
**CITY OF MESA
HUMAN RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD (HRAB)
April 28, 2021 Minutes**

The Human Relations Advisory Board (HRAB) of the City of Mesa met on April 28, 2021.
at 6:00pm via ZOOM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Ron Williams- Chair
Tom Brennan
Colleen Byron
William Campos
Margaret Duarte
Amy-Lyn Faatoafe
Bill McAllister
Jared Smith- Vice-Chair
Lou Wade

MEMBERS ABSENT

Joseph Holmes

STAFF PRESENT

Andrea Alicoate
Cisco Luzania
Tara Hall
Robert Rash

GUESTS

Joe Zhao

1. Chair's Call to Order.

Mr. Williams, called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

(1a) Announcement of excused absences.

Mr. Holmes was announced as an excused absence.

2. Items from Citizens Present.

No citizens wished to speak to the board.

3. Approval of minutes from the March 24, 2021 HRAB meeting.

It was moved by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Wade that the above-mentioned minutes be accepted as written.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES- Mr. Williams, Mr. Brennan, Dr. Byron, Mr. Campos, Ms. Duarte, Ms. Faatoafe, Mr. McAllister, Mr. Smith, Mr. Wade.

NAYS- None

4. Hear and discuss update from the Mesa Police Department (MPD).

(4a) Update on hate & bias crimes strategic initiative efforts, along with cases and/or trends within the community as it relates to diversity.

MPD Commander Robert Rash was present to give an overview on the department's proposed Hate Crime Strategic Initiative. In 2019, legal representatives and MPD command staff formed a work group to assess hate crimes in the local community. Commander Rash presented a graph that

alluded to the persistent issue of hate crimes being underreported. Mandatory hate crime training was required for the entire department and has been infused in the Basic Police Academy training lesson plans as well as all Field Training Officer trainings. This includes sending officers through bias trainings for the proper identification and intervention in potential hate crime incidents.

Commander Rash gave an overview of the review process for the updates to MPD policies that followed the IACP Model Policy created in 2016. MPD is proposing that officers take the lead on documenting hate crimes/hate incidents in the reports they take following the standards set by the FBI. Additionally, MPD will be tracking their hate crime reports monthly to ensure that the most recent information is made available.

Dr. Byron commended Commander Rash and the work groups efforts, she asked if the definition of a hate crime contributes to the underreporting of said crimes. The Commander indicated that MPD follows definitions set by the Federal Government and the State of Arizona has sentencing enhancements if there is a bias motivated crime. Ms. Duarte inquired as to the options included in the 'box' on the officer's reports for when bias is part of motivation. Commander Rash informed the board that an officer cannot submit a final report without checking said box and providing adequate justification for their selection which is then reviewed by no less than 3 levels of supervisory cadence as well as recordkeeping specialists. Ms. Duarte additionally asked how the officers are taking accurate statements from victims. Commander Rash responded that all officers are equipped with activated body cameras that take a recording of the conversation that takes place as to ensure accurate reporting.

Mr. Brennan asked if the lack of a state hate crime law provides challenges to MPD in enforcing hate crime violations, to which the Commander said that the department still applies the sentencing enhancements and conducts advanced reporting for those crimes and incidents. Mr. Wade asked if the Federal Department of Justice has stepped in to prosecute hate crimes in Mesa before, to which the Commander stated there has not been such an intervention but that they are in constant collaborative communication with the federal partners.

Mr. Holmes submitted a question inquiring what the East Valley Fusion Center was and what functions they have. Commander Rash stated that it is an intelligence center that is housed within the Central building that has nearly a dozen local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies that can assist and share information for anytime a potential offender crosses jurisdiction. This allows for quick and efficient responses to complex cases and leads to innovative investigative techniques.

Mr. Williams asked for a status update on the department's response to the rise in hate crimes against Asian communities. Commander Rash informed the board that as an aggregate, hate crimes against the Asian community are historical one of the lowest reported of all demographics. He also spoke that the only incidents thus far in Mesa have been vocal threats made over telephone to Asian restaurants.

