

## **Social Service Human Relations Board**

### **Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Social Service Human Relations Board (SSHRB), November 29, 2016**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

President Williams called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Present were Vice-President Blake, and members Hyman, Sorensen, Chilcott, Hastings, and Jenks.

#### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NONE**

#### **3. AGENDA ITEMS**

##### **3.-A PUBLIC INPUT REGARDING COORDINATION OF POSITIVE COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO BIAS-MOTIVATED ACTIONS AND OTHER EVENTS AFFECTING ALAMEDA AND THE NATION.**

Staff provided an overview of SSHRB, stating that it was established as a charter Board with the purpose of creating an environment which will encourage and bring about mutual understanding, respect, and goodwill among groups of people in the community and to improve social services in the community.

Staff went on to say that we are here today to hear from the community and work with you to support your efforts to build an inclusive community. In 2000, the City passed a resolution declaring Alameda a hate-free community. While SSHRB does not do programs, each year, it partners with the Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) and Alameda Collaborative for Children, Youth, and their Families (ACCYF) to support the Season For Non-violence campaign, LGBTQ roundtable and Harvey Milk Day events. Last year, it co-sponsored, and encouraged the City Council to support, the AUSD Everyone Belongs here campaign. Staff added that tonight we are asking the public for input that will assist the Board in identifying positive ways that we can work with the community to support civility and inclusion, and noted past events, such as the Muslims in America forum and screening of MILK, that SSHRB has sponsored as part of building a community that doesn't tolerate discrimination and fear.

Mayor Spencer welcomed everyone and thanked the SSHRB and staff for their work in the community over the years. She noted that SSHRB is a charter Board and that reflects the importance of its role in the City. Mayor Spencer acknowledged the presence of AUSD Superintendent McPhetridge, Alameda Police Chief Roller, and Councilmember Daysog, adding that SSHRB will share the input received this evening with the Council.

President Williams stated that, earlier in summer she had received communications from residents who expressed concerns regarding bias-motivated events around the country, and how they might affect the residents of Alameda. In response to these concerns, SSHRB sent letter to local organizations, as well as local papers, offering to facilitate a community dialogue to discuss these issues and what positive actions the Board might take in partnership with community. The Board had planned to call a meeting after the first of the year, but, after

Bias-motivated graffiti at Edison Elementary and other events following the election, it decided to hold the meeting this evening.

President Williams introduced Superintendent McPhetridge who talked about lesson 9, the history of the LGBTQ roundtable, and the need for AUSD to continue the dialogue about tolerance of differences in the classroom, turning the Me to the We. The Black Achievers Alliance and ALCANCE (Latino roundtable), have been formed to broaden the discussion and the work on inclusiveness. Recent racist graffiti prompted the community to come together through efforts of groups like ACCYF, SSHRB, APD, and community leaders. Superintendent McPhetridge thanked the Board for helping start the conversation.

President Williams then introduced Chief Rolleri who said that he agreed with statements made by Superintendent McPhetridge and that the Department takes these incidents seriously. He added that the efforts by John Knox White are more indicative of the community than the racist comments. In the last three years, there have been eight reported incidents of hate crimes. The bias-motivated graffiti had no witnesses, and no cameras at the site. The case will be re-opened if more information becomes available.

President Williams thanked AUSD Board member Barbara Kahn who first brought this issue to the Board's attention, and then invited input from those in attendance.

Public Comment:

Councilmember Tony Daysog thanked SSHRB members and staff for their work, adding that the Board has played an important role in changing the City in a positive direction. He said that it is important to say no to hate, that Alameda has always had an open door, and that he appreciated the work of SSHRB to open that door even more.

Reverend Laura Rose spoke as the pastor of First Congregational Church Alameda, a mother, and someone who is active in LGBTQ community. She shared that she is Co-leader of the All Faiths Coalition, a group that is here to support and work with community groups. Reverend Rose felt that the convening of a vigil after the election was proactive and a great idea by the community. The Edison incident followed that vigil. She added that kids are hearing that other kids of different skin color are going to be pushed out of the country, and that with these types of discussions happening, adults have to be ready to engage. She stated that not all in the Muslim community feel safe in participating in activities and work is needed to build confidence and trust. She concluded with a suggestion that the City should get Everyone Belongs Here posters up throughout the City and in businesses and other locations.

Sister Pat Nagle, a member of the All Faiths Coalition, shared that she is saddened by events that have occurred, but also heartened by the community response to these events. She added that diversity is a wonderful thing, and that she was saddened by the meanness generated by the discussions around Propositions L1 and M1, stating that everyone needs, and has a right to, a home. She concluded with hope that everyone can come together around the rental crisis, and asked SSHRB to help bring the community together around housing and affordable housing,

Anna Martin shared that she has two kids, one of them a member of the LGBTQ community. She thanked APD and AUSD for their handling of the student walk-out after the election, adding that their response this time was quicker compared to the time when a swastika was discovered.

John Knox White (JKW) thanked SSHRB for having tonight's meeting and Tony for his long-time support of issues of equality. He shared that he was a little uncomfortable with his name being mentioned so many times regarding the success of the vigil and welcoming of elementary school students. He wants people to know that he is just one of a group of co-facilitators who, through the Alameda Comes Together (ACT) Facebook page, have helped bring community members together around these important issues. By suggesting let's do something on ACT, a caring community came up with the elements of the vigil, and by suggesting to expand the welcoming beyond Edison, a caring community came out to welcome students at all elementary schools. He sees ACT as a place where people can visit to share ideas and get involved.

