



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

Leon L. Williams San Diego County Human Relations Commission

Meeting Minutes

July 18, 2023 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

1. Call to Order
 - Meeting called to order at 5:33 PM.
2. Roll Call & Introductions
 - **Present Commissioners:**
Pedro Anaya, Kate Clark, Angela Elliot-Santos, Eleanor Evans, Rodney Fowler, David Garcias, George Khoury, Ellen Nash, Khaliq Raufi, Gina Roberts, Joseph Allen Ruanto-Ramirez, David Vance, Edith Sanchez Cruz (Sheriff Proxy)
 - **Late Commissioners:**
Taha Hassane, Summer Stephan, Nicole Murray Ramirez, Sarah Farouq
 - **Excused Absences:**
Cinnamon Clark, Estela De Los Rios, Adeem Ismaeil
 - **Absent Commissioners:**
Dennis Hodges
3. Land Acknowledgement
 - Mr. Strong read a script recognizing and acknowledging Indigenous people that called (what is now) San Diego County home for a millennia.
4. Public Comment: Opportunity for members of the public to speak to the Commission on any subject matter within the Commission's jurisdiction, but not an item on today's agenda.
 - None
5. Celebratory/Awareness Month or Day:
 - Disability Pride Month
 - Commissioner Ruanto-Ramirez shared history on Disability Pride Month
 - French American Heritage Month
 - Chair Nash shared history and stats of French Americans in the United States
 - Immigrant Heritage Month
 - Will be incorporated with Agenda item #8
6. Rules of Order
 - Mr. Strong reviewed an excerpt of the commission's rules of order:

- Be respectful of others who are speaking, remain on mute until it is your turn to speak and avoid interrupting others. Raise your hand to be called on by the Chair. Do not speak until called on by the Chair.
- Refrain from discriminatory and harassing remarks.
- Definition: “Discriminatory or harassing remarks” includes legally protected speech in a Board meeting that disparages an individual or group based on their perceived race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, disability, etc. or other hate speech but does not rise to the level of a criminal threat or inciting violence.

7. Discussion of Commissioner Khoury’s Comments at the May 16th Human Relations Commission meeting

- Commissioner rules were given on speaking limits.
 - Commissioner Khoury – 3 minutes,
 - Public Comments - 2 minutes, however requesting not to repeat comments given at June HRC meeting.
- Commissioner Khoury Remarks – Commissioner Khoury notified the commission that he composed a letter and has sent it to Cindy Jones to be sent to the entire HRC via email. Mr. Khoury denies the allegations of being anti-semantic brought against him by Rabbi Meltzer and Commissioner Nicole Murray Ramirez, Mr. Khoury shared that he has family and friends that are Jewish. Restated the history of Nakba, the impact on Palestine and him personally. Can share book titles and reports to those that wish to learn more on the history of Palestine, asks Rabbi Meltzer and Commissioner Murray Ramirez, and all of you to join him in promoting equality and justice regardless of religion, race and color.
- Public Comment:
 - George Nasser spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
 - Jamal Kanj spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
 - Doris Bittar spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
 - Nadir Khuri spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
 - Jeanine Erikat spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
 - Larry Christian spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
 - Andy Trimlett spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
 - Lenna Odeh spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
 - Amal Jabran spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
 - Rima Khuri spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
 - Francine Maxwell spoke to the Commissioners regarding ‘cancel culture’ within the commission when someone disagrees with something said. Agree to disagree respectively.
 - Ed Sweet spoke to the Commissioners regarding agenda item #7, Commissioner Khoury comments.
- Discussion of Proposed Actions
 - Chair Nash – Reiterates this matter was brought to commission attention by Commissioner Murray Ramirez, who sent the commissioners a letter asking for 1. Mr.

Khoury to rescind his remarks and apologize to the Jewish Community and Rabbi Meltzer. 2. This commission remove Mr. Khoury as a commission member.

