



Where Life is Sweet

# Hispanic Advisory Committee Minutes

## February 20, 2023

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Chair Jose Garcia called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Committee members present were Mark Gomolski, Jessica De La Cruz, and Jesse Roa. Alberto Munoz was excused. Also present was Council Representatives Roy Barron, City Manager Byron Smith, EOTEC General Manager Al Davis, and City Recorder Lilly Alarcon-Strong. Councilor Maria Duron was not present. Youth Advisors Sarahi Gutierrez, Leslie Mendoza Romero, and Jayson Gutierrez were also in attendance. The pledge of allegiance was given.

Jose thanked all those attending the meeting stating the Committee did not meet in December due to the Christmas Holiday and the January meeting was cancelled due to the weather and cancellations from scheduled presenters.

### **Meeting Minutes**

Mark moved and Jesse seconded to approve the minutes of the November meeting. Motion carried unanimously. (No meeting was held in December and January.)

### **2024 Committee Goal Setting Session**

Jose stated the Committee will be discussing setting possible goals that members can work on throughout the year to where they can be a resource to better address issues facing the community. The Committee, youth members, staff, and members from the public spoke regarding:

- Grace Donovan with Rural Engagement and Vital Center would like HAC's help specifically related to pushing out nitrate issues in well water. There was discussion regarding what those issues are and best outreach efforts and methods to give information to the public, as well as meaningful ways to communicate with specific landowners as many do not want to listen or engage in these discussions topics or have their wells tested. There was some discussion regarding having HAC members man booths at different community events to push out information and asked that the City consider gifting HAC members City of Hermiston shirts to they can be quickly identified as being part of the City. Byron stated shirts can be purchased for HAC members after approval of the 2024-25 budget.
- Elizabeth Corbett with Blue Mountain Community College would like HAC'S help with outreach efforts specifically geared towards Hispanic students, promoting scholarships, and overall higher education learning information. Student Advisors led this discussion stating students prefer attending CBC instead of BMCC as the travel distance is the same but there are more things to do in Tri-Cities instead of Pendleton after class and CBC seems to offer more courses and stating perhaps BMCC would have more student enrollment if more courses were offered in Hermiston instead of Pendleton. There was discussion regarding best ways to connect to Hispanic parents and students regarding higher education information, including many trade programs that are offered at BMCC and around the area, and more. There was agreement that perhaps BMCC representatives should consider scheduling a meeting with present student advisors and additional students to hear candor thoughts and suggestions for overall improvement in enrollment and engagement.
- Increase the Latino Vote- There was discussion regarding Umatilla County and Hispanics having the lowest voting populations in the state and ways to encourage voter registration and education letting people know, specifically Hispanics, that their vote is important and matters. Outreach ideas included manning booths at different community events and evening hour outreach efforts. Byron asked HAC to work with non-partisan organizations like the League of Women Voters of Oregon on this goal.



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- Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15<sup>th</sup> through October 15<sup>th</sup>) Celebration- Organizing a community event celebration with food and misc. vendors, entertainment, and more. There was some discussion regarding working with other community organizations to bring this event to life.
- Cinco de Mayo Celebration- The Cinco de Mayo Committee (501c3) members Martha De Leon, Moises Lopez, Nazario Rivera, and Brenda Florez introduced themselves and invited HAC to participate in the planning of one large Cinco de Mayo event stating they are looking forward to building a better relationship through collaboration and a unified front to promote the City and EOTEC. HAC members and Byron stated they had similar feelings that there should be one large cohesive event instead of two and would be happy to partner with them in this effort.

### Closing Comments

#### Public Comments

Casey Ortiz stated this was a great meeting filled with lots of information about what's going on in the City and stated he sells organic coffee from Mexico and would love to be able to keep this part of the Hispanic Culture alive by selling the coffee throughout the community and would appreciate any advice or help they are willing to offer.

The Committee suggested he set up vending booths at any and all community events and advertise electronically.

Dolores Veliz, Hermiston- Thanked everyone who participated in these discussions and informed the Committee that she sent a letter to the City Council asking that they remove Mark Gomolski from the Hispanic Advisory Committee (HAC) based on derogatory remarks he made regarding horrible gay stereotypes and referring to the Juneteenth event as the Negro event, during a private meeting he held with her.

Virgina Garcia Rome, Hermiston- Agreed with Dolores, stating she has also sent a similar letter to the City Council asking to remove Jose Garcia as HAC Chair as she feels he has caused division in the community by hosting a second Cinco de Mayo celebration last year.

#### Committee Comments

The Committee thanked all those who presented and participated in the meeting.

#### Youth Representatives

None given.

#### City Representatives

EOTEC General Manager Al Davis stated he wanted to address the false accusations made by La Voz both verbally at the last HAC meeting and in print last year during the Cinco de Mayo event, stating EOTEC and the City work diligently to have a good relationship with the community and are not taking advantage of the Hispanic population as accused. Every person and event is treated the same with prices posted on the City's website. However, anyone wishing to rent the Umatilla County Fair and/or Farm-City Pro Rodeo grounds must contact each organization as they manage their own area/grounds. It is important that HAC and the Community know



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that the City and EOTEC's goal is to unite the community, not divide it, and hopes HAC and individuals who have questions or concerns reach out to him directly first in the future instead of spreading misinformation.

Roy and Lilly spoke on the following:

- The Council's Goal Setting Meeting in January
- The Council's bond approval to improve many City facilities to include: City Hall, Library, Harkenrider Senior Center, and Public Safety Center
- 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Año Viego Celebration at EOTEC on 12/31 went well thanks to help from HAC Members Jessica and Jesse, as well as EOTEC staff, and other community participants.
- Mayor and Municipal Court Judge election information

### **Next Meeting**

Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm at City Hall Council Chambers.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:43pm.

DRAFT