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*Director*



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
COMMISSION ON MINORITY AFFAIRS**

**Meeting Minutes**

A meeting of the Commission on Minority Affairs was held on Monday, September 20, 2021. Pursuant to public notice, this meeting was conducted by a Webex videoconference call.

**1. COMMISSION BUSINESS**

A. Commissioner Melendrez assumed duties as chair and called the meeting to order at 9:33 am.

B. Commissioners Present: C. Hasaan Azam, C. Yerania De Luca, C. Jose Melendrez, C. Amy Shaw, C. Kathleen Taylor.

C. Commissioners Not in Attendance: Chair D. Edward Chaney, Vice Chair Myisha Boyce, C. E. Mercedes Krause, C. Angelica Villarta

D. Staff Present: Emily Ku, Management Analyst for the Commission on Minority Affairs

E. Public Attendance: Shariff Darin Balaam, Valerie Balen, Nicholas Dunkle, Katie Ryan, Janet Serial, Tyler Shaw

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

NA

**3. COMMISSION BUSINESS DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION BY THE COMMISSION**

**A. Approval of August 16, 2021 meeting minutes (for discussion and possible action)**

C. Taylor moved to approve the minutes. C. De Luca seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**B. Receive presentation from Sheriff Darin Balaam, Washoe County**

C. Azam introduced Sheriff Balaam, who has spent 21 years in the Washoe County Sheriff's Office. His experience encompasses all three bureaus: Operations, Detention, and Administration. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Nevada Reno and a Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice Administration from the University of Louisville. He is a graduate of the Federal Bureau of Investigations Southwest Command College and the University of

Louisville's Southern Police Institute's Administrative Officers Course. He is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation Nevadan and a native of Sparks.

Sheriff Balaam said when he took office in 2019, they were building relationships with the community, so he started a community engagement committee that Commissioner Azam sits on. He reached out various leaders in the community, and the sole goal is to partner with a wide, diverse cross-section of our community that represents all the minority communities. If they have events, how do they build that trust and legitimacy with those communities because they know some may have had a bad experience growing up or later lives. That group meets once a quarter now. They had met every month after George Floyd but backed it off now. They look for opportunities that they can partner. This month, they set two goals for the committee. One was to meet with Reno's police chief board of community leaders, and Sparks is getting ready to start one. The plan is to come together as a region once a year so they are all on the same page. Their first meeting is coming up in the next month. They are trying to have a community event and are partnering with the Faith and Blue weekend event. It was created last year back East, and they are touting it as the largest one-weekend event bringing faith-based communities and law enforcement together. They are having a cornhole tournament at the Boys and Girls Club in Sparks. There will be food trucks and local law enforcement will have teams. The Community Engagement Committee tries to identify those types of events where they can bring the community and law enforcement together to build that trust and learn about all the communities they serve.

The Sheriff's Task Force is a small group of community leaders, 4 associations within the office: one for deputies, one for deputy supervisor, one civilian, and civilian supervisors. What he presents is every use of force, citizen complaint, and pursuit they have that is closed. They pick and he presents the case to them. They walk through the entire investigation, and share the discipline but redact the personal information. They get to see from start to finish the entire investigation. They just had their first meeting. They did a use of force taser event. He walked through the event and showed the video, and they got to see first-hand what that task force does. They don't issue discipline, but he uses them as a sounding board—are there things the task force sees that maybe they aren't catching, are they giving enough discipline, etc. This is how he is exposing people in his community this is what the Sheriff's office is doing, and hopefully they can go out and share what the Sheriff's office is doing.

Right after George Floyd, Sheriff Balaam also started a Diversity and Inclusion committee. He had his own employees ask him if he would like to hear how they are feeling. The committee is comprised of employees in the Sheriff's office, both civilian and deputies. They meet once a month, and help with three things: mission and vision, recruitment, retention and promotion. They are working on human resources to recruit minorities and people of color. When they would go to some of the communities, one deputy kept getting asked and didn't want to be used as a token. This community now, part of their agreement is that they go to all the communities. If they are in those communities and if they hear something whether good or bad, they can help respond and bring some education. During the increase in violence against Asian Americans, he had a crime lab person say that their community is feeling a little scared. Sheriff Balaam said they offered to go to one of the community events and speak about how they monitoring that violence. That committee is helping both with messaging, recruitment, and promotion and retention. He had 35 employees leave over the last

year, which is higher than normal. Women in policing: he doesn't have a lot of females on the deputy sheriff's side up in the ranks. The highest he has is a lieutenant. They are coming together to figure out what they can do better to encourage females to promote and break down some of the barriers. This committee is also helping us navigate getting women up the ranks and also show them that this is a great profession.

C. Taylor thanked Sheriff Balaam for speaking to the Commission and asked if their department received CARES (Coronavirus Act, Relief, and Economic Security Act) or ARP (American Rescue Plan) funding. They received some more PPE (personal protective equipment) with the initial CARES Act funding. A lot of CARES money went to the Cares Campus for people experiencing homelessness that the county just built. They are purchasing a robot cleaning machine with the UV lighting to disinfect the jail. They kept the pandemic from the detention facility for the first 8 months, and then they received funding so they could have a company disinfect it. He is now trying to ask for additional deputies for the next 3 years to help with increased staffing for the jails and Cares Campus since the President said it can be used for law enforcement. He is responding to incidents at the Cares Campus instead of the city, so that is increasing his workload.

