



Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations

320 West Temple Street, 1184 Hall of Records
Los Angeles, California, 90012

(213) 974-7611
<http://www.lahumanrelations.org>

MEETING OF APRIL 6, 2009
320 W. Temple Street, Room 1140
Los Angeles, CA 90012

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Felipe Agredano, Adrian Dove, Donna Bojarsky, Lea Ann King, Kathay Feng, Zedar E. Broadous, Lea Ann King, William Lambert, Vito Cannella, Eleanor Montaña, Susanne Cumming, Sergio Paz.

COMMISSIONERS NOT ATTENDING:

Tong Suk Chun & Sandra E. Thomas

COMMISSIONER ATTENDING BY TELEPHONE: Mario Ceballos*

COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Robin Toma, Chief Deputy Director Richard Verches, Assistant Director Elena Halpert-Schilt, Grace Löwenberg, Wilson Chua, Tony Massengale, Annie Flores, Borden Olive, Caroline Hata, Emily Pacheco, Cherylynn Hoff, Sharon Quinn, Sikivu Hutchinson, Ray Regalado, Isaac Martinez, Marshall Wong, Juan Carlos Martinez, Sharon Williams,

COUNTY EXECUTIVE GUESTS: Cynthia Banks, Director, Department of Community and Senior Services, Miguel Santana, Deputy CEO .

MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order/Flag Salute and Moment of Silence: The Commission meeting was called to order at 12:35 p.m. by President Agredano. Commissioner Paz led the flag salute and moment of silence.

Approval of Minutes of Meetings of previous meetings: It was MSC unanimously (Dove/Cumming) to approve the minutes of March 2, 2009 as amended.

Public Comment: Commissioner Cannella announced that he has been reappointed to a new term as Human Relations Commissioner but that he has resigned from the Sybil Brand Commission and will be recognized for 24 years of service to that Commission at the April 7 Board of Supervisors' meeting.

President's Report:

President Agredano announced the Retirement Recognition of Borden Olive with Commission recognition of his 50 years of service to the County of Los Angeles which included 44 years with the Human Relations Commission. On behalf of the Commission he presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Olive who made brief remarks..

The President promulgated the Resignation Letter of Commissioner John Wuo, who is already Mayor of the City of Arcadia and who will be moving on to become director on the corporate Board of a major American Insurance Firm.

President Agredano announced his appointment of Commissioner Donna Bojarsky as Co-Chair of the Inter-Faith Committee and of Commissioner Adrian Dove as Chairman of the Budget and Development Committee.

President Agredano welcomed the distinguished visitors Miguel Santana, Deputy CEO of LA County and Cynthia Banks, Director of the LA County Department of Senior Services. The entire meeting will be devoted to hearing from them. The President also welcomed all of the staff he had invited, in the spirit of transparency, to attend this meeting about the pending reorganization and budget proposals impacting the Human Relations Commission.

Executive Director's Report :

Executive Director Robin Toma's announced that in the interest of time and because of the availability of our special guests, he agreed to postponed his regular report to the Commissioners on overall progress until the next monthly meeting which will be in early May 2009. This meeting will focus entirely on receiving oral briefing on the basic elements of the CEO's budget and reorganization proposal and its anticipated impact on the Commission.. He did however briefly express our gratitude to the Board of Supervisors whose Resolution last week supported the Commission's initiative to focus on developing some effective remedies for the burgeoning problem of Crimes against the Homeless across our County.

Discussion/Action Items:

All Action Items were tabled and will be discussed in the next monthly meeting of the Commission which will now be held on May 4 or May 11, 2009: The postponed Special Items, it was announced, will include; (1) An informal report by Commissioners King on her Project-One Teen Songwriting Contest and events associated with it. Commissioner Bojarsky was also asked to assist; (2) A follow-up report by Commissioner Lambert on efforts in line with the Motion telephoned in by Commissioner Ceballos which would lead possibly to meetings with Cardinal Roger Mahony and Rabbi Marvin Heir re. actions needed to ameliorate local impact on Interfaith Relations that resulted from the Pope's recent Appointment of Bishop William Richardson.