- County Counsel read By-Laws in regard to the removal of a commissioner.
- Chair Nash discussed potential options: We have other options if we determine that Commissioner Khoury either did not violate this group's rules or that he could have conveyed his message in a different way to better foster discussion on the difficult situation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, as we could use our newly learned Dialogue process given to us by our consultants, Essential Partners, to have dialogue and create an educational opportunity for this commission and the public.
- Open to Commission discussion (3 min limit):
 - Commissioner Evans spoke in support of Commissioner Khoury and wants him to stay in HRC.
 - Commissioner Anaya spoke on the process and working through difficult conversations, suggests utilizing Essential Partners as our main resource to conduct better dialogue.
 - Commissioner Farouq spoke on the importance of being educated on the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Suggests inviting someone from the Palestinian community to speak about topic. Also spoke in support of Commissioner Khoury.
 - Commissioner Raufi quoted a verse from the Book of Jews (Torah) – Deuteronomy- 26.
 - Commissioner Murray Ramirez remarked that the issue should not have been brought up, that Commissioner Khoury changed his travel plans to attend the May 16th meeting to speak after he learned that Rabbi Meltzer was going to be speaking. Brought up an issue with former Commissioner Julia Legaspi and a hate speech regarding the LGBTQ+ community and how it is owed an apology letter as well as the Jewish community.
 - Commissioner Clark spoke on the importance of education and calling the community in to dialogue. Not in favor of letter writing but prefer to converse with fellow commissioners and agrees with public speaker Ms. Maxwell.
 - Commissioner Hassane said he has observed 3 main things since May meeting. 1. In terms of Commissioner Khoury not remarking on Arab American Month and instead talking about Palestine, this is false, this is part of Arab history. 2. No one has the right to control someone else's narrative on what they experience or how they see it. 3. We are not here to solve the conflict on Israel & Palestine... let's disagree respectfully.
 - Commissioner Roberts spoke on why the Commission is here and how it needs to move passed this issue. Agrees with Commissioner Anaya in having dialogue with the community.
 - Commissioner Fowler spoke in support of Commissioner Khoury. Pointed out how emotions get the best of us when we hear something we do not agree with and encourages that we continue to move forward and leave personal differences aside.
 - Commissioner Elliot-Santos spoke how as the only Ingenious person here, I don't see anything wrong in telling the truth, sometimes it hurts. Agrees with Commissioner Anaya in having dialogue. Also spoke in support of Commissioner Khoury.
 - Commissioner Ruanto-Ramirez spoke on International Refugee Day and the differences in how celebratory months/days are acknowledged and celebrated.
- Commissioner Roberts motions to 1. Move topic offline via Dialogue to better understand the issue. 2. Stop any thoughts on removing Commissioner Khoury from the

Commission. 3. Remove this from our history. Seconded by Vice Chair Evans.

- Commissioner Murray Ramirez expressed frustration on the motion.
- Commissioner Anaya would not be able to support a motion that asks for it to be swept under the rug.
- Commissioner Clark agrees with Commissioner Anaya and will not be able to support this motion as it stands. Acknowledges hurtful comments made today on the topic.
- Commissioner Ruanto-Ramirez concurs with Commissioner Clark in not erasing this from HRC history.
- Revised Motion by Commissioner Roberts, to amend not stopping the conversation but to move to an educational dialogue externally.
 - County Counsel, yes this is allowed. And tabling the removal of Commissioner Khoury is also allowed.
- Commissioner Hassane requests to add an amendment to motion and restore dignity to Commissioner Khoury.
- Commissioner Follower motions to vote.
- Mr. Strong motion: Table the discussion on removal or censorship of Commissioner Khoury, but also to move to educational component and also to move with the dialogue process.
 - Chair Nash: Call to Question?
 - Commissioner Farouq: Does tabling mean we are going to come back to this? Or for sure stop this discussion?
 - County Counsel Answer: Two types of Table Motion. One is to Kill it, the second is to table it until the end of the meeting.
 - Commissioner Anaya recommends to vote this motion down and to separate these motions.
 - Commissioner Fowler points out that everyone had a chance to speak.
 - Commissioner Evans reiterated the three original motions given by Commissioner Roberts.
 - County Counsel: You have a motion in the call to question, and that needs to be voted on first.
 - Mr. Strong: Voting on Call to Question to end discussion.
 - Vote:
 - Anaya – Aye
 - Clark, C - Absent
 - Clark, K – Aye
 - De Los Rios - Absent
 - Elliot-Santos – Nay
 - Evans – Aye
 - Farouq – Aye
 - Fowler Sr. – Aye
 - Garcias – Aye
 - Hassane – Aye
 - Hodges – Absent
 - Ismaeil – Absent
 - Khoury – Aye
 - Sanchez (Sheriff Proxy) - Abstain
 - Murray Ramirez – Nay
 - Nash – Aye
 - Raufi - Aye
 - Roberts – Aye
 - Ruanto-Ramirez - Aye
 - Stephan – Aye

