

PETALUMA COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL MEETING:
March 1, 2017, B'nai Israel Jewish Center, 740 Western Avenue, Petaluma CA 94952

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:
8:05 AM by Rabbi Ted Feldman

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

- Attendees introduced themselves and the organizations they represent.

2. MISSION STATEMENT – read by Rabbi Ted Feldman

“The mission of the Petaluma Community Relations Council is to serve as a coalition of individuals and groups, promoting the values of respect, appreciation and understanding of diversity among all people in our community. By fostering positive human relations, we identify and confront discrimination, respond to the needs of our community, and serve as a source of information and advocacy.”

3. INTRODUCE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

- Rabbi Feldman introduced the gathering to members of the PCRC Coordinating Committee: Marjorie Helm, Lena Hoshino, Cynthia Clarkson, Faith Ross, Elece Hempel, Stephen Weiss and Rabbi Ted Feldman
 - **LISTENING FOR A CHANGE project** –Petaluma Police Chief Ken Savano and Phyllis Rosenfield are working on a community outreach program, designed to gather and document perceptions from both police officers and citizens, hoping to counteract prejudice and disunity. **LISTENING FOR A CHANGE** is looking for volunteers willing to conduct interviews for the project. Marjorie Helm and Rabbi Feldman are also involved in this project. For more information contact Marjorie Helm or Rabbi Feldman.

4. CELEBRATORY REPORT 2/27 CITY COUNCIL MEETING: “It Won’t Happen Here” (IWHH) Resolution

- Sam Tuttelman shared the outcome of the February 27, 2017 Petaluma City Council Meeting, where members of the Board unanimously voted to support “It Won’t Happen Here” Resolution. While it’s common for others to speak on behalf of those who feel disenfranchised, Sam told the members that this was a unique gathering of several hundred people of all races, and many of them, speaking for themselves. He also asked the PCRC members if they would agree to the idea of presenting Humanitarian Awards to a handful of young speakers who courageously addressed the council concerning their plight as children of non-citizen residents. Sam Tuttelman, Rabbi Feldman and Erica Stuart are working on this project. **See attachment
- Abraham Solar spoke about the importance of reducing the level of stress children are suffering as they continue to worry about the fate of their families. He noted that many of our students are more focused on the well-being of their parents than they are on scholastics. He also noted that the February 27 City Council meeting helped Latino families not only learn about the inner workings of local government, but also learned where City Hall is located and what it has to offer all residents of Petaluma.
- Chief Savano shared comforting words regarding the current climate and reiterated his department’s stand against unreasonable Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) deportation actions.
- Rabbi Feldman mentioned that there were those present at that Monday night meeting, who objected to the City’s Declaration, and stressed the importance of having those individuals join PCRC, in order to strengthen communication within our community. All voices must be heard, and we all must work together.
- Salman Hameed, from the Islamic Center of Petaluma, talked about the anxiety members of his community are experiencing over new immigration laws. He shared his own experiences and stressed how important the IWHH Resolution is to immigrants and refugees. He also believes that ignorance fuels hate and said that his Center is doing what it can to educate Petaluma residents. The Islamic Center plans to hold an event that will help others learn about their faith. The event is scheduled to take place March 11, at 6PM, at Lucchesi Park.

5. PLAN FOR PETALUMA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FAIR

- Marjorie Helm spoke about the need for a networking fair in Petaluma that mirrors the Community Engagement Fair, which was organized by the North Bay Engagement Fair in Santa Rosa this past January. She noted a similar event, “Where Do We Go from Here,” which was held at Aqus Café, could not house the enormous turnout. Therefore, she asked PCRC to help consider options as to where to hold the event. She said those involved with this project are hoping to host a Petaluma Engagement Fair in May (possibly the 6th or 7th). She also noted to those present that Jewish Community Centers, organizations, and synagogues across our country have been experiencing bomb threats and that we need to be conscious of that.
- Police Chief Savano updated members about the department’s expanded community service programs which include, town hall (neighborhood) meetings where officers and citizens can meet informally. The purpose is to help alleviate common, yet unfounded fears about how law enforcement operates. He said there should be no fear of “run-in’s and/or arrests.” He said this program came about with assistance from faith based organizations to improve relations between police and the residents they are sworn to serve. Four community service meetings are planned for March 11, 12, 18, 19.