C. De Luca said that the High School Academy in Carson City has been very successful in exposing student to law enforcement as a future career. She asked Sheriff Balaam if there's anything like that for Washoe County. Formally, no; they go around to the high schools, and they are in 4 elementary schools in Sun Valley. There's no formal academy. He teaches criminal justice courses for Truckee Meadows. He was in the Jumpstart program and used that as a recruitment tool and gave tours. Unfortunately he's not teaching this semester. When they have those career days, they send out their community engagement teams out. For the larger events, they bring out their canines to pique their interest.

C. Taylor asked if there will be a virtual format for the Faith and Blue initiative. She said that there's an SBA (Small Business Administration) faith-based initiative would be wonderful to disseminate the Faith and Blue event to that network. Sheriff Balaam said every 6 months they host a regional law enforcement faith-based breakfast. That's a good idea to open it up. That's a breakfast with all of the federal, state, and local law enforcement. With the faith-based community, they have a huge network, and they are a great sounding board. Sheriff Balaam thanked her for that idea and will consider it.

## **C. Subcommittee Updates (for discussion and possible action)**

### 1. Community Liaison

C. Azam said if we had more time, the Sheriff would have gone over more initiatives. That's just scratching the surface, and there's so much that is going on. Sheriff Balaam is very engaged. C. Azam said the City of Reno and City of Sparks have initiatives very much aligned with the Sheriff and said maybe we can hear from them individually.

### 2. Legislative

M. A. Ku gave a quick update on SB 222, the Diversity Liaisons bill, which goes into effect in January.

The offices involved are beginning to plan for the diversity and inclusion meetings at the state agency level.

C. Taylor said on September 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, there was a virtual forum sponsored by the Nevada Equal Rights Commission. It specifically highlighted legislation for the passage of SB 327, that is in celebration of the Nevada CROWN Forum as it relates to World Afro Day. Senator Neal is the bill sponsor known as Nevada's version of the CROWN Act. Nevada is the 12<sup>th</sup> state offer protections for Nevadans based on hair texture attributed to African ancestry. This is particularly important legislation if you are a woman of color and wear braids, dreadlocks, afros, or other hairstyles.

### 3. Economic and Business Development

C. Shaw wanted to share Back to Biz, and the content is designed to help businesses grow. They cover a wide range of topics including hiring talent, selling online, building your brand, creating new revenue streams, finding new customers, managing stress and more, especially the challenges businesses are facing after the pandemic. The program was initially funded by former CEO Howard Schultz, and includes a coalition of non-profits and companies such as Chase, Facebook, Microsoft, Starbucks, and more. Program can be accessed for free by going to <http://creativelive.com/backtobiz>. It's a great program, and they're really relevant with businesses today.

### 4. Workforce Development

C. Taylor as of September 6<sup>th</sup>, unfortunately 35 million Americans lost their unemployment benefits. Looking at Nevada, 150,000 Nevadans stopped receiving unemployment benefits. It's pretty daunting, and DETR (Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation) Director Elisa Cafferata said that while US Department of Labor has authorized the use of American Rescue Plan funds to continue the benefits, DETR has no plans to do so. An extension would require a special legislative session to approve the use of federal funds for extending the unemployment benefits. Federal programs that ended on September 6<sup>th</sup> included the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, and the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation. Nevada continues to have the worst jobless rate in the nation at 7.7% as of July. About 1/3 jobs that the state lost when the pandemic hit have not come back according to DETR. To try to offset this, there are training programs available and resources specifically through GOED (Governor's Office of Economic Development). Those are some training options that people can explore, becoming reskilled or upskilled to try to reenter the workforce.

C. Melendrez said that the UNLV School of Public Health was contacted by the State of Nevada concerning workforce engagement. The state awarded a mini grant to develop workforce opportunities and specifically to identify diversity and equity groups to go into the field of public health. He will be bringing two recruiter positions into the School of Public Health to help recruit into the public health field, like nursing, kinesiology, radiology, etc., to increase diversity in those areas. That will start in October, and the funding is for a 2 year period. Hopefully, if successful, those will become permanent positions.

### 5. Housing

C. Taylor said there is a new housing rental assistance program for households impacted by COVID-19, called RAFT - Rental Assistance For Tenants. Eligible households must reside within the City of Las Vegas, and have income at or below 80% AMI (area median income). Financial assistance will be provided up to 18 months, to include rent and rent arrears, home energy costs, and other expenses related to housing. Also, she attended a webinar on the Nevada Housing Coalition (NHC) last month on community land trusts in affordable housing in Nevada. It's a pretty neat concept. The City of Reno specifically embarked on a housing development based on a land trust model to create affordable housing. Next month she will be attending the NHC Annual Housing Conference at the Culinary Academy of Las Vegas and will be in person.

