

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting -
September 16, 2015

Attendance:

Anne Fillin, George Chippendale, Ruth Chippendale, Mary Fong, Chris Lundin, Paul Chestnut

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

2. Approval of July minutes

The minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Buena Vista update

The owner of Buena Vista mobile home park has rejected a Southern California-based nonprofit organization's bid to purchase and preserve the site as a source of affordable housing. The decision was influenced by a lawsuit filed by the Buena Vista Mobile Home Park Residents Association. The lawsuit seeks to reverse the City Council's May 26 decision to approve the closure of the mobile home park, along with a package of relocation assistance benefits for the 400 mostly low-income Latino residents who would be displaced. We anticipate further developments.

4. Torture Awareness update - Letter on SB 124

At the July meeting, we decided to send a letter of support for SB 124 which aims to prevent and limit the use of solitary confinement in state and county juvenile prisons. A letter was written by Paul and all present signed the letter. It was sent to Loni Hancock, Chair of the Public Safety Committee, and to the bill's author, Senator Mark Leno.

5. Community Forum on Racism

Last Saturday, a large group of people attended the Palo Alto Kids' Carnival at Cubberley. The carnival featured a magician, a juggler, a balloon artist, a live band, inflatable slides, a bounce house, and games ranging from sack races to dance lessons and a Frisbee distance-toss. The carnival, which was co-sponsored by the City of Palo Alto, is the latest event spearheaded by Palo Alto's University AME Zion Church to help build racial and ethnic understanding and a stronger sense of interracial community in response to the June 17 massacre of black church members in Charleston, South Carolina. Rev. Kaloma Smith is leading the local movement, which other faiths and members of the community are joining. The objective of the events is

to reconcile differences and to build community.

After calling attention to the event, we had a long discussion about racism and how we feel about various awkward situations.

6. Death Penalty News

This topic was shelved until next month because Terry McCaffrey was not present.

NEW BUSINESS

7. Pope's Encyclical "On Care for our Common Home"

The topic of the Spirituality Tuesday on October 27 will be the Encyclical. The Green Committee is presenting. Presentors will be Katia Reeves, Paul Chestnut, and Ann Akey.

8. Law Enforcement Training - Support for SB11 and SB 29

Two bills to increase training for law enforcement regarding mental illness are currently on Governor Brown's desk. SB11 and SB29 require all peace officers in California to acquire additional training (more than is currently required) related to mental illness at multiple points in their careers. They would significantly increase the current requirements, and better prepare law enforcement to recognize, de-escalate and respond to incidents involving mental illness. The Governor has until October 11 to sign them. We urge everyone to call the Governor's office to urge him to sign these bills.

9. What's On Your Mind?

There is a new Youth Coordinator: Chris Mardesich. This is a good time to reach out to the Youth group to invite them to participate in parish initiatives.

10. Volunteer for Faith-sharing/Question of the Week

Next meeting - October 21, 2015