



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS**  
*COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS*

Yakima Meeting Minutes  
August 2, 2010

**Roll Call:**

Commissioners present: Ty Cordova, AnaMaria Diaz-Martinez, Gilberto Mireles, Rosalba Pitkin, Teresita Torres, Lourdes Portillo Salazar, and Manuel Villafán.

Commissioners absent: Lillian Ortiz-Self

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

Vice Chair Ty Cordova called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

Vice Chair informed the audience that Sam Granato, Yakima Chief of Police who was invited as part of the panel would not be attending.

Yakima local Commissioner Manuel Villafán welcomed EPIC personnel Mary Hernandez, Billy Ochoa and EPIC's President and CEO Rick Doehle as well as panel presenters, Richard Sanchez, Wapato Chief of Police; Elaine Beraza, Yakima School District Superintendent; Pamela Byrd, Department of Licensing; and Kenneth Nichols, DSHS Regional Office Manager.

Mr. Doehle welcomed the Commission on Hispanic Affairs and stated that it was an honor having them in town and thanked them for using the EPIC facility for the meeting.

Roll Call: Commissioner Lillian Ortiz-Self not present.

Commissioners introduced themselves and shared the areas that they represent as well as where they are based. Introduction of staff and intern also occurred.

Vice Chair Ty Cordova and Yakima local Commissioner Manuel Villafan went over CHA's priorities and shared the following:

- CHA's Mandate and accomplishments
- WA State distribution of Latino population by county
- Projected growth of minority school-age population in Washington State

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- Graduation rates for Yakima School District
- Yakima County Felony Convictions and State Juvenile Recidivism rates
- The importance of establishing relationships in the community and involvement in the Legislative process

### **Panel Presentations**

Commissioner Mireles informed the panel of the time limit on their presentations and the process for advising them when their time was about to end.

Kenneth Nichols, DSHS Regional Office Manager shared the following:

- Region 2 includes Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Klickitat, Walla Walla, and Yakima
- Their primary focus is the safety of children; they handle complaint referrals regarding abused and neglected children
- Services include; kinship care, foster care, group cares services, visitation services, and at times adoption
- EPIC offers Medicaid Child Treatment Care, Parenting classes, Daycare, and Medical care as necessary
- Disproportionality statewide; Hispanic children are placed in foster care more often, however, not in Region 2
- Committed to hiring social workers that are Hispanic bilinguals, adequate training, and culturally sensitive result in great staff and management

Elaine Beraza, Yakima School District Superintendent shared the following:

- New to the valley of Yakima; her district serves a diverse population of about 15,000 students of which 63% are Hispanic
- There are 22 schools; most of the 14 Elementary schools are in the east side of Yakima, however, most Hispanic students attend the schools in the west side; some do get bused to the east side schools
- Eisenhower and Davis High offer Alternative and Career Tech; employability rate is 78% for those that attend these schools and who graduate from these programs
- Weakest subject is Math; strongest is Reading
- Looking for better ways to teach math; huge effort in both math and science
- Early Exit Model for ELL offered in four of the schools; need to strengthen and shore up their English schools
- Remainder of schools offer the Content ESL
- Graduation rates; have the highest on time grad rates
- Test scores for ELL outscore the other kids; these students graduate with a good command of both languages
- Area that we can partner in is Early Education; Pre-K continuum, will work with the Gates Foundation to develop a program
- Need students to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; need to provide technological advances so that they can be on equal footing

Richard Sanchez, Wapato Chief of Police shared the following:

- Wapato has the lowest income per capita; less than \$30,000 per family and the lowest drop-out rate

- There is nothing to do for our youth after 5PM; Community Center has been closed for years and the pool closed this year; economy makes it hard to fund
- Group from Zacatecas, Mexico worked with students to improve their math skills
- Migrant Early Learning program is really neat; education and working with families is of utmost importance; gets families back together
- Farm workers received a grant to work with dyslexic kids and those with mental disorders
- City focuses on the bad but not on the positive things kids are doing thus suppressing kids that are doing really good
- Media also thrives on the negative but not the positive; the small cities have the biggest problems, however, funding always goes to the bigger cities
- Since the Arizona law; fear has come back and the trust is gone; incarceration is NOT the answer

Pamela Byrd, District Manager with the Department of Licensing shared the following:

- Her area includes the following offices: Union Gap, Sunnyside, Kennewick, Walla Walla, Goldendale, and White Salmon
- They have bilingual examiners in all their offices; clientele is 45-60% Hispanic
- There is no age requirement for an ID Card; all that is required is a certified birth certificate (does not matter if the child is born in the US or elsewhere) plus \$20
- There's been a change in the ID format; it helps prevent identify theft and fraud
- DOL is a progressive agency; offers more services on-line, revamped some of the equipment for testing especially for Hispanics, and implemented major changes in identify requirements for obtaining licenses
- Sister Grace from Sunnyside works with the local Police department; prepares Hispanic to take the knowledge and drivers test
- Hispanics tend to take the driver's test as many as three times and five to six times for the knowledge test; they use the repeat test to train and pass the test
- Lots of money is being spent on retake of tests; need more folks like Sister Grace
- DOL's role is not to train or teach; we just give the test