6. PRESENTATION BY REV. DEBORAH LEE, Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity

- Rev. Lee is Director of Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights -- a program run by the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity. Before giving her presentation, she introduced to the PCRC Members to a courageous young woman who just recently fled her country for what she hoped would be a safer life in the United States.
 - Out of concern for her personal safety, her name is being withheld from this public document. Speaking in Spanish (and relying on Rev. Lee to translate) she spoke of her plight and uncertainty as a newly arrived immigrant. She said it is vital to review the fundamental reasons why immigrants migrate to the United States. She has called America home for 1 year and 7 months, after fleeing Nicaragua. “I am an immigrant, just like 11 million in the United States,” She noted that the difference between being an immigrant and feeling like a migrant, “I entered with a Visa, but when it expired, everything changed. Now I know what it is to be a migrant. As a migrant, you don’t have access to rights. We are discriminated against because we don’t speak the language, and it hurts. We do not migrate because we want to; we do so out of necessity. I do not feel safe where I work, where I study, or on the public roads. But nevertheless, here *you* are today. Thank you, for thousands of families who have fled their countries, but not our values and roots, and power to transform and make things better in our new country. There is so much possibility to grow as a person.” To the members of PCRC she said, “You truly represent a part of God that loves life and is full of hope to know that not all Americans are against us.” In ending, she quoted Pope Francis, “Immigrants are not the danger -- they are in danger.”
- Rev. Lee’s presentation dealt with the current taboo term “Sanctuary,” and what it really means. She said the Sanctuary Movement was designed to prevent people from raw justice by offering them refuge on sacred ground. Since its roots are in the religious community, this explains why she supports the Interfaith Movement – one that is evolving again in light of the recent Federal Policies. She explained that there are 4 main strategic sanctuaries:
 1. Physical Sanctuaries –places of worship (Churches, Temples, Synagogues) and private homes (similar to the Underground railroad)
 2. “Accompaniment” – creating relationships with community. She cited a program underway in Alameda County where volunteers get matched with a newly arrived family or individual. So far this program has helped 32 families deal with such basics as school, housing, rent and employment. She noted that the irony of arriving, for all immigrants, you cannot legally work. If you cannot work, how do you pay rent or buy food for your family? “Accompaniment” helps new arrivals transition.
 3. Advocacy – The most vulnerable are those working and living outside Petaluma’s city limits, where access to schooling, city government, law enforcement, is hard to reach. Rev. Lee urged PCRC to help make Petaluma inclusive by working reaching out to Sonoma County, so that all neighborhoods, urban and rural can be helped.
 4. Networking – Rev. Lee urged Petaluma to establish Hotlines (Rapid Responders). She noted that such a program has been established in Contra Costa County – a network of protection and rapid response. Immigrants need a point of contact. They don’t know the laws. They don’t know who to call for help. Networking can offer them a critical point of contact.

Lastly, Rev Lee noted that there are 17 Congregation Sanctuaries currently operating in the Bay Area, and it is important that there be expanded sanctuaries where people can feel safe and trust those who take them in. She noted that a recent FOIA request showed that 15 people were turned over to ICE. Not one of these people had legal representation. She said that residents need to have a deportation strategy – always have legal representation to protect you and your rights. “The problem is that many aren’t aware of the laws. This is why Strategic Sanctuaries are important.” **See attachment

- Chief Savano said that is not appropriate for ICE to enter a town without notifying local law enforcement first. He added that he had heard that in some cities, ICE is no longer wearing badges or signage signifying who they are.
- During the discussion PCRC members were advised that some immigrants, who dutifully checked in with their probation officers, suddenly found themselves in the same room with an ICE agent. Faced with deportation, none of them had legal representation, required by law. It was mentioned that Sonoma County Supervisors are currently working on policy procedures and resources to address this.
- PCRC members also discussed the importance of implementing the “Truth Act” at the County level – realizing, that now more than ever, it’s crucial to set up a “Know Your Rights” Hotline.

7. UPDATES FROM PCRC MEMBERS

- Muslim Event -- March 11, at 6PM, at Lucchesi Park
- Hate-Free Petaluma posters and decals ready for distribution
- Tenant Protection Meeting – March 23, 6:30 at St. Johns Church
- Social Justice Meeting/Conference – April 28, between 9 am – 5 PM, at Petaluma Junior College

8. NEXT COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

- Thursday, March 9, 2017 @ 10:0 AM
 - **Topic to be discussed – Sanctuary Status**

9. NEXT GENERAL MEETING

- Wednesday, April 5, 2017 @ 8:00 AM

Meeting adjourned at 9:26AM