

CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS
STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: September 17, 2007
To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
From: Maria Rychlicki, Director of Human Services
Subject: Human Relations Commission Recommendation Regarding
the UNESCO 800th Anniversary of Rumi
Attachments: 1. September 6, 2007 Staff Report, Human Relations
Commission

INTRODUCTION

At the Human Relations Commission meeting of July 19, 2007, a presentation was made by Mr. Kamran Khavarani and Mr. Shahram Farshadfar regarding City sponsorship of a program celebrating the Sufi poet Rumi, as part of UNESCO's celebration of his birth 800 years ago. The verbal presentation proposed a week of activities including an exhibition of Rumi inspired paintings, dance and musical performances, poetry readings, television programming, book promotions, silent auction, brochures, posters and School District participation. No time frame other than sometime during 2007 was proposed. The Commission tabled the item and appointed a subcommittee to further research the issues and develop a recommendation for full Commission consideration.

At the Commission's meeting of September 6, 2007, following the report of the subcommittee, the Commission voted five in support and one abstention of the following motion: The Human Relations Commission does not support a program commemorating Rumi at this time. Staff supports this recommendation and suggests that a component of the upcoming March 9, 2008 Multicultural Festival incorporate recognition of Rumi and other historic figures important to the community's cultures.

Staff respectfully seeks City Council direction.

DISCUSSION

The subcommittee (Commissioners Paul Krentzman and Carol Goldsmith) met with staff on August 15, 2007. Following deliberation that ranged from the lateness and lack of specificity of the proposal, (verbal presentation rather than detailed written proposal of date, components and cost), and ability of the City to participate meaningfully in such programming to the larger issues of precedent of commemorating an historic figure for whom the majority of the Commission had minimal or no knowledge and whose works might be considered to expound upon theological ideals, the subcommittee

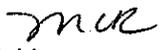
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recommended that the Commission not support a program commemorating Rumi at this time.

The recommendation was presented to the full Commission on September 6. Mr. Khavarani and Mr. Farshadfar were in attendance and following Commission deliberation, proposed that a Rumi commemoration composed of an art exhibition only be considered. The Commission continued deliberation echoing concerns about the lateness and lack of program detail and whether consideration of an art show fell under their charge. A suggestion was made that the March 9, 2008 Multicultural Festival might incorporate a component commemorating Rumi along with other historic figures important to cultures represented in the City.

RECOMMENDATION

Human Relations Commission voted five in support and one abstention of the following motion: The Human Relations Commission does not support a program commemorating Rumi at this time.



Maria Rychlicki
Approved By



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS
OFFICE OF HUMAN SERVICES

MEMORANDUM

TO: Human Relations Commission
FROM: Maria Rychlicki, Human Services Director
DATE: September 6, 2007
SUBJECT: Recommendations of the Commission Subcommittee Regarding UNESCO Celebration of Rumi

Introduction

At the July 19, 2007 Human Relations Commission meeting, a presentation was made by Mr. Kamran Khavarani and Mr. Shahram Farshadfar regarding City sponsorship of a program celebrating the poet/Sufi Rumi as part of UNESCO's celebration of his birth 800 years ago.

The Commission tabled consideration of the item until an appointed subcommittee (Commissioners Goldsmith and Krentzman) further researched the issues and developed a recommendation for full Commission consideration.

Discussion

The subcommittee met on Wednesday, August 15, 2007. Staff in attendance were Maria Rychlicki, Julie Kahn, and Brad Meyerowitz.

Staff summarized the proposal. Staff advised the subcommittee that fiscal year 2007/8 work plans and funding were already programmed. Staff also expressed concern that the proposal was received late in the year and it was unclear whether sufficient resources existed to participate meaningfully if the City were to agree to participate in the program. Staff recommended that if the City were interested in commemorating Rumi, this element could be part of the upcoming Multicultural Festival on March 9, 2008.

The subcommittee discussion noted that the cost and timing of the proposed event were secondary to the larger issue of being asked to celebrate a historic figure whom the majority of the Commission had minimal or no knowledge of. Discussion also stressed the Commission's obligation on behalf of the City to be thorough in its evaluation of all proposed programming presented for consideration. It was noted that the City has not commemorated any individuals who have had great impact on our community and nation-at-large (such as Martin Luther King). In light of this, the subcommittee could not recommend commemorating an individual with less impact on the community.

The subcommittee agreed that City programming endorsed by the Commission should have either current or long-term merit and relevance to the community, should be educational and enriching, and not a vehicle for commercial ventures.

Brad Meyerowitz was asked about criteria used by the Fine Art Commission when evaluating proposed City programs. He noted that there can be no sales concurrent with or following any program.

Discussion also noted that while presented as universal, Rumi's works do expound upon theological ideals and concern was expressed about the precedent of the City supporting a program commemorating such ideals. The subcommittee recommended that programming supported by the Commission should not reflect religious or political ideals.

It was also noted that even if Rumi's works were determined to be secular, and the Commission recommended a program commemorating him, as in any City endeavor, a full understanding of what is celebrated must be reflected in the programming. This understanding is not clear with respect to the proposed program and Rumi's works at this time.

Finally, the subcommittee discussed whether formal criteria should be developed with respect to Commission review of programming, including the vendors that will participate in the March 9, 2008 Multicultural Festival. There did not appear to be formal consensus on this point.

Recommendation

The subcommittee recommended that the Commission not support a program commemorating Rumi at this time. The Commission may wish to consider formal guidelines for reviewing future requests for program participation/sponsorship received by the City and forwarded to the Commission for comment and recommendations.