
CITY OF MESA**HUMAN RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD (HRAB)****August 26, 2020 Minutes**

The Human Relations Advisory Board (HRAB) of the City of Mesa met on August 26, 2020 at 6:00pm via ZOOM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT**STAFF PRESENT**

Natalie Lewis
Ruth Giese
Andrea Alicoate
Cisco Luzania
Tara Hall

GUESTS

1. Chair's Call to Order.

Mr. Williams, called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

(1a) Announcement of excused absences

(2a) Announcement of departing Board member Alvaro Gonzalez.

2. Items from Citizens Present.

No citizens wished to speak to the board

3. Approval of minutes from the June 24, 2020 HRAB meeting.

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

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

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

NAYS- None

4. Hear and discuss update from the Mesa Police Department on police community forums and other community engagement initiatives.

Ms. Hall from the Mesa Police Department was present to speak. Ms. Hall was able to present on the departments strategic initiatives update. She spoke about how the community engagement division was continuing the Citizen Engagement Academy in order to give members of the community a more direct perspective of how the department and its officers operate. She spoke to how as the academy is growing there has been a 25% increase in attendance from underrepresented groups. Ms. Hall stated that the Salt River Tribal community had given the department a community grant to continue these outreach programs. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Hall and the rest of the MPD Community Engagement team has been reimagining these types of community events to be virtual in the interest of public health. The five virtual events for the month of July had reached over 150 citizens who participated. The addition of a coordinator position in her office is making these efforts more plausible.

Mr. Williams asked when another “Share Your Roots” event was going to be held. Ms. Hall informed the board that because of the positive reaction from the community and department to the stories by numerous officers, they were in the process of planning another event in the near future. Ms. Hall encouraged the board to recommend settings for groups from the community to have a chance to speak with officers and promote dialogue. Ms. Hall thanked Mr. Williams for the work his organization HeroZona has been doing in promoting these dialogues within the community. Mr. Holmes asked if there were any surprises in the feedback and reception to these community events. Ms. Hall responded by saying it was good to see the dialogue between officers and citizens when given these platforms, and that given the growth of these programs there has been more regional collaboration with other departments. Mr. Faatoafe also offered support for MPD’s outreach efforts and thanked the department for reaching out to the Native American community.

5. Hear and discuss HRAB ideas to help the City respond to historical disadvantages of communities of color.

This conversation stemmed from the ask by Mayor Giles to recommend ways for the board to promote engagement between the city and residents. Mr. Williams recommended that in order to promote increased dialogue with the community the board can explore a community forum. Given the recent pandemic and the use of virtual events, Mr. Williams suggested that the board explore a virtual forum as well. Mr. Holmes suggested that the board identify “community champions” who are leaders within their own respective communities to promote representation. This would enhance the participation from within those communities and make sure a wide variety of voices are heard.

Dr. Byron recommended that the board makes sure that when exploring virtual events that they be cognizant of those disadvantaged residents who do not have access to the technology or systems required to partake. Additionally, Dr. Byron suggested that the board explore topics that fall within the board’s purview and can entice heightened community participation. Mr. Smith recommended that the board collaborate with the Mesa Chamber of Commerce for community events and to initiate dialogue with leaders in the community. Mr. Campos asked if the board had a list of strategies that they had tried in the past for outreach and community events. Staff committed to provide the board with some examples of outreach that the board has conducted in previous years. Mr. Wade referenced that the weaknesses detailed in the 19/21 HRAB Strategic Plan included attendance to board sponsored events and meetings. He also asked if other sister cities in the region are experiencing the same obstacles in having consistent attendance at their events. Dr. Byron committed to reaching out to the Tempe Human Relations Commission. Both Mr. Brennan and Mr. Wade suggested that the board develop specific community-based questions and the

board agreed to compile a list of those question at the next meeting to ask those within their own circles.

6. Hear and discuss Citywide efforts to COVID-19 including Mesa CARES programs.

Ms. Alicoate gave an update on the progress of how Mesa CARES programs are positively affecting the community. She highlighted that the Feeding Mesa program has been able to provide over 2 million meals to members of the community. These programs include restaurant meals, canned food collection and weekly food distribution. Also, the Mesa CARES Small Business Technical Assistance Program has begun to offer classes, trainings and consulting services to small businesses in addition to relief funding. Ms. Alicoate also informed the board that the Residential Utility Assistance program is being provided in partnership with Mesa CAN for Mesa, SRP and Southwest Gas. She also stated that the city had recently purchased PPE, including 1.5 million masks for distribution to residents. Lastly, the city is exploring providing COVID testing for residents and employees.

7. Review 2019-2021 Strategic Plan to assess priorities for 2020/21 Board year.

This discussion was pending on the results of the community-based question inquiry that was detailed in previous agenda items. Mr. Williams asked that the board take time to review items in the strategic plan for preparation for future discussions.

8. Discuss the selection of the position of Vice-Chair for 2019-2021 Board year.

Due to Dr. Byron's term concluding at the end of the board year, she has volunteered to step down as Vice Chair to allow for another member of the board to assume the role who will provide more time in succession planning. Dr. Byron recommended that the board members who are interested have discussions with the Chair in preparations for formal nominations during the next meeting.

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

(9a) Next HRAB meeting will be held on September 23, 2020 at 6pm via ZOOM to be later announced.

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

Mr. Campos reported that he had begun the process of attending community engagement academies. Ms. Duarte stated that she is attending a conference on how to reform policing that will be hosted by the AXON company. Mr. Smith said that he has begun to offer consulting to minority owned small businesses. Mr. Williams reported that he had participated in discussions for the National Race Equality Day on July 14th 2020. Additionally, he participated in a backpack giveaway for children in South Phoenix and had attended a Mesa Police Department community forum with young community leaders. Mr. Williams also announced that he had joined the board of Visit Mesa.

11. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 PM.

***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.**

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