



STATE OF WASHINGTON
COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

CHA Community Meeting, Mattawa

April 19th, 2013

6:30 – 9:00pm

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Meeting called to order at 6:33pm.

Commissioners Present: Anita Ahumada, Rosalba Pitkin, Ty Cordova, Sharonne Navas, Lillian Ortiz-Self, Andres Mantilla, Nora Coronado, Frank Lemos, Manuel Reta, Cynthia DeVictoria

Commissioners Absent: Gloria Ochoa

Staff Present: Uriel Iñiguez, Marena Lear

Panelists: Jerry Yorgesen, Mattawa School Board; Steven Saxe, WA Department of Health; Pedro Serrano, WA Department of Labor & Industries; Silvia Barajas, Mattawa City Council; Chief John Turley, Mattawa Police Department; Commissioner Cindy Carter, Grant County; Sharon Ortiz, WA Human Rights Commission

Commissioner Ahumada made the interpretation services announcement.

Commissioners introduced themselves and their areas of expertise. Commissioner DeVictoria acknowledged special guests in the audience.

Chair Ortiz-Self explained the format of the meeting and reviewed the agenda.

CHA Official Business

Commissioner Cordova motioned to approve the minutes from the Olympia Public Meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Reta. All in favor, motion carried.

CHA Presentation

Director Iniguez and Commissioner DeVictoria presented a PowerPoint with local statistics and information about the Commission.

Chair Ortiz-Self called upon the panelists to address the issues raised in the presentation regarding L&I/farmworker issues, lack of available housing, and the achievement gap in education.



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Panelist Remarks

Silvia Barajas, Mattawa City Council

I've been in Mattawa since 1982. I've been a member of city council for 8 years, and I'm here to tell you about the housing concerns. Our population is about 4,000, in peak season it rises to about 7,000. Housing is a major concern. We have low income housing, but it's not related to Mattawa. They receive our services, but the money doesn't come back into the city. We also have rental issues, with inspections. Now sometimes there are 2-3 families per trailer, and there are not enough rental places for people to live. I have some information on new projects coming into town. We have Esperanza, there will be about 8 new units built, and they will be taken off the portables. There will also be a new addition by the park; 7 acres of land will be annexed for housing, and 7 acres for commercial. It will happen, but there are some problems. Right now we have no more city land to build on, the areas around us belong to the county, and it is very expensive and difficult to annex them. The city council recognizes that it's a big issue and we are trying to get on top of it. Hispanics have very low representation on the city council. I want to invite everyone to attend our council meetings and share their ideas. Right now we have two open seats. I went in to city council because I am also a business owner.

Cindy Carter, Grant County Commissioner

I live in Royal City. I want to commend these children that are here. I am a mother and a wife, and in our household we have the same issues that everyone deals with. I was a stay-at-home mom up until 2007 when I selected to fill this position. I represent south of Ephrata, west of Moses Lake, it covers Quincy, Royal City, Mattawa, Beverly, and others. I have the biggest area and I represent over 30,000 people. I'm your liaison for county government. I'm an elected official. We don't control the other officials, but we can talk with them. We do have certain control over budget for the roads; we get a list of what roads need to be paved, etc. We work closely with the Grant County Fair manager. We have a 32 Million dollar budget. We are over the public defenders, so if you need legal representation, we provide that. We try to distribute the budget fairly. I have 3 children, and my oldest daughter was a teacher here in Wahluke until last year. I've been in Mattawa high school and middle school, and I've ridden with the sheriffs in patrol cars. We are over the planning and building department. To get a building permit, that's one of the departments we are over. To annex the portion you are talking about, it's about \$2,000 to do an amendment. Mattawa has an urban growth area outside the city limits where it is anticipated that a lot of growth will happen in the next 10-20 years. Areas can be annexed, housing developments if they want to come in. Different areas in the county, they will do a plan amendment, if a development, or they want to change the housing so it's more concentrated housing, they can do that annexation. We would vote on that. My husband and I have a cherry orchard and an apple orchard, and we're also farmers, so I realize the importance of housing. If we want to get workers to stay, we have to provide housing.



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Jerry Yorgesen, Wahluke School Board Member

I moved here in 1975, and I graduated from high school here, and came back and taught here for 6 years. Looking over the graduation rates, Wahluke high school is actually considered to be doing a very good job with the Latino population. The graduation rate is 81.6%, and statewide it's less than 50%. As far as housing, I'm not an expert on that. The other night we had a concern about parents coming to open houses. For example, we had an open house for 6th graders on sex education, and it was not very well attended. It would be nice to get more attendance at some of those events.