### **Public Comments**

Juan Orozco shared the following

- Poor management and abuse of power by the City of Wapato
- Community Center closed when there was an open contract with Sea-Mar; all City officials especially the Chief of the Fire Department and the Mayor made sure this program failed
- Wapato has an Olympic pool yet City officials refused to let Sea Mar manage it
- The Yakima Herald reports the way they want to report
- Most people in Wapato are very poor yet water rates have increased by 35%; the monies from this increase were used to hire the Mayor's brother-in-law
- Non-profits have board members who lack the training; The Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic has an Executive Director who gets a huge salary while farm workers are being sent to collections
- KDNA is another prime example, board members running amuck; poverty pimp organizations where the community does not have a voice in the selection of board members
- Need a federal oversight committee to check on the non-profits

Luz Bazan Gutierrez shared the following:

- Non-profits help small business
- There are 42 non-profits due to the poverty in the community
- Opportunities for Latinos do not exist
- Need to develop leadership training for youth and adults; including immigrants and old “tejanos”
- There is a new community here with a new set of people; need to provide opportunities to transform them with efforts such as in the 60’s

### **Questions/Comments from the Commissioners for the Panel**

Are Hispanic children placed with Latino families and what is the success rate of children going into Hispanic families?

Kenneth Nichols replied as follows:

- We prefer to place children with family members and with licensed Latino foster parents
- Placement meetings occur to discuss the needs of the child and to ensure that their needs are met
- We work with the Consulate of Mexico and the Guatemalan Consulate in the placement of kids; our Region works very hard to reunite kids with family especially in deportation situations
- Columbia Legal Services and the Consulate of Mexico are two agencies that we collaborate with; in California, Zacatecas, Sinaloa, Oaxaca, etc.
- 90% rate of success in the placement of children with Hispanic families; some Caucasian kids also go into Hispanic families
- Poverty and parenting are big issues; need more Hispanic foster homes

Berta Norton, DSHS Manager shared the following:

- We have Family Team Coordinators where family team decisions are made on who and where the child is placed during the course of the investigation

Commissioner Radillo: How do we address the kids not graduating and how do we encourage going to college?

Superintendent Beraza replied as follows:

- We partnered in a College to Success grant; students are identified in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and given a mentor that helps them prepare for college, the mentor remains with the student through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade
- We also have the AVID program; a college preparatory program for students who have potential for success in advanced academics programs but who need a support system i.e. IT and the medical field
- Lots of kids do not come to school because there is no one doing outreach to bring them back to school
- There needs to be a personal contact with kids to get them back to school; instruction needs to be engaging and meaningful

Commissioner Diaz-Martinez: In regards to the ratio of teachers to students, what are your goals and what can you do?

Superintendent Beraza replied as follows:

- We are not doing good; some schools do better than others
- If children are doing good in school parents will get involved; they do have interpreter services and all communication is in the language
- We do background checks when parents come in to volunteer; undocumented parents are insured that they will not be reported, however the fear is there
- We had a banner year on outreach to parents; we teach ESL and provide childcare

Commissioner Pitkin: Is DOL going to ask for additional documents for a minor child to obtain an ID?

Pamela Byrd, DOL replied as follows:

- In order for parents to get an ID, they now recognize a Mexico license as an acceptable document for obtaining an ID; for minors a certified Mexican birth certificate is all that is necessary

Vice Chair Cordova: Acknowledged Pam for her agency's collaboration efforts and asked how the rural community was being served after the closure of offices. Also were mobiles being used?

Pamela Byrd, DOL replied as follows:

- The Goldendale and White Salmon offices went down from five days to four; the office serving Goldendale is still providing service to the rural community
- Hispanic customers are not computer savvy so this is a challenge, however, rural community is still being served
- Mobile units not feasible due to cost
- Renewals can be done a year in advance

Vice Chair Cordova: In regards to retesting of individuals, what is the percentage of unlicensed drivers and do you know of other entities that can provide drivers training?

Pamela Byrd, DOL replied as follows:

- Casa Hogar is doing some driver's training

Commissioner Mireles: Asked that DOL agents continue to treat customers with dignity and respect such as a laborer or someone with language issues; especially with the fact that the agency has fewer staff and more to do.

Pamela Byrd, DOL replied as follows:

- Recent changes have put our Division under the Customer Services Department
- More focused attention on providing decent customer service; we also have several bilingual staff

Commissioner Torres: Are folks being detained for not having drivers license?

Richard Sanchez, Wapato Chief of Police shared the following:

- I see it all the time; we need to earn their trust
- Without building trust we cannot change things; Hispanics are concerned that the info they share will go to ICE
- 60 people are in jail; most don't have a license and cannot go to the programs

Luz Bazan, community member shared the following:

- Union Gap DOL office; two customer reps are always chatting; flow is not working constant bottleneck
- Perhaps "hidden shoppers" concept can be utilized

Pamela Byrd stated that triage is the reason why the two customer reps.

Commissioner Portillo-Salazar: Driving without a license is a huge issue so how can we change/how can we improve?

Pam Byrd said that we need to work with the courts on a payment plan so that suspended licenses can be reinstated and get folks back to work so that they can pay their fees and penalties.

### **CHA Official Business**

CHA Received approval from the Governor to continue reimbursing travel expenses for Commissioners to attend CHA public meetings.

### **Adjournment of meeting**

Commissioner Villafán made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Pitkin seconded the motion.

A vote was called to adjourn the meeting; Ayes were unanimous. **The motion carried.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.