



Where Life is Sweet

Hispanic Advisory Committee Minutes

October 16, 2023

Chair Jose Garcia called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Committee members present were Mark Gomolski, Jessica De La Cruz, and Alberto Munoz. Jesse Roa was excused. Also present were Council Representatives Maria Duron and Roy Barron, and City Recorder Lilly Alarcon-Strong. Youth Advisors Jeannine Heredia, Sarahi Gutierrez, and Yaneisy Perez were also in attendance. The pledge of allegiance was given.

New Member Introduction- Jessica De La Cruz

Jessica De La Cruz introduced herself stating she was born and raised in Hermiston, is a Medical Assistant at Marisol's and an Office Manager for her dad's janitorial business. Jessica expressed her desire to be a part of the Committee to continue to grow to be a resource and help guide and unite the community and thanked the City for the opportunity to be part of the HAC.

Jose stated Jessica's father, Eddie, was an original member of HAC and expressed his excitement to have a second-generation HAC member on the Committee.

HAC welcomed Jessica to the Committee and thanked her for her willingness to serve.

New Youth Advisor Introduction

Jose asked the Youth Advisors to introduce themselves and state why they chose to be involved:

- Jeannine Heredia stated she wants to be involved in the community and see what HAC is all about. She is tired of only seeing white people at meetings and the lack of Hispanic involvement. Her father was very busy raising their family as a single parent and working long hours to provide for their family and therefore could not be involved; however, there are many Hispanic people who can be involved but choose not to be and that needs to change.
- Sarahi Gutierrez stated she feels similarly to Jeannine and wants to be involved, informed, and aware about changes that impact her, her family, and the community.
- Yaneisy Perez stated she feels similarly to Jeannine and Sarahi. She wants to be involved as she sees discrimination, the lack of help integrating immigrants, and the lack of conversation about Hispanic needs at the High School.

Jose thanked the Youth Advisors for their desire to be involved, to make a difference, and to be willing to have uncomfortable discussions about their concerns.

Maria informed Yaneisy that she can create awareness and address her concerns at the school level as the City is a completely different entity and does not have oversight of the Hermiston School District (HSD).

Roy thanked Yaneisy for the great points she made and stated he hopes she continues to be involved in this process as involvement can be difficult, but these topics must be talked about boldly as he also sees a lack of representation at the school he works at where there are a total of 70 staff members yet only 3 are Latino's. He asked that HAC consider hosting an event for Hispanic Heritage Month as he is disappointed in the City and HSD as they did not do enough or hardly anything for Hispanic Heritage Month.

Mark asked Lilly if HAC could go to the High School and give a presentation about the Committee and information on how to become involved in volunteerism.



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Lilly stated this would have to be a conversation between Administration, at a higher level, and the HSD; however, the Chamber of Commerce is hosting a Volunteer Fair on October 24th at the Community Center to showcase all the groups people can volunteer for in the community, and a group from the High School called Just Serve has reached out to her with the intent of attending the event. The City will have a booth at this event and give information about City Committees, election information, and how to volunteer at the City level.

Safeway Turkey Bucks Program

Mark stated Safeway representatives were unexpectedly unable to attend but asked that Mark share information about the program which allows customers to donate any amount of money each time they make a purchase and all of those proceeds will be shared between the Gage House and other food pantry's in the area.

HAC thanked Safeway for their efforts helping those in need.

New Owner Introductions and Information from Grocery Outlet

Francisco Sanchez and Cesilia Garcia Independent Owner-Operators of Hermiston Grocery Outlet introduced themselves. Francisco stated while listening to the earlier conversation he wants to remind everyone that if you fight for what you want, success in life is possible no matter who doesn't believe in you or want you to succeed. Francisco stated he moved from Mexico to America as a teenager within a community where the Hispanic population was 2%. Although he did not know the language or culture, he completed four years of high school in two years and graduated with honors all while working and having other responsibilities; his family later moved to another community with a 25% Hispanic population where he continued to work hard and kept proving himself. Hermiston's Hispanic population is 51%. Francisco stated with continued hard work, support from their families, and determination, they own their own business and are living the American Dream in the land of opportunity, and if he was able to accomplish all of this, then anyone can.

Jose agreed stating anything is possible with the right attitude.

Francisco and Cesilia gave information regarding:

- Their move to Hermiston from the Portland area to own this store
- Planned community events at Grocery Outlet to include:
 - Trunk or Treat with local vendors present selling food and goods on October 28th stating they want to give small vendors an opportunity to shine and grow and asked that others in the community do the same
 - Christmas Toy Drive
- Changes they have made to Grocery Outlet to include:
 - Giving employee bonuses
 - Giving 10% discount for employee purchases
 - Giving 5% discount to local food banks
 - Stocking more Hispanic foods

Maria thanked Francisco and Cesilia for the information and stated she believes the community will rally behind them once people know their story and encouraged them to reach out to the Chamber of Commerce and Umatilla Electric Cooperative Business Resource Center to help them continue to succeed.

Francisco and Cesilia thanked the community for being very giving and helpful.



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HAC welcomed Francisco and Cesilia to the community and thanked them for their support of the community as well.

Meeting Minutes

Mark moved and Alberto seconded to approve the minutes of the August meeting. Motion carried unanimously. (There were no meetings held in September)

Closing Comments

Public Comments

Virgina Garcia Rome, Hermiston- Welcomed Alberto, Jessica, and the Youth Advisors to the Committee and stated it was great to see all the Committee positions filled, as well as thanking Jessica for being involved like her dad, as she was one of the original members of the Committee with her father.

Deloris Veliz, Hermiston- Thanked Yaneisy for her comments regarding integration in the School District being difficult, asked that they remember they always have a right to freedom of speech and it's important to utilize this to bring progress and change. Ms. Veliz stated she may be reaching out to the School Board regarding this issue.

City Representatives

Roy, Maria, and Lilly spoke on the following:

- 2024 Election information for the Mayor, Municipal Court Judge, and At-Large Councilors
- Continued city budget discussions
- City Council Meeting Schedule
- Youth Advisors

Committee Comments

Mark and Jose spoke regarding a group called Vicion who was targeting the Hispanic community in the area with a get rich quick scheme. Highly regarded Hispanic members of the community attended each event held in the area convincing the general public to contribute large amounts of money to this group in exchange for large and quick returns on their money. Jose and Mark reported the group to the City, Police Department, and Catholic Church as one members of the Vicion group used his affiliation with the Knights of Columbus through the Catholic Church to gain community trust, information was quickly pushed out to the community alerting them of the fraud. The Catholic Church also stripped the title of the Knights of Columbus member who participated in this fraudulent act.

Jose and Mark thanked the City and Police Department for their fast response and reminded the public to be vigilant of potential schemes such as these.

Youth Representatives

Jeannine stated the High School will be holding a Trunk or Treat on 10/27 in combination with Cancer Awareness night.

There was some discussion regarding the Dia de los Muertos event hosted by Juntos from the Hermiston High School last year and whether or not the event would be held this year. Jessica stated she could reach out to the event organizers and let HAC know as HAC members expressed an interest in participating in the event.



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Next Meeting

Monday, November 20th at 7:00pm at City Hall Council Chambers. Jose stated the November meeting agenda is full and presenters have also been scheduled through January 2024.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:14pm.

DRAFT

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