Steven Saxe, Department of Health

I appreciate the opportunity to come and meet with you. I'm the director of health professions and facilities for the department of health. While we do the regulation of all the health profession facilities, I want to focus on specialty facilities regulation, and that involves temporary worker housing. Agriculture is a vital part of the economy, which necessitates having an adequate labor force. We ensure temporary worker housing is safe and adequate, and that those facilities are operated appropriately. We work jointly with L&I in that regulation, and we look at sites that are 10 people or more, or 5 units or more. We work on the development of additional housing in that we try to encourage growers to look at adding housing for their workers. We do that with L&I and the Employment Security Division. We start with the growers providing technical assistance in developing farms, building to appropriate standards. We work with them on meeting the appropriate operations for their facilities. We have teams of Spanish-speaking inspectors that go out to the sites. We also do complaint follow-up – we've left some complaint forms here on the table. Please submit them to us if you're aware of any problems with licensed housing. The other thing I would like to mention is some of the growth we've had, as you know there's not enough housing. When we started this program around 2000, there were only 118 facilities providing a little over 7,000 beds. We now have about 226 facilities providing 13,000 beds. We also had the highest number of applications for our construction review folks to look at. I would also like to share that the Dept. of Health also has boards and commissions that do regulation of professions, and they're looking for some diverse candidates to fill some of those positions – it's not just licensed professionals but members of the public. I would like to encourage the Commission, as well as those in the audience, to submit their names.

Sharon Ortiz, Washington State Human Rights Commission

We're one of the oldest civil rights agencies in the U.S. Our first statute was written in 1949, and it protected individuals in employment for race, color, and national origin. Since then we've grown a lot, back then it was the board against discrimination. What we do is enforce civil rights laws that were born out of the sixties. We're not like amnesty international; we don't have any jurisdiction over the federal government, Indian tribes, police officers; we can't help people with disappearances, immigration, things that you would typically think of as human rights. We investigate claims of discrimination in the areas of housing, employment, places of public accommodation which does include schools, insurance, and credit.



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The scope of our jurisdiction is limited. We do have the policing powers of the state, so we are a law enforcement agency and we do prosecute people who discriminate and are not willing to resolve the issues with the parties of the claim. Our agency has been cut a devastating 34.3%, and one of the first things we had to do was close some of our smaller offices, and our Yakima office was closed. Since we've closed those offices, we're not seeing complaints out of Central Washington. I am from Eastern Washington and I started in our Yakima office. We're not getting any complaints out of Grant County, and I think there has to be some discrimination, because I've lived in these areas. In 2011 we only had 3 employment complaints from all of Grant County, and only one housing complaint. Last year we had 11 employment complaints and one housing complaint. That's really low compared to what it used to be. We have now put someone back in Yakima and we are recruiting for an investigator, so our goal is to build it back up. If you are treated differently because of your national origin, or if you're not rented to because you have children, I would encourage you to take one of our bags with our information. And employer asking a woman for sexual favors is considered sexual harassment, it's against the law, and people can file a complaint with our agency. If you do not want to come forward, you can talk to us; it is a difficult thing to talk about. We can also initiate our own complaint against a business or housing provider. I would encourage you to call us, one third of our staff are bilingual, out of the twenty-seven staff that we have left. If you're hurt on the job, and you're terminated, or if you get pregnant and you're terminated, that is also against the law. Retaliation is also illegal – it's illegal to retaliate against someone because they've asserted their rights. Many times your initial complaint does not prevail, and the retaliation complaint does prevail. I would encourage you to contact our office, and I'm here to answer any questions you may have.

John Turley, Mattawa Police Chief

(Speaks in Spanish): Even though I can speak Spanish, I ask for permission to speak in my own language, English. Before I begin I want to say to you – community, pride, and respect.

(English) This is what I'm here for. I was retired, and I came back, because I wanted to. I'm here for you. I have a 3 phase approach to rebuilding your police department here in Mattawa: your community, your schools, and your churches. Your community is important because we need to rebuild the trust. I promise I won't let anyone work in the police department that doesn't deserve to be there, that doesn't recognize the community that they work in. I work for everyone. I don't hold anyone in special regard when it comes to my job. My job is to protect and help you. I'm applying for grants; I help the school, I want to be a part of the school. If we want to work ourselves out of gangs, out of those kinds of evil things that are destroying the reputation of Mattawa, we have to start at the migrant council. We have to start when they're small. You as parents have to start learning a little English, it's important. How many of you can help your kids with their homework when they come home from school? We have to all work on this, from the very smallest kindergartner, up to high school. We can do it; we need to make leaders out of your children. I know that Mexican families are strong. I have family in Chihuahua. I have lots of cousins



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that are Mexican-Americans. I want your kids to see me as their friend, someone that will help them when they need it. We are going to work on 24/7 coverage. We haven't had that in Mattawa in a long time. We have a plan; we're applying for grants to have more police officers. We are community servants. I look at it as community service. We want to clean up this community, it takes all of us.

