

MINUTES & NOTICE OF BOARD ACTION

APPROVED _____

LANE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



This document, upon approval in a public meeting by the Board of County Commissioners, serves as official minutes of such meetings as required under the Open Meetings Law, ORS 192.650.

Pursuant to notice made by mailing agendas to news media, a selected list of jurisdictions and individuals in Lane County, a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners was held.

Questions should be directed to The Board Office Specialist 3, ext. 4203.

September 28, 1993
5:15 p.m.

JOINT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Fairgrounds'
Auditorium

Chair Steve Cornacchia convened the meeting with Commissioners Ellie Dumdi, Jack Roberts and Jerry Rust present. Communities of Color Panel Members Present: Donna Albro, Terrell Ayo, Nami Bolton, Richard Bremer, Thomas Coley, Chuck Dalton, Lydia Donohoe, Carey Drayton, Greg Evans, Bobby Green, Mark Harris, Beatrice Head, Emilio Hernandez, Pearl Hill, Bettie Sing Luke, Henry Luvert, Connie Mesquita, Earl Myles, Janese Olalde, Jan Oliver, Al Parra, Guadalupe Quinn, Joseph Riviera, Angie Sifuentez, Twila Souers, Jamina Terrazas, Anselmo Villanueva and Marcus Woods.

I. INTRODUCTIONS/WELCOME; AND

II. PURPOSE OF MEETING

Cornacchia welcomed panel and audience members and explained that Board members were here to listen to participants speak about problems associated with access and the availability of services to the communities of color. He noted that the agenda had been created by a subcommittee of panel members. Cornacchia stated that this meeting was not expected to be an action night, rather a beginning wherein issues and suggestions on how to resolve those issues would be outlined. He indicated this would help the Board deal with funding matters that come before them, such as the YDC and IGHS budgets. Panel members concurred that 7:30 p.m. would be an appropriate time length for this meeting. Cornacchia introduced fellow Board members and the Acting County Administrator and each panel member introduced themselves.

III. DISCUSSION/INSTITUTIONAL RACISM - IS EQUAL ACCESS EQUITABLE ACCESS?

Head commented that agencies need to be sensitive to the issue of language barriers and provide people who can act as interpreters, or actually hire bilingual workers. Luvert stated that there is a lack of knowledge regarding cultural interpretations, too. He noted that this is reflected by figures in the

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juvenile and adult justice systems which reflect an over-representation of people of color. He indicated that there is a lack of action and lack of programs in the juvenile justice system to deal with these issues. Dalton observed that he has noticed a fear of acknowledging that racism is at play in the immediate community, as well as the nation. He cited examples of institutional racism in the school system, where mitigating circumstances regarding color issues are not taken into account. He emphasized that it is the initial denial of racism that sets the stage. Harris expressed concern regarding who assesses criminality versus racial issues. Sifuentez concurred regarding the denial of racism and stated that education is absolutely necessary.

Donohoe noted that the Lane County community has not realized or accepted the influx of a variety of cultures. She stated that some agencies, and even doctors, do not provide equal treatment. She cited an example of different food boxes being given to Hispanic and white families. Hernandez observed that the major contributor to this problem is the lack of voice that minorities have within agencies. He mentioned that minorities' voices are not accepted as legitimate and that their concerns need to be accepted as valid and accurate. Evans remarked that one of the key problems with Lane County is that minorities are not represented at decision-making levels. He also stated County departments, such as the District Attorney's office and the Fairgrounds, do not have any minorities in their employment ranks. He encouraged that meetings be held at times convenient to working people. He stressed that the key to access, voice and equity begins at the table where decisions are being made and those doors need to be open to minority representatives. Dalton emphasized that more special minority "oversight" committees are not needed. He stated that representatives want to participate on the boards or committees where decisions are made on where the money gets distributed. Head observed that employees need to be encouraged to educate the people they work with and that people also need to talk about what is going right, instead of just what is wrong.

Oliver asserted that people of color just want what other families and citizens have - they want things to work better and want systems that work in an equitable manner. She acknowledged that developing systems that will work are very complicated, and noted that many participants have come to numerous similar meetings in an attempt to deal with these issues. Souers noted that minority people seem to bear the burden of educating everyone else in the system. She expressed a desire to begin to focus on some systematic and systemic ways to approach the problems. Luvert commented that "token changes" are made and then regression occurs. He referred to the fact that at Youth Services consultants for children of color are only funded through March. Noting that the problem is not temporary, he observed that there is no plan to make it part of a long term, permanent solution. Coley expressed a desire that the group work to come up with a meaningful message that he can take back to his constituency that will give people a sense that they belong to the community. Green stated that the answer is "No" to the question of whether equal access is equitable access, noting that just because the door is open does not mean people will get served adequately. He suggested that more accountability to meeting goals in this arena can be achieved by tying in economics, via administrators' performance evaluations related to these issues. He stated that the community of color also needs to

"get its act together" as well and stop fighting over crumbs and start seeking a slice of the pie. Evans noted that when there is a problem with a person of color, various staffs seem to seek an expert, or a representative of the community as a whole, instead of communicating directly to the original person. He suggested that people need to stop trying to find an intermediary, admit that they don't know how to relate and start working toward constructive education and dialogue.

