

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY OBSERVER REPORT

Tacoma Human Rights Commission (HRC)

February 18, 2021

Observer: Lydia Zepeda

Meeting called to order at 5:34, no quorum

Roll Call

Present: Lisa Snyder, Verda Washington, Amanda Westbrooke, Norman Brickhouse

Absent: André Jiménez, 2nd Vice Chair, Taniesha Lyons, Sarah Rumbaugh, Ronita Boultt, Melvin Nobles, Jr., 1st Vice Chair, C. Ivan Johnson, Al Ratcliffe, Michealea Lemons, Chair, Keshreeyaji Oswal

Others Present: Andreta Armstrong, staff liaison; Dana Coggon from CPAC, Elliot Barnett, Staff Liaison of Planning Commission, Eric Alozie, Thomas doing tech support.

Ice breakers to build rapport: describe self using a non-living object.

Acknowledgement of Black History Month & HRC History: HRC began in 1967 to address red-lining. It was called the Human Relations Commission. The newly elected Mayor Rasmussen called for its abolition and indeed it was in 1969 when the majority of the newly elected city council opposed it. The City Council defunded the HRC for a few years.

Incident on 9th and Pacific Avenue - Commissioner Dana Coggon, Community's Police Advisory Commission (CPAC). CPAC was formed after the Benny Branch incident because of community demands. CPAC has no actual oversight or power over TPD. They want to be able to have oversight, to determine policing policy and be a liaison between TPD and community.

Pacific Avenue is just one of many police incidents. With Zoom CPAC has had more participation than ever. Stated there was no question as to what happened because of the video available. CPAC had their emergency meeting before the City Council had theirs. Members said they keep saying over and over that it should never happen again. There are some bills in the state legislature that will provide guidance on oversight, but CPAC needs HRC support to be granted oversight to TPD. CPAC needs as many people as possible to reach out to City Council and ask that CPAC have oversight.

Community Trauma Response Team: mental mobile medics for those in need. They are volunteers who will work with people traumatized by the police. As CPAC Education subcommittee chair, Dana's goal is to find out what the community wants to see from CPAC. CPAC has pushed to have body cams on all officers. Roll-out was slow, however the Pacific Avenue incident caused Chief Ake to require every active officer to have a body camera by end

of March or April (Dana was unsure). This is ahead of schedule; they were not supposed to be required until the end of 2021.

No details were given about the incident and no questions were asked about it by the Commissioners.

Sarah: As a candidate, how quickly do you need to respond to incidents? Dana: need to acknowledge what happened within 24 hours, no later than 48 hours.

Ronita: What is the racial makeup of CPAC? Dana: We lost two African-Americans, but got one. We have no Pacific Islanders, no Vietnamese.

Andre: Are your subcommittees open to the community? Dana: Our subcommittees do not have language to allow it. We need open them up.

Break at 6:30pm for five minutes.

Meeting called to order at 6:36pm

Roll call again:

Present: Lisa Snyder, Verda Washington, Amanda Westbrooke, Norman Brickhouse, André Jiménez, 2nd Vice Chair, Taniesha Lyons, Sarah Rumbaugh, Ronita Boullt, Melvin Nobles, Jr., 1st Vice Chair, C. Ivan Johnson

Absent: Al Ratcliffe, Michealea Lemons, Chair, Keshreeyaji Oswal

Approved agenda unanimously

Motion to amend the agenda to acknowledge Black History Month. Approved.

The acknowledgment done earlier in the meeting was done again for the benefit of the Commissioners who were not present before. It was suggested that could add more about what has happened since 2014, e.g. income as a protected class and rental housing codes.

A request was made to get it on the web before the end of Black History Month and include everyone who has ever served on the HRC.

Motion to post history on website with proposed changes: unanimously approved.

Minutes from January 21, 2021, moved, seconded and unanimously approved.

Staff reports,

HRC applications and interviews. More than 30 people applied. Andreta selected 17 to interview including those who have reapplied. Council member Ushka will choose whom to interview. The interviews for new HRC Commissioners will be public February 25, 4:15-5:45pm
Contact Andreta for the link: andreta.armstrong@cityoftacoma.org

BLM mural budget: unsure if Arts Commission will fund it.

Housing and Equity Taskforce. Elliot Barnett, liaison for Planning Commission of City of Tacoma. Gave his Affordable Housing powerpoint, Home in Tacoma. The goals of the Affordable Housing Action Strategy are to increase housing supply and change zoning rules to allow multi-family housing, tiny houses, additions etc. He acknowledges historical impacts of red-lining that persist in current housing patterns. He states the current housing strategy and zoning rules are not working to create housing or make it affordable. He asks that the HRC make its voice heard to support missing middle housing (duplex, triplex, fourplex, courtyard buildings, townhouses, cottages, tiny house) across the city and medium scale apartments in some areas of the city. He shows a map of Tacoma with corridors for apartments called **Evolve Housing Choice** versus **Transform Housing Choice**, where most of Tacoma would be zoned for apartments.

Andreta asked him to ask him how the HRC can give its input. The Planning Commission will be putting all the information on the website in a week cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma He asks that they let the City Council know what they think before they decide in June.

Sarah asked about whether the Evolve and Transform choices would achieve affordability. Elliot indicated the Evolve will not provide enough affordable housing to meet demand.

Statement for support for Tacoma Mutual Aid - Andre asked for input on a letter to the City Council on the lack of restroom and hand washing services for people experiencing homelessness. Motion to send the letter was approved unanimously.

Heal the Heart - Verda indicated they were just getting to know each other, no goals yet.

Committee updates -

Policy and advocacy committee - Andre - writing the above letter. He says he hopes this is the beginning; the HRC can and should do more to support the homeless.

Education and Outreach - Sarah, we have been working with planning commission; Elliott's presentation is our update.

No other committee updates.

Public Comment: no public comment, Sarah asked for everyone to identify themselves and say why they were there.

Eric Alozie a small business owner, wanting to see what the HRC does. Wants to get on the agenda about impact fees.

Lisa Woods is the chief equity officer, present to learn about HRC.

Announcement: Thanks to Commissioners Lisa and Al for being on the HRC for their service. Praise to Andreta for her work.

Taniesha has a DEI anti-racist book club. Reading a chapter a week. Invites everyone to join.

Adjournment at 7:40pm.