and Mattawa
- Consulado de Mexico needs to come to Othello to help these folks get their Matriculas
- Department of Health closed down some housing units in Othello; need Project Esperanza (similar to Mattawa) assistance in Othello

Alejandra Porfirio, Columbia Basin Health Association staff member shared the following information regarding the Mixteco culture:

- They are one of 120 indigenous groups from Mexico
- Their seven most important celebrations include Day of the Dead, September 16 Independence Day, Holy Friday, etc.
- Some of their customs include getting married at a very young age; 13
- Education is very limited; not enough teachers and a high drop out rate
- Health: Prenatal care is unheard of (Dona Lupe, the Partera/Midwife) and no access to medical providers
- Social Isolation and extreme poverty in their homes; their children are the hub of the community
- Mixteco's passive character equates to much oppression both here and in Mexico; we have a right to a worthy life

Cheryl Hanks, DOH comments were as follows:

- She is a public member for the PIRT (Pesticide Incident Reporting and Tracking) Committee
- Cynthia Lopez is Chair of the Committee
- State Level volunteer position is currently open; applications need to be in by September of this year

Cecilia de Luna's comments:

- Foster Care is low; can't find foster homes for kids
- Need Hispanic Foster Parents

Ricardo Velasco's comments:

- Forming a new organization of parents (Columbia Basin Education Center) to address community problems and adult education
- Need to integrate into the community

Dora Treviño (Quincy), Cristina Pelayo (Yakima) and Maureen Caputo (formerly of Illinois) all lost loved ones in gang related incidents. Comments provided are as follows:

- Dora lost her son to gang members in the 90's; On a mission since 1999 to eradicate gangs
- Cristina lost her daughter in 1997: she's pushing the Federal Game Bill Abatement and happy that cities are implementing ordinances to address the gang issue
- Gabriel Morales is a contact for international Latino gang training
- Maureen lost her son to gangs in Chicago; has researched gangs for years and would like our support with HB2224

Alicia Cardenas-Short, Employment Security Department shared the following:

- ESD programs for youth that involves one on one; contract with youth so that they stay in school
- Jobs for youth is a means of keeping them out of gangs
- Ex-Offender program; works with employers to hire these individuals
- Offers resources for housing and mental health

CHA Official Business began at 9:55 PM

Commissioner Chacón moved to approve the Pullman public meeting minutes; Commissioner Gutierrez seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor; the motion carried.

Commissioner Portillo Salazar moved to approve the changes to the CHA administration policies; Commissioner Baca seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor; the motion carried.

Chair Lopez Morton reminded all that elections were in August.

Commissioner Portugal moved to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Gutierrez seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor; the motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 PM.