JKW suggested creating a database where people can report when they encounter hate crimes, and then follow up to see what, if any, actions have been taken. He remembers SSHRB having a similar plan, but wasn't sure if it had ever been activated. While applauding the work and dedication of Chief Roller, JKW expressed hope that APD/community relations could somehow be systematized, so that the efforts of Chief Roller are assured to continue when he is gone. He also asked if Alameda is considering what might be involved in becoming a sanctuary city. Finally, JKW asked us to consider how to bring communities within the City together to engage and bring about change, citing the fact that more than 30% of our community is Asian-American, but City boards and commissions don't reflect that. He suggested that there could be training or other efforts to reach out to these communities.

Eleanor Wiley stated that she has been working on these issues since the 60's, and that Alameda is a very different community today. She said she likes the idea of the data base suggested by John Knox White, adding that people at tonight's event are people of privilege and that we need to take personal responsibility to see that things change.

Gabrielle "Gaby" Dalton stated that she is proud to be Alamedan, and that Alameda is a microcosm of what is happening at the national level. She referred to the 99% movement, asking "What does this look like in Alameda?" She voiced concerns regarding the living wage in Alameda, the negativity around L1/M1, and how we might become a community of racial, economic and social justice.

Anna Rossi said that she is the chair of the Alameda Deanery and a member of its Refugee Support Committee. She added that they have recently received a family from Afghanistan and are currently helping them economically, emotionally, and in other ways, fit in to the community of Alameda. After the election, they asked, "Are we going to be deported? Are we going to be put in a camp?" Ms. Rossi asked that we all think about refugees when implementing the Everyone Belongs Here campaign, and work with her organization and others to assure that refugees in Alameda are made to feel welcome and safe.

Zayba Shaikh shared that she appreciated having the opportunity to speak out; having a place where she can be heard. She stated that, following the election, she felt a strong need to be present for herself, her community, and the community-at-large. A graduate of Chipman middle school and ASTI, she asked her former principal who she might speak with to better engage with

the community. Since then, she has connected with John Knox White and Reverend Rose. She said “This is my home and people are now saying this isn't my home”. Zayba said that she is concerned that being a part of a community where women wear headscarves has made her a target for discrimination, adding that there is fear in her community, and people don't know how to get involved. She knows that those here tonight are willing to help, but thinks they also need to bring resources together in more tangible ways, to reach out, welcome, and help eliminate the fear felt by her, and other minority communities. She said that, once members of her community feel safe and welcome, it will be easier for them to engage and work with others. She thanked those in attendance, adding that they made her feel good about being involved in community and made Alameda feel like a real community.

Chuck Kapelke, Vice-President of Advocacy for the PTA Council thanked SSHRB and community members for their involvement. He stated that he supports creating models of police and community relations, and thought it was great that the Everyone Belongs Here concept was already in place. He suggested that the PTA could help to engage parents in the community.

Barbara Kahn said that in the past the community was very different and very separate. Stating that we've come a long way, but could go back if we do not actively encourage interaction between community members, she said we need action to bridge the gap and bring communities together. She concluded by asking the Council to think about the implications of the national election, and to be alert and prepared to participate, and be proactive.

Olivia Higgins, co-chair of the AUSD LGBTQ roundtable, said she agreed with all that had been said, and asked that the City financially support the effort to have the Everyone Belongs Here poster in places of worship and businesses. She shared that her kids have two moms and that when her daughter in middle school had several kids say mean things to her, she was defended by friends and others. She also cited an incident where a transgender student faced opposition and other students stood up for him. She asked how young people might have a voice in our efforts, adding that students had leadership in developing the (EBH) poster and should be engaged.

Page Tomblin, member of the PTA Council Board, shared that the “welcoming” event at Franklin was great, and suggested that there be tools for folks and organizations to help them lead discussions regarding bias-motivated and other events. He stated that different messages are coming from Washington DC, including the possibility of deportations, and that the City needs to be ready to react, adding that Oakland is sanctuary city and its school district is already thinking about what might happen in the future.

Tamara Centeno, co-chair of ALCANCE, AUSD's Latino roundtable, shared that, after the election, how proud she was to see the community come together and APD protect our students during their walk-out and protests. She thought the recycled political posters with hearts was a great idea, adding that it was good that social media helped bring everyone together. She asked if Alameda had a cable television channel that could be used effectively in our efforts. [It was mentioned that Alameda High School is doing a new media program that might be able to work on this]

Lorrie Murray, director of an after-school music program at Maya Lyn elementary, said she noticed that tension in school for kids is felt and has been felt for a while. Kids are worried, as they hear things regarding the political situation that may affect their family's safety. She added that she has seen this manifest itself in behavior problems, and commended AUSD teachers for working with

stressed kids. Ms. Murray suggested working with the PTA to educate parents about having conversations in a way that do not spill over to the kids.

Board discussion:

Staff noted that, up until a few years ago, the Alameda Multicultural Center was active and would host multicultural events, and, in 2004-06, SSHRB hosted Festival of Families events that brought the entire community together.

After a brief discussion, a motion was made to refer the input and recommendations heard at tonight's public hearing to the Board's Human Relations Workgroup, authorize the workgroup to have SSHRB support/co-sponsor activities that are consistent with the Board's mission, and have the President of SSHRB draft a letter to the City Council setting forth the recommendations received from the public.  
M/S Hyman/Sorensen Unanimous

4. **BOARD/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS, NON-AGENDA** - NONE

5. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS** - NONE

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM  
M/S Sorensen / Blake Unanimous

Respectfully submitted by:  
Jim Franz, Secretary