Quinn suggested that the issue of education is a two-sided road. She asked the Board of Commissioners to take responsibility to educate themselves regarding racism, diversity and cultural sensitivity through workshops, etc. in order to recognize the problems when they seem them.

Cornacchia opened up this issue to comment from the audience; however, there was none. A county staff member, David Suchart, read through the lists of "Issues" and "Suggestions" which had been written down on easel pads during the discussion (see attachment).

Souers indicated that, as an individual within the Native American community, she would like the opportunity to talk to other folks within the community and perhaps bring back other ideas that are issues as well. Green again mentioned that performance evaluations are vital tools. Bolton indicated that "class-ism" is also a prevalent issue. He noted that people here at the table were of a certain economic strata and cannot necessarily speak for the people who actually are receiving services. Noting that these people need a voice, he suggested that going to churches and meeting places of the various communities would give officials an opportunity to hear their voices. He also commented on the possibility of inviting them to meetings such as this. Dalton indicated that for that type of outreach, child care should be provided. Donohoe remarked that efforts need to be made to go to homes of the people to hear their problems. She also stated that new residents need to have a forum to be introduced to American culture to enable them to adapt and be good citizens. She noted that this week alone, 162 new Hispanics had arrived in the community.

IV. DISCUSSION/LANGUAGE ISSUES

Head reiterated that language differences are a large barrier. Villanueva noted that School District 4-J has about 19,000 students and that there are other languages, in addition to Hispanic, that are represented. Sifuentez stated that she wished to speak regarding language barriers, access issues and stereotypes. She expressed concern regarding the Latino stereotype that new immigrants do not want to learn the language or fit into society. She emphasized that these folks come to this country because they want "the same things that we all have," but this becomes difficult because of the language barrier. She suggested that there needs to be some type of transitional programs, through social service agencies, for new immigrants. Parra noted that there is also the issue of cultures within a culture, using the example of the Mexican, Salvadorian, Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Panamanian, etc. cultures within the Latino community. Oliver stated that some don't care as much about cultural sensitivity as they do about competence. She stressed again that people just want things to work for their

kids and their families. Sifuentez concurred with Oliver, stating that hunger is hunger. Responding to Rust, she observed that a person with prejudice within themselves may not treat others equally, thus being incompetent. Harris remarked that people of color are expected to be competent to deal with white society, but that expectation is not equal in reverse. He stated that the race of a client seems to get in the way of agencies delivering service. Dalton emphasized that the priority of service delivery needs to be raised by attaching dollar values. He indicated that racism needs to be part of the job evaluation process.

Ayo expressed the concern that a focus needed to be put on kids' issues. He indicated the need for programs to be set up for kids to help them, and "nip problems in the bud" for all races, noting that their problems later on become adult system problems. He stated that society needs to find the dollars needed to keep kids involved in something constructive and provide access for kids to jobs and education. Dalton observed that kids know the community really doesn't care about them if they don't provide for them. He commented on the need for a community center, as other projects always seem to have a higher priority. Ayo concurred, remarking that a community center would allow easier access to the kids. He noted that there is nothing now to take kids away from criminal activity. Head explained to the group that a community center was in the works through the Youth Development Commission. Mesquita concurred with Ayo, stating that there is nothing for the kids to do if they don't have the dollars for sports and other "elitist" activities. She emphasized that money needs to be put into our youth, the future. Oliver observed that when there are no dollars for schools, the kids don't feel valued. She stated that if Measure 1 is not passed, things will get worse. Hernandez remarked that all agencies need compliance and need to look at the long term picture. He stressed that youth program dollars, such as summer job programs, need to be monitored and invested in low income kids. Evans agreed that it takes a total community effort. He suggested that labor unions and the business community need to become involved, too, as most governments are strapped for resources. He suggested that the Board of Commissioners can act as a catalyst and encourage public/private partnerships. He remarked that programs need to be developed for kids who cannot pay, using the example of a "Police Athletic League." Ayo confirmed this need, citing the crowds of youth present at the basketball courts under the bridge. Green, stating that he was all for positive alternatives for youth, noted that it always comes down to funding. He observed that in order to increase self-esteem, providing skills for acquiring jobs was absolutely necessary. He cited internships, education, vocational training and life skills as necessary priorities for funding.