- Vance – Aye
 - Ayes: 14
 - Nay: 2
 - Abstain: 1
 - Motion Passes
- Commissioner Roberts Motion: Table indefinitely the concept of removing Commissioner Khoury for statements he made on 16 May 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Vance.
 - Vote Motion #1:
 - Anaya – Aye
 - Clark, C – Absent
 - Clark, K – Aye
 - De Los Rios - Absent
 - Elliot-Santos – Aye
 - Evans – Aye
 - Farouq – Aye
 - Fowler Sr. – Aye
 - Garcias – Aye
 - Hassane – Aye
 - Hodges – Absent
 - Ismaeil – Absent
 - Khoury – Aye
 - Sanchez (Sheriff proxy) - Abstain
 - Murray Ramirez – Nay
 - Nash – Abstain
 - Raufi - Aye
 - Roberts – Aye
 - Ruanto-Ramirez - Aye
 - Stephan – Aye
 - Vance – Aye
 - Ayes: 14
 - Nays: 1
 - Abstain: 2
 - Motion Passes
- Commissioner Anaya motion to have a working group to organize a dialogue using Essential Partners made up of six individuals including members of the commission, public etc. to address what is to be done including future education initiative and next steps. Seconded by Commissioner Roberts.
 - Call for Question:
 - Commissioner Fowler remarked that the commission is being disrespectful and inconsiderate of the public's time by not trying to resolve this issue, there has been overwhelming support for Commissioner Khoury. This issue needs to be resolved tonight.
 - Commissioner Farouq requested clarification on motion.
 - Commissioner Anaya gave examples for his motion.
 - Commissioner Farouq is not in favor of this motion.

- Commissioner Vance suggests having education before dialogue can occur.
- Commissioner Roberts spoke on how Commissioner Fowler's concerns may not be necessary in regard to Commissioner Khoury.
- Commissioner Stephan asked for clarification if the Jewish community was represented on this commission, how can we approve dialogue without both sides being represented.
- Commissioner Murray Ramirez concurs with Commissioner Stephan in needing more Jewish representation on the commission.
- Chair Nash called out Commissioner Murray Ramirez for being out of order. Stated that she has attended the Essential Partners Dialogue sessions and has learned and agrees with Commissioner Anaya's motion. We will bring on the voice of the Jewish community, we will talk about the process that includes education, sharing history of other communities.
 - Spoke to commissioner Khoury directly and voiced her respect for him.
 - Apologized (on behalf of herself) to those that were hurt by whatever hurt that is. The truth has to be told.
- Motion to continue to the next meeting by Chair Nash. Seconded by Commissioner Roberts.
 - Vote Motion #2:
 - Anaya – Aye
 - Clark, C – Absent
 - Clark, K – Aye
 - De Los Rios - Absent
 - Elliot-Santos – Aye
 - Evans – Aye
 - Farouq – Aye
 - Fowler Sr. – No
 - Garcias – Aye
 - Hassane – Aye
 - Hodges – Absent
 - Ismaeil – Absent
 - Khoury – No
 - Sanchez (Sheriff proxy) - Abstain
 - Murray Ramirez – Aye
 - Nash – Aye
 - Raufi - Abstain
 - Roberts – Aye
 - Ruanto-Ramirez - Abstain
 - Stephan – Aye
 - Vance – Aye
 - Ayes: 12
 - Nays: 2
 - Abstain: 3
 - Motion Passes

8. Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs Overview– Lucero Chavez Basilio, Director
- Not discussed; have been invited to attend the August 15, 2023 meeting.

9. Subcommittee Updates

- Vice-Chair Elliot-Santos – Legislative Subcommittee: Encourages commissioners to join the Legislative Subcommittee as there is currently only three members.

- Vice-Chair Evans – Communications Subcommittee: Shared next community meeting, August 5, 2023 at Lemon Grove Library. Encourages everyone to attend. Encourages commissioners to participate in subcommittees.
10. Discussion of community raised matters relating to the Commission promoting positive human relations. Discussion is limited to 15 minutes which may include the Commission placing the matter on a future agenda for possible action.
 11. Staff updates
 - Commissioner K. Clark asked for clarification on meeting ending at 7:30pm.
 - Vice-Chair Evans: Yes because it is a public space and allowing time for clean-up etc.
 12. Announcements
 - None
 13. Adjournment
 - Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM

Next Meeting of the Commission:

August 15, 2023 - 5:30pm