

CITY OF MESA
HUMAN RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD (HRAB)
Ad Hoc Issue Research and Action Team (IRA)
March 20, 2014 Minutes

The Issue Research and Action Team of the City of Mesa met on March 20th, 2014,
at 5:00pm at the Mesa City Plaza, 20 E. Main St. Ste. 250.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cliff Moon, Chair
Denise Heap

MEMBERS ABSENT

Frank Johnson

STAFF PRESENT

Andrea Arenas

GUESTS

Stephanie Sherwood

1. Call to Order.

Mr. Moon called the meeting to order at 4:59pm.

2. Items from citizens present.

There were no citizens who requested to speak to IRA.

3. Approval of minutes from the February 20th, 2014 IRA meeting.

A motion was made by Ms. Heap to approve the February 20th, 2014 IRA meeting minutes, Mr. Moon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of minutes from the February 26th, 2014 IRA meeting.

A motion was made by Ms. Heap to approve the February 26th, 2014 IRA meeting minutes, Mr. Moon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Hear, discuss and take action on the Mesa Speaks, Mesa Listens: Community Conversations on Discrimination series:

- Participant dialogue evaluation.

Ms. Arenas provided the board members a copy of the evaluation drafted by Mr. Moon, and reviewed by Ms. Kurtz, a third party consultant for the series. A motion was made by Ms. Heap to approve the participant dialogue evaluation, Mr. Moon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- Press release and promotional flyer.

Ms. Arenas provided the board members with a copy of the promotional flyer and drafted press release for review. Ms. Arenas asked the members to send her a quote that could be used in the press release by the following Monday. Ms. Arenas advised that flyers will be printed for distribution and will be translated in Spanish. Mr. Moon suggested that they also be translated in Asian languages and stated that he had a contact that he would forward for such services. Ms. Arenas outlined plans for distribution throughout the community by staff, and advised that board members will be given the same information to distribute among their contacts. Ms. Arenas also relayed professional feedback suggesting that the title of the series be changed from, "Mesa Speaks, Mesa Listens: Community Conversations on Discrimination" to, "Mesa Speaks, Mesa Listens: Community Conversations on Inclusion & Diversity" to make it more marketable.

The board members agreed as long as the intentions of the dialogues is relayed in other ways i.e. press release verbiage, opening speech by the moderator at the events, etc.

- Facilitation and event timeline.

Ms. Arenas provided the board members with an outline of the facilitation and event timeline as composed by Ms. Kurtz. Ms. Arenas asked the member to review it and provide and feedback, concerns or suggestions as necessary. Ms. Arenas informed that they were no longer able to use the Phoenix School of Law for facilitators and note takers because the school semester would be completed by the time of the events. Ms. Arenas asked for assistance recruiting individuals for those roles and advised members to forward contact information from those interested. Mr. Moon also commented that they will stress the importance of board members being present at one or more of the events.

6. Hear, discuss and take action on diversity speaker's bureau as a community resource.

Ms. Arenas provided the board members the final draft of the statement that would be listed on the Diversity Speaker's Bureau webpage, as well as a participation/ agreement form for non-profit speakers who specialize in a diversity-related topic that would like to be listed as a resource. Ms. Arenas advised that she would forward board members the form to solicit participation. Ms. Arenas stated that the web resource will become active once they have at least five speakers willing to participate.

7. Hear, discuss and take action on City's support for employees' gender transition in the workplace.

Ms. Heap summarized that since gender transition is a medical procedure, HIPPA laws prevent places of employment from releasing information regarding one's transition even though best practices advise that it is beneficial to provide information to those in the workplace. Thus was a recent case with a City of Mesa employee, even though the employee was willing to provide consent and educational materials. Ms. Heap asked Ms. Sherwood to speak further on her personal experience.

Ms. Sherwood is a Police Sergeant with the City of Mesa Police Department, working in the department for over 25 years. Ms. Sherwood is transgendered and began transitioning at her employment in September 2013. Ms. Sherwood stated that she provided research on the best practices for transitioning in the workplace, and with her superiors approval selected a date in which she would be presented as a female to other staff. Ms. Sherwood explained the importance of management properly informing and explaining the process to staff as well as welcoming open lines communication in order to address questions and expel any rumors. Ms. Sherwood stated that her management was recommended not to publicize the matter by legal staff, even though there was no legal restrictions once she gave her consent, therefore her co-workers were not adequately notified. Ms. Sherwood detailed how the lack of information actually created more hardships in the workplace such as rumors spreading, perceived lack of support and avoidance around her.

Ms. Sherwood expressed that the City needs to adopt a policy, along the lines of the best practices, given that gender transition is becoming more prevalent in the workforce. Ms. Sherwood stated that having a policy and procedures in place would show support to any future employee wanting to go through a transition. Ms. Sherwood also recommended that the City of Mesa change their employee discrimination policy to include gender identity.

Mr. Moon questioned if Ms. Sherwood had or would be seeking legal representation. In response, Ms. Sherwood stated that she did not have legal representation, nor did she plan to seek legal representation simply because she would be retiring in May and any policy changes would not directly affect her at this point.

Ms. Sherwood stated that her recommendations are to improve the process in the future for other employees going through a transition, because it is likely to happen again. Mr. Moon suggested arranging a meeting to speak with a representative from the City Attorney's Office to get more information on the topic. Ms. Heap suggested drafting a policy based on the best practices information.

A motion was made by Ms. Heap to invite the City Attorney to the next meeting so board members can ask questions, Mr. Moon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Another motion was made by Ms. Heap to work on drafting a policy and conduct research with help from Ms. Sherwood, Mr. Moon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Discuss future agenda items, meeting dates, announcements, other housekeeping.

Mr. Moon announced the Black and Latino Coalition Project on March 28th, 2014 at 6:30pm at the Tempe Center for the Arts where a moderated conversation will take place with Edward James Olmos and Lasana O. Hotep. Ms. Heap announced that the Cubs will be sponsoring an LGBT game on Saturday, March 22nd, 2014 at 4pm.

- Next meeting will be held on Thursday, April 20th, 2014 at 5:00pm.

9. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 5:53pm.

Submitted By:



Ruth Giese,
Diversity Program Administrator