



City of Albuquerque - Office of Civil Rights
1 Civic Plaza, Albuquerque, NM 87102
Phone- 505-768-4595, TTY 711
civilrights@cabq.gov

City of Albuquerque Human Rights Board (HRB) Public Hearing on Anti-Homeless Sentiment and Discrimination Based on Housing Status Minutes

Date: Saturday, June 22, 2024

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Location: Community Room of the International District Library, 7601 Central Ave NE, Albuquerque, NM 87108

Board Members Present:

Anami Dass, Chair
Sean “Jack” Champagne, Vice Chair
Larry Hinojos Jr.
Kate Boulton

City Staff Present:

Lisa Schatz-Vance, Board Attorney
Mari Kempton, Parliamentary Council
Jennifer Lucero, Minute Taker

Board Members Not Present:

Samia Assed
Leticia Galvez-Trujillo
Kimberly Andujo

I. Call to Order & Introductions

- a. The meeting was called to order at 1:13 p.m. by Chair Dass.
- b. All board members and city staff who were present introduced themselves.

II. Verbal Questionnaire

(A) Members of the Public were asked to raise their hands if they agree to the following statements:

1. The City of Albuquerque has enough accessible public restrooms.
 - a. No hands were raised
2. The City of Albuquerque does not have enough accessible garbage receptable.
 - a. Majority of hands were raised.
3. Attacking a person who is homeless because they are homeless is a hate crime.
 - a. Majority of hands were raised.
4. The City of Albuquerque is responsible for the current housing crisis.

- a. Majority of hands were raised.
5. The federal government is responsible for the current housing crisis.
 - a. Majority of hands were raised.
6. The City of Albuquerque is solely responsible for the housing crisis.
 - a. No hands were raised.
7. The federal government is partially responsible for the housing crisis.
 - a. Majority of hands were raised.
8. Homelessness is a choice.
 - a. No hands were raised except one individual stated “sometimes.”

III. Public Comments and Testimonies

a. Public comment made by unidentified individual who is a case manager working on behalf of the unhoused assisting with replacing vital documents. This individual addressed concerns regarding the preliminary injunction which was vacated on May 17th. They suggest that landlords should work with landlord liaisons or case managers and case managers can send letter of recommendations to vouch for unhoused individuals.

b. Testimony was given by Rowan Rosen who is a library employee. She stated the library is the only public restroom in the International District. She witnessed Metro Security driving off homeless even during after-hours and have intimidating presence to discourage the presence of unhoused individuals. She states there is no shades at the bus stops and had to call emergency services for heat strokes. Unhoused individuals come in library many times seeking medical care. EMS is not promptly responsive if individuals are homeless.

c. An unidentified local resident of the International District area saw an individual who was perceived to be homeless steal his neighbor's bike. He stated he feels more threatened by fellow residents than unhoused individuals.

d. An unidentified individual made public comment regarding her concerns with hotel voucher issues. The communication between the City outreach workers, HopeWorks, and hotel managers is miscommunication or non-existent. There is no notice given when the vouchers run out. This past week an outreach worker told hotel manager that vouchers are up and people have to leave immediately while someone else told them they can stay until the end of the month. When folks are forced to vacate the hotel, there is presence from the City of Albuquerque or HopeWorks to provide any support.

e. Amanda Roybale who is a current hotel voucher resident gave testimony regarding her experience with HopeWorks. She states HopeWorks has given many unkept promises. HopeWorks transported her to the motel to live until her housing application gets approved. The application was process then a second background check ultimately prevented her from securing housing. HopeWorks has given inadequate notice when she has to leave the motel and return to living on the streets.

f. Aaron Esquivel who is also a resident of the Motel 6 gives his testimony regarding his concerns of constantly worrying about belongings being taken from him and having to have friends take turns watching their stuff. He states it is

chaos and feels like he will relapse but is still trying to do his best and has children he wants to be reunited with.

g. Adam Litzer, who is a physician's assistant and works in homeless outreach, gave his testimony addressing the safety concerns for unhoused individuals and the misconceptions. He states the middle class doesn't know that homelessness is coming for them. More and more people are one month away from not affording rent and being evicted. He works with First Nations and goes to the Westside shelter once a week as well. He has been working with Maria Wolfe, the Homeless Innovation Officer.