Mr. Williams thanked the Commander for his and the departments efforts to take on these challenges and commended them for the historical response that is being undertaken. Commander Rash reiterated the departments commitment to the advancement of hate crime trainings and engagement with stakeholders within the Mesa community to create safer and more inclusive place to live.

(4b) Update on police community forums and other community engagement initiatives.

Ms. Tara Hall, Mesa Police Community Partnership Administrator, was present to give an update to the board on the MPD's continued efforts to engage with Mesa's many diverse communities. She mentioned the first ever Mesa PD Teen Academy where young residents have the chance to have in-depth conversations with police officers and learn some of the day-to-day duties they encounter. This is part of the ongoing effort to engage more with younger, diverse populations.

Additionally, Ms. Hall gave an overview of the 30X30 initiative that the department is currently undertaking. This is a desire for MPD to have female officers make up 30 percent of the total officer staffing levels by 2030. She detailed how this recruitment, retention, and representation in all ranks was supported by command staff and referred to newly appointed Assistant Chief Gina Nesbit. This initiative includes collaborating with national organizations and other police departments to continue developing adequate strategies for female recruitment.

5. Hear and discuss HRAB creation of job skills resource guide for the public.

Mr. Smith spoke to this topic and announced to the board that a representative from Arizona at Work would be present at the next board meeting to give a presentation on how HRAB can collaborate on with this project.

6. Hear and discuss creation of educational HRAB community forums.

Mr. Williams spoke about how this initiative stemmed from the HRAB strategic planning retreat and is still being worked on to provide a cultural learning series for Mesa residents. There is an effort to promote diverse education and inclusion for all residents.

7. Discuss and take action on moving the May 2021 Board meeting to May 19, 2021.

It was moved by Dr. Byron, seconded by Mr. Wade that the May 2021 Board meeting be moved to May 19, 2021.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES- Mr. Williams, Mr. Brennan, Dr. Byron, Mr. Campos, Ms. Duarte, Ms. Faatoafe, Mr. McAllister, Mr. Smith, Mr. Wade.

NAYS- None

8. Discuss and take action on the cancellation of the 2021 June and July Board meetings

It was moved by Ms. Faatoafe, seconded by Mr. Brennan that the 2021 June and July Board meetings be cancelled.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES- Mr. Williams, Mr. Brennan, Mr. Campos, Ms. Duarte, Ms. Faatoafe, Mr. McAllister, Mr. Smith, Mr. Wade.

NAYS- None

ABSTAIN- Dr. Byron

9. Scheduling of meetings, future agenda items, and general information.

(9a) Next HRAB meeting will be held on May 19, 2021 at 6pm via ZOOM to be later announced.

10. Hear reports on conferences and/or meetings attended.

Mr. Smith reported that he attended and spoke at the Equity Advisory Council meeting reporting on HRAB's advisory role to City Council as well as his personal perspective as an Asian-American in the community. Ms. Faatoafe invited members of the board to the American Indian Fathers Association open house of their new facility on May 14th. Mr. William attended a meeting of the Arizona Interscholastic Association Community Advisory as well as the Visit Mesa Board of Directors Equity & Diversity Committee meeting on April 7th. He also attended a COVID Roundtable to discuss the City's work in the response to the pandemic and a will be attending a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion masterclass due to chairing a subcommittee on the Streets of Joy that works on homeless issues who he hopes will make a future presentation to the board.

11. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04PM

***Members of the audience may address the Board on any item. The Arizona Open Meeting Law (ARS § 38-431 et seq.) limits the Human Relations Advisory Board to discussing only those matters listed on the agenda and other matters related thereto.**

The City of Mesa is committed to making its public meetings accessible. For accommodations, translation, or additional information, please contact the City of Mesa Diversity Office at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting at (480) 644-3705 or AzRelay 7-1-1 for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Si necesita asistencia o traducción en español, favor de llamar al menos 48 horas antes de la reunión al 480-644-2767.