Pedro Serrano, Department of Labor & Industries

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I'm here to talk with you, not to you. I was raised in the state of Jalisco in LA, California. My job title is Hispanic outreach manager for the division of occupational safety and health. Did you know that if you are a member of the Hispanic community, you are more likely to get hurt than any other community? That's why my position was created. My job is to tell you what your rights are under L&I's division of occupational safety and health. We have other divisions such as employment standards and industrial insurance. I have been in this position for the last 23 years. I have seen how people get hurt. I have seen that Latinos are more likely to die or get hurt on the job nationwide and in the state of Washington than any other group. The mission of the Department of Labor and Industries is to keep everybody safe and working, and that includes everyone, regardless of immigration status. Who is responsible for your safety on the job? Your employer. If we happen to do an inspection at your job site, if there's something wrong, most likely the employer is going to be cited, a lot of times with a fine. As employees we also have responsibilities – to follow the safety and health regulations of the job site. If there's something wrong, you have the right to go to your employer and tell them. If that doesn't work, you have the right to file a complaint with the department. We have complaint forms in Spanish. You can file a complaint in writing, or you can call me. Housing is not required to be provided by the employer. If they do provide it, it needs to meet state requirements; it needs to be safe. If it is not, talk to your employer, or file a complaint. The Department of Health is the primary inspector for housing. The Department of L&I has jurisdiction over housing where there is an employer-employee relationship.

Public Comment

Oscar Perdomo

I received a request from everyone who plays soccer in this community. I am the secretary of the Mattawa soccer league, and we have been active for 3 years or more. During these 3 seasons, we've seen over six hundred players, coaches, and referees, but that is a very small number. In Mattawa there are not a lot of opportunities for recreation. Soccer is probably the only opportunity for recreation that is free. One of our major concerns is that we don't have facilities. The school has given us one field for 14 teams among the Mattawa and Othello soccer leagues. It is a need. The park has been disabled. Why? We have heard that in order to play there we have to come with a fee. I know all the budgets have been cut, but this city needs to be issued some grants so that we can have that field again. We need your help. Soccer is in the veins of all Hispanic Americans.



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Antonio Ayala

I have 3 kids. I don't agree with that our schools are doing well. At my daughter's school, we created a parent committee called a PTO, of which I am the president. I would like us to have tutors. If we can't help our students in grades one through five, by the time they get to junior high they arrive with problems. My daughter has to come to the high school to get special help. She was the first, but how many more do you think will follow? If we don't change this, we're going to return to the low rate of graduation. And when they go on to college they are going to be unsuccessful. I believe schools should be more open, that we should look for more and better resources and opportunities. The majority of these children are American citizens so why should they be denied their rights? If we don't act now there will be problems in the future.

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Griselda Calderon

I thank the chief of police for what you said. My concern was that a lot of the police officers weren't being professional. We would like the police department to be more transparent. We also need a Spanish newspaper, and you addressed that over 90% of the population are Latinos. We would benefit a lot from having a Spanish newspaper. Someone in the community should take that up. My other issue is healthcare. We need more resources for mammograms and screenings. I know there are organizations that provide services for low-income people, so it would be nice to bring more organizations into Mattawa for low income people that provide these services. A lot of people need these services but they do not go to the clinic because the prices are not affordable. Another issue is that people are not making a lot of money, so it's very difficult for them to do other things, like learn English. A typical work schedule includes someone that works 10 hours. They come home really tired so it's hard for them to enroll in any English classes. It would be nice to coordinate something with farm worker schedules to provide English classes – a program could be brought in during the winter time, which is down time for farmworkers. Another issue is housing. People would like to purchase houses but they do not have the money, so if we could also bring organizations that help people with purchasing their houses, and improving their housing is also needed. Increasing people's wages is also a huge issue.

Hilda Calderon

Good afternoon my name is Hilda Calderon; I'm the vice president of the PTO at Marshall middle school. Mr. Jefferson, I would like to ask if you are going to do anything about the playgrounds at the middle school. It's a concern to me.