h. Rosemary Blanchard gave testimony regarding her concerns of human rights, human dignity and the sweeping of people's possessions. She states the City and the State has right to provide more rights than the federal constitution. The Human Rights Ordinance protects and promotes human rights and human dignity. She wants the HRB to set a standard for human dignity.

i. Bonnie Readers gave testimony stating she was on SSDI and was evicted for nonpayment which was not true and she is now unhoused. Her parents' ashes were stolen. There is a need for places to keep their belongings safe.

j. Testimony was made by Henry William Jr. who states he has experienced racism. He discusses his use of drugs because he does not have basic necessities such as to shower, food, and money but wants to quit.

k. Testimony was made by Janus Herrera who is a member of Coalition for a Safer Albuquerque. She has been unhoused due to domestic violence and states WIC is not enough. She discussed her experience with a disabled elderly unhoused individual who was turned away from using a restroom due to his clothing and urinated himself. The westside shelter is inadequate due to it being not within city limits and away from services. She witnessed many in dire need of medical care but do not have access and are afraid to abandon belongings.

l. Mohammed Ahmed gave testimony regarding his experiences. He has been unhoused for six months. He was formerly employed by the Social Security Administration but was fired. He feels safest at Jerry Cline dog park due to its access of water and restrooms. He has been perceived as a treat when he was sitting with a friend at the park. Parks & Rec employees told him he needed to leave due to presence of children and drugs. He stated there was no drugs nor children present.

m. Testimony was made by Courtney Heiglemeyer who is an APS teacher at New Futures school for pregnant teens and is also a professor at UNM. She states he has been formerly unhoused. Half of her students live on the streets. She has written letters to City Councils, Mayor's Office, Solid Waste, Parks & Rec., and Chief of Police. She received only once response from Councilor Fiebelkorn. She has also had letters published from the Albuquerque Journal and the Daily Lobo. She spoke an assistant with the Mayor's Office over the phone stating the policy is a three days notice before belongings are removed. She states no notices are given and the policy is not being followed.

n. Testimony was given by Enrique Cardiel who is the director for Health Equity Council for Bernalillo County. He states Unhoused is a serve public health issue but is addressed as a criminal issue. He discusses the need to create

affordable hosing without loopholes. He has had issues with code enforcement not allowing people allowing others on their property. Shelters are kicking folks out if using drugs but shelters are not set up for safe use. There needs to be safe use sites. There needs improvement for temporary housing and medical access. People are limited in belongings they can take on the bus.

o. Testimony was given by Andrew Romero who is currently an unhoused veteran with a Bachelor's degree in Health and Science for personal training. He has noticed there is a lack of empathy. He is currently sober but is not willing to ask family help because he's been using. His cousin was pedestrian who was killed recently on Central due to oncoming traffic. He is unable to sleep because he is worried of his belongings being taken. He does not know how to access a voucher and does not know how to get help.

p. Anami Dass gave testimony speaking on behalf of her friend Levi who was discriminated against. She told a story about how Levi explained to his case manager that he was discriminated and his case manager was dismissive. Dass quoted Levi as having said, "They look at the way I look, the way I behave, the words I'm speaking, my mannerisms, my attitude, how I smell, and assume I'm homeless, dangerous, criminal, and can't be trusted. What they should assume is that I'm poor."

IV. **Closing Remarks**

q. In his closing remarks, Vice Chair Champagne discussed his experience with Pittsburg homeless. He described his friendships with individuals in Pittsburg and explains it is possible to have relationships with unhoused individuals but here in Albuquerque it is qualitatively different. He commented that the problem is not the homeless but number of homeless and lack of access. He said, "the way you treat the people who have the least amount of power in your society is the best reflection on a society as a whole."

V. **Announcements**

a. The next Human Rights Board meeting is July 18, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in the Lower Hearing Room of the Plaza Del Sol building.

b. The report to this public hearing will be published by July 22, 2024.

c. The EEOC, NM Human Rights Bureau, and OCR Panel Discussion is on June 25, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. via zoom. Information is on the OCR webpage.

V. **Adjournment**

a. Meeting adjourned by Chair Dass at 2:35 p.m.


Anami Dass, Chair

July 18, 2024

Date