## 6. Health

C. Melendrez said we are doing better in Nevada, but people are still getting sick. Ninety percent of people getting sick are people who are unvaccinated. We need to keep up with the messaging of vaccination as much as we can. More than 6,000 people received their first shot of the vaccine for the Raiders game, and a couple of other professional teams are following that model. They reported this morning that still over a thousand people are dying every day in the United States from COVID. The vaccination results look really positive for ages 5-12, so they will be putting that forward for review. Hopefully one step closer for having the vaccine for those kids. As of August 26<sup>th</sup>, 60% of Washoe County 12+ residents are fully vaccinated and over 500,000 doses have been administered. Passed by the Nevada State Board of Health, Governor Sisolak signed the emergency declaration that all state of Nevada employees who work with vulnerable populations to be vaccinated. Last week, Nevada passed a milestone and more than 3 million doses have been administered so far, but there's still a lot of work to be done. C. Taylor asked how many breakthrough cases are in Nevada and how many breakthrough cases are attributed to the new variant. C. Melendrez there have been those cases but will see if he can find the information. From what he knows, vaccinated people might get it but they aren't ending up in the hospital at the same rate.

## 7. Education

C. Melendrez said that next week, the national US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce convention will be in Las Vegas and is partnering with the Latin Chamber of Commerce. There will be some kind of higher education program at this conference, and the Southern Nevada institutions were invited to be there. Details are forthcoming.

C. Melendrez said that most of the higher education institutions hold the designation as minority-serving institutions (MSI), as well as Hispanic-serving institutions (HSI), under the Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institution. That is a Title III Designation, which means the institution is eligible for federal dollars. UNLV holds two Title III grants and an LSAMP (Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation) grant. The second part is under Title V is the Hispanic-serving institution. This Friday at UNLV, they are hosting their first ever MSI/HSI student success summit. They are talking about student engagement and research in those areas. In March, the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education are actually holding a national conference at Nevada State College. C. Taylor asked with the question with the minorities into STEM fields, does that include the Continuing Education program, who are the non-traditional students. Are there

STEM programs for that subgroup. C. Melendrez doesn't have the full details of the scope of work on the grant. There is a program at CSN (College of Southern Nevada) to fund pre-certificate programs, and UNLV is coordinating with them. They are also working with faculty to develop a pre-bachelor's program from a pre-public health perspective so they would be introduced into the field. They might then pursue a bachelor's degree. That's an area we are looking at and how we can collaborate and coordinate with CSN.

M. A. Ku went over C. Krause's report. This week the number of COVID-19 positive cases in CCSD (Clark County School District) is 129 and 728 cases this month. The Board of Trustees voted to authorize the Superintendent to develop a mandatory vaccination plan. That plan hasn't been fleshed out yet, they've only given the Superintendent the authority to do so. The second item is about the ARP (American Rescue Plan) funding. CCSD sent out a survey to gather input on how to spend the ARP funds the school district is receiving. They received over 13,000 comments through the survey and 60 organizations gave their input at meetings. On recruiting, CCSD is expanding recruiting and marketing efforts to hire more staff. Diversity is a priority and they have expanded efforts to increase diversity through the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Work Group. At the WCSD (Washoe County School District) School Board meeting, they discussed how they will be redistricting the Board of Trustees districts following the 2020 Census. They also discussed PPE (personal protective equipment) funding.

There is also an Indigenous Peoples Market and Festival on September 25<sup>th</sup> at the Old Las Vegas Fort this weekend from 10am to 3pm. It is a celebration of Native American Cultures through food, dance, music and crafts.

7i. Letter of support for Washoe County School District Superintendent's Task Force.

C. Melendrez introduced the letter of support to the Washoe County School District Board of Trustees for the creation of the Superintendent's Task Force. C. De Luca made a motion to approve the letter of support. C. Shaw seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**D. Management Analyst update (for discussion and possible action)**

a. Community updates

- i. This week is the National Minority Enterprise Development Week and they are holding a virtual conference the entire week.
- ii. Tomorrow is the Clark County Redevelopment Agency meeting. They are restarting their development agency.
- iii. Thursday there is a documentary screening of Windsor Park, followed by a panel discussion with Senator Neal about one of the first all-black housing communities in North Las Vegas. Due to the soil, a lot of the houses are actually sinking, and they still need government support to fix the issue. That will be at UNLV at 6pm.
- iv. Saturday is the Afrikfest Awards Gala hosted by African Chamber of Commerce
- v. Sept 24-25 is the Nevada Administrators and Superintendents of Color Coalitions' Bridging Equity into Action Summit held in Las Vegas
- vi. Friday, October 1 is the Southern Nevada Diversity Summit. It is virtual and hosted by Nevada State College.
- vii. October 4-5 is the National Immigrant Integration Conference at the Westgate Las Vegas

- viii. The Office of New Americans and Office of Minority Health will tentatively be hosting an ARP listening session with the immigrant community on October 7th and Oct 12 with the BIPOC community. This is part of the Nevada Recovers Listening Tour.

**4. NEW BUSINESS**

NA

**5. PUBLIC COMMENT**

NA

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

- Meeting adjourned at 10:32 am
- Next Meeting: Monday, October 18, 2021 at 9:30 am