Maria Rodriguez

My name is Maria Rodriguez and my concern is towards housing in Mattawa. We have a huge need for housing; many people are sharing homes because there are not enough houses to buy. There are also no homes for sale because there is a lack of land in Mattawa. I know that there are housing programs but the



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majority of housing programs are only for people who have valid documentation. From my point of view, I believe that this city should look for a way to get property to build on.

Policarpio Tapia

I'm president of the PAC. I have been here for fifteen years and this is the first time that I have seen so many people representing us. Thank you to the CHA for being here. I like how our chief of police presented himself. I'm in agreement with the concerns expressed by the rest of the community. I appreciate you being here, and we will be getting in touch with you about these issues.

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Chair Ortiz-Self thanked the community members for their comments.

Break

The Chair called the meeting back to order at 8:25pm.

Commissioner Pitkin reminded the audience members to utilize the interpretation equipment if necessary.

Discussion

The Chair asked the following questions directed to Mr. Yorgesen: How are your graduation rates calculated – do you measure only the seniors that graduate or the 4-year cohort? You have three schools under the school improvement plan that are not meeting the quota. Can you address what you're doing in that regard? We heard from the audience that there is a need for more resources for parents and more tutoring services.

Jerry Yorgesen, Wahluke School Board Member

I'm not sure how OSPI does the graduation rates. As far as tutoring, in the elementary schools, we've come up with an academy, which is intervention for kids that are falling behind to help them catch up, primarily in math and English. We've been working on the schools that are in need of improvement, our scores have been going up in the last couple years.

Commissioner Cordova asked the following question directed to Chief Turley:

How many bilingual people do you have in your department, and how are issues addressed when someone does not speak English?

Chief Turley



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Myself and Maybelline Pantaleon, the administrative police clerk, are currently the only bilingual staff. I've been chief since January 9th. We had to do a lot of clean up. We had an interim administrator that had to do a lot of work. Since I've been there, we've hired Maybelline and a backup for her. We have a bilingual intern also who helps with the interpreting. We just recently hired a new reserve police officer who is now working with the irrigation district, who is Latino and speaks Spanish. The intent is to continue having the Anglo officers do the best they can to learn how to deal with the imbalance in language. They can always call me; I can go out and interpret. We have interpreters that we can call. We would like to have more, but we're having some difficulty. The attorney that was assigned to the city is not returning out phone calls. We may just get our own, do our own test if we have to. We will make sure that that gets done properly. We're making good efforts towards that. I would like to work with the sheriff in having the city also provide a school resource officer. We will not make the mistakes from the past.

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Commissioner Navas raised the following question to Mr. Saxe and Mr. Serrano: Can you please give examples of the requirements for safe housing and safe facilities?

Steve Saxe

All housing plans are looked at first by our construction review folks. We also look at and work to make sure they have adequate water and sewage. There's also the operation of how people live and work, looking at food preparation areas, electrical safety, sewer safety, security plans, etc. That's a high level overview of the types of standards we have, covering construction standards as well as operations standards.

Pedro Serrano

There are many requirements that need to be met before an employee can occupy the housing. It needs to be clean, with clean working toilets, kitchen, and showers. It needs to have screen doors and screens on the windows. Any exposed wires need to be fixed. The rooms are 50 sq. ft. per person, which is not very much. If you feel it is not safe, talk to the employer first, and if you feel the need, file a complaint with us. It is confidential.

Commissioner Mantilla posed the following question to Councilwoman Silvia Barajas: Can you address the city's plan for making fields accessible?

Silvia Barajas

We're making a lot of progress in gang prevention, for example we've decreased the amount of graffiti. The Chief has been talking to kids in the schools about gang-related issues. We're very concerned every time we see any graffiti around town. We ask the community to let us know if you see it. About the soccer field and the park: we only have one park, and it's a public park for everyone in town. Everyone's welcome to it. This year we're going to take out all the grass and plant new grass. We want it safe for the



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community. If you have any concerns, everyone is also welcome to attend city council meetings, and there are interpreters. This year it will be fixed, and when the park is ready it will be there for everyone to use.

Commissioner Coronado posed the following question to Steve Saxe: How is this community being engaged to get their basic healthcare needs met?

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Steve Saxe

That is a little out of my area, but most health districts in the area are working on the community health benefits plan to do assessments in each community, to find out what are the needs in the community. As we look at health care reform, we need to address the unmet needs. I will talk to some people who work with community health prevention and work with local public health, and try to take that information back to them.