Committee Reports :

Reports by all of the below listed committees were postponed until the May meeting:

7.1 Executive Committee (Chairman Agredano).

7.2 John Anson Ford Human Relations Awards Event Committee (Chairman: Lambert)

7.3 Zerohour Program Committee (Chairman: Lambert)

7.4 Hate Crimes and Police-Community Relations (Chairman: Dove)

A list of all Committees, their membership and Chairs had been distributed by the President.

Presentation/Discussion: Chief Executive Officer (CEO)'s Proposal to Merge HRC Commission and staff into Department of Community and Senior Services (DCSS) .

President Agredano introduced and welcomed the special guests presenters; Miguel Santana, Deputy CEO and Cynthia Banks Director of DCSS. He also called on all Commissioners and all staff and others in attendance to introduce themselves. Mr. Santana and Ms. Banks as then called upon, both provided an outline and overview of the current stage of the CEO Reorganization and Budget Adjustment Proposals.

Deputy CEO Miguel Santana reiterated the fact that L.A. County, like the rest of the nation is confronted with a need for tougher than usual belt-tightening because of the current economic climate. The Subvention of County Sales Tax more-so than Property Tax Revenues have come in below projections and this has resulted in a projected shortfall of a possibly \$230 million. He stressed that the CEO in trying to maintain core services to residents without any layoffs and balancing its budget has been a daunting challenge. It is an extremely challenging status and the CEO has had to develop many initiatives to achieve this balance. The discussion here today is one part in a series of initiatives, strategically designed to create increased efficiencies within and between departments. Some of the techniques deployed include the non-filling of vacant positions and reorganization of departments to optimize existing resources to improve service delivery in the very same process as the balancing of the budget. To enable the treatment of each problems as an opportunity in Los Angeles County there is needed participatory support and collaboration by al cross section of all stakeholders..

He presented the current proposal to merge HRC into DCSS as one of many proposals which could in fact accomplish goals much broader than a mere financial proposal; using this urgency as a chance to strengthen the productivity and capacity of both HRC and DCSS by securing greater efficiencies through for example, HRC access to DCSS administrative skills and outreach capacities of the DCSS service centers in all areas of the county, and its strong leadership. He indicated it had been estimated that this proposed reorganization could achieve \$500,000 savings in salaries and employee benefits. He pointed out that nonetheless, not one HRC staff would loose a job and that all current HRC staff will have a position in DCSS, and will also retain their seniority and salary levels.

In terms of timeframe it is estimated that the overall proposal will first go before the Board as part of the overall budget concept on Tuesday April 21, 2009 and probably as an item for testimony around the second Tuesday in May 2009.

He assured also that the Commissioners will continue to provide leadership and direction as it has throughout most of its entire history. All Commissioners will continue in their current appointments and will continue to make policy recommendations to BOS as they do now.

DCSS Executive Director Cynthia Banks then spoke indicating that she looks forward positively to working with both the Human Relations Commissioners and the HRC staff, and to continue building a climate of team trust that will enable achievement of all the goals. She pointed out that DCSS' existing missions are already similar to those of the HR Commission's. As a relatively small Department, (450 staff) by L.A. County standards, DCSS can be very flexible and will continue seeking to provide HRC (15 Commissioners and 25 Staff) with as much flexibility and autonomy as possible or needed to achieve its most important mission. Director Banks, made it abundantly clear that she intends to be held accountable to maintaining the mission of HRC in a fully transparent climate in all of the work required to be done by all parts of the organization and that she will always make herself available to answer all questions.

Informal Question and Answer:

There were a number of questions from Commissioners and from staff which were all answered by either Mr. Santana, Ms. Banks or in some cases by both. There were no items to be voted on and no formal report was made of this very informative, informal exchange. There were also no written reports provided about any aspects of the reorganization/merger. It was a very open and direct atmosphere and was what amounted to, for many, the first face-to-face meeting between dedicated parties who are on a path of becoming part of the same organization with a set of missions that are vital to the County of Los Angeles.

Adjournment of Meeting:

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY SECRETARY:

ADRIAN DOVE

* Commissioner Mario Ceballos was not present but was connected by conference telephone per pre-approved and fully noticed arrangement.