Hill asked the group to establish a time frame to come back together and continue discussion. Green asked the Board members to provide feedback to the group on what they heard.

V. COMMISSIONERS' RESPONSE

Rust thanked panel members for attending and noted that, practically, he would like to choose three to five issues and do them well. Thanking Lane County agency staff members who also attended, he suggested that one follow-up action

could be that every Lane County department supervisor, and all agencies who get funding from Lane County government, get a copy of the video tape of this meeting and that they be required to study it. He suggested that there could even be a test given to relate to salaries. Rust mentioned that perhaps a "Color Ombudsperson" could be established at each agency. He indicated that a commitment needs to be made to get more people of color on boards, commissions, etc. He stated that he didn't think Lane County had done well enough in hiring practices related to hiring people of color. He concurred that kids should be the highest priority and that jobs, programs, etc. need to be put in place in this community.

Dumdi observed that people need to be integrated into the mainstream and be a part of the processes already in place. She concurred with the need for job competence. She indicated that officials need assistance in learning what the needs are of newcomers in the community. She stated that perhaps providing periodic orientations to explain laws and expectations is necessary. She cited an example of knowledge of the necessity of drivers' licenses. She also agreed with the need for activities for kids to help them build self-esteem. She noted that there are buildings already in existence that have potential as a community center. She suggested the possibility of a counselor on the mall. She concurred with the need to get businesses involved, too. Responding to Dumdi, Terrazas noted that the communities of color have brought their issues to the table many times. She asked where the Jeffrey Lewis report on YDC was. Head stated that it was important to note that one problem regarding driving was the ability to afford insurance coverage.

Roberts indicated that he had primarily heard a lot of frustration. He observed the need to approach the questions of racial and ethnic justice as a permanent part of the way business is done. He cited the need to learn more about each other and how to overcome barriers. He stated that the Board of Commissioners needs to be a bridge to expand this discussion and asked that all participants make a commitment to building on this beginning. He commented that the single biggest issue is dealing with youth and exploring the broader issue of prevention. He expressed concern about the over-representation of black youth in the juvenile services system and suggested that this could be one focus. He noted that perhaps some of the momentum on Lane County's affirmative action had been lost and that a commitment needs to be made to get back on track. He suggested the possibility of a series of smaller group meetings, concentrating on a variety of issues. He asked all participants to make a commitment to an ongoing effort.

Cornacchia noted that the issue is so large that the Board does not have the ability or resources to deal with all of the issues. He indicated that the first need was to accept that racism exists in this community. He stated that the Board passes on budgets of "pass through money," state and federal dollars. He observed that a renewed effort is being made to find ways to deal with racism issues, with recent appointments of more people of color to advisory committees. He remarked that there is a mutual responsibility in getting the communities to get more volunteers to come forward. He stated that his message tonight is that he and the Board remain committed in that arena to act upon what they've heard.

He indicated that his personal commitment as an elected official was to limit the spectrum to dealing with issues which the County can deal with in the service delivery system, acknowledging the potential for racism. He made a commitment as Chair to talk to Board members individually and ask them where they would like to go from here, related to meetings, input, merit evaluations, etc. He acknowledged that the YDC issue is a very significant issue and that changes are being made to the YDC Board and that HB 2004 will facilitate changes. He observed the number of Lane County management people in the audience. He concluded that no promises were being made other than commitments made tonight.


Head asked for a process, something concrete, regarding accountability, supervision and evaluation, perhaps in the form of an advisory board. Rust indicated a willingness to promise to put the issue on the Board's agenda and then notify people of when that discussion will take place. Roberts suggested that perhaps the Human Rights and Affirmative Action Advisory Committee could take this on as a challenge to work with the Board and oversee the process. Cornacchia stated that an extensive discussion at the Board level would be held within the next three weeks.

Riviera stressed that if attention isn't paid to the fast-growing Latino population, it will overtake the corrections system in a few years. Roberts responded that he realized the Latino population was very much over-represented in the adult corrections system, but that has not happened yet in the juvenile system. He emphasized that his idea on the pilot program regarding black youth in the juvenile system does not mean that other demographics can be ignored.

Cornacchia indicated that the upcoming Board work session may be held in conjunction with the Management Team. Harris asked what would be the process for further input and implementation. Cornacchia said candidly that he was personally centering on issues which the Commissioners have control over. Rust indicated a commitment to establishing a work session where a determination will be made regarding a process on how further input will be handled and where another series of small meetings may be held. Cooley asked that this information then be communicated to the panel members.

Due to time constraints, additional items on the agenda were not discussed at this meeting.

This meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.



Sharon Giles
Recording Secretary