Commissioner Pitkin asked the following question to Mr. Yorgesen: According to the census, the Mattawa community is monolingual in Spanish. What resources are there for adults to learn English?

Jerry Yorgesen

The school offers Rosetta stone, and I believe there is a church group that offers English classes.

Commissioner Ahumada posed the following question to Mr. Yorgesen: What are your efforts to engage the parents to participate?

Jerry Yorgesen

We're hoping that some of these PAT and groups that form a liaison between the school and the community it might improve. I think all the schools now have some sort of PTA group.

Commissioner Lemos posed the following question to councilwoman Barajas and the county commissioner: It's been stated that there is a housing problem. There were comments that low income housing is too expensive to undertake. That response doesn't make sense. What is different in this city in regards to this program for low income housing? Also, what is the plan to deal with expanding the city boundary?

Silvia Barajas

I'll talk about the expansion of the city. Mattawa is very small. You see a lot of land around, but its county. We can't force them to sell it to the city. The county would have to annex, which is costly, and then they would have to sell properties. We're not able to build any more houses. Many times there are multiple families living in one trailer, which is a hazard. We are doing our best, but we are limited by



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space. They're going to make quite a few apartment complexes, and that will take away a lot of the need. It will take time, but we are trying our best. There are going to be 7 acres annexed, and it will be all housing, with 5 for commercial. This is in its starting phase, and the plans are coming.

Cindy Carter

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We have the housing authority in Grant County that is governed by a different board, other than the county commissioners. I think Mattawa may have some low income housing spread throughout the county. As far as development, it will take a land builder or a developer to come in and purchase land and annex it into the city. We would be more than happy to work with the planning department and getting the paperwork done to help move that forward.

Commissioner Lemos asked the following question: What actions has the city taken in regards to re-zoning the 16-20 units per acre?

Silvia Barajas

There are a lot of issues on the table right now, and we are working on that. There are a lot of zones that we need to bring up to date.

Commissioner Reta asked the following question to Pedro Serrano: What is being done make sure that the L&I medical provider directory includes Latino bilingual and bi-cultural doctors?

Pedro Serrano

There are some Hispanic doctors in that directory. I can find out exactly how many, and I have some handouts on that subject. When you have an accident on the job you have the right to choose any doctor for your first visit, but for any visit after that the provider is chosen by L&I.

Commissioner DeVictoria posed the following question to Pedro Serrano: Why is it that Hispanics have the highest rate of injuries, and what targeted effort is being made to bring that rate down?

Pedro Serrano

After I've reviewed hundreds of cases of both fatalities and accidents, the most significant contributing factor is working too fast, as well as lack of training, and training in the language of the employee. Falls from ladders is the number one accident, and tractor deaths are also very common. If we could prevent these, we could prevent 50 – 70% of deaths within the agricultural industry. We are looking at those numbers, and here I am.

Chair Lillian Ortiz-Self thanked the panelists and shared the following:



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One of the things I heard consistently was that the community doesn't know how to access the services that are available. I would encourage city council to have concerted efforts to discuss what is happening with zoning, what is the process, what are the anticipated target dates, etc. to communicate the information to the community. We keep hearing an anxious community that wants to settle here and make Mattawa their home, and need to know when affordable housing will be made available. As far as education, I would say that you have our future in your hands. Mattawa has a very young population. We keep hearing about parents that want their children to do well but don't know how to help them. They're asking for tutoring, they're asking for more resources so their students can succeed. I would encourage school board members to find out what the programs are and what the gaps are. The only way to understand what is out there is to have honest conversations with your constituents.

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To the Department of Labor & Industries: the community is still very afraid of retaliation. What information is being provided to prove to them that their rights are going to be protected? This is a very big gap.

One of the things we know keeps our communities strong is structured recreational activities for our children. There has to be a concerted effort by this community to support their young people if we are going to continue to prevent gang activity.

To the people of Mattawa: You are a wonderful, welcoming community. I see your hard work, dedication, love and passion for your children. Mothers and fathers, encourage your young people as their growing up to run for these seats. We need your voice – we need them in the city council, on the school board, in the county commission, in law enforcement. This is your community. Please reach out to the Commission and let us help you find your voice in these positions– encourage your young people to run for office. It is time that you are also sitting at this table with the positions to make the decisions. We need to see you, and we need to hear your voice. We take your comments seriously, and we will continue to follow up with Commissioner DeVictoria and continue to empower her and assist the members of this panel to make a difference in this community. Thank you so much.

Commissioner DeVictoria motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Mantilla seconded the motion.

All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:03pm.