



COUNTY OF SONOMA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Commission on Human Rights

January 28, 2008

**Permit & Resource Management Department
2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95404**

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Juanita Ashe, Judy Boyce, Herb Genelly, Dalia Goldschmidt-Sheff, Chris Rohde, Marie Sparks, Robert Villegas

Commissioners Absent:

Staff Present: Taryn Lewis, Maggie Martin

I. Call to Order/Introductions: Boyce called to order at 5:31 PM

II. Consent Items:

Approval of Agenda: The Agenda was approved.

Approval of December 17, 2007 Minutes: The Minutes were approved.

III. Public Comment: None.

IV. Commission Update:

Swearing in of New Commissioner (if appropriate): None.

Openings and Appointments: Rohde announced that there are eight openings in Districts 1 (2 openings), 3 (3 openings), 4 (2 openings) and 5 (1 opening).

Martin also reported that Sparks has been reappointed to represent the 5th District, and she has been in contact with Supervisor Kerns' office to recommend that Genelly be reappointed.

V. Supervisor Communication Update: None.

VI. Old Business:

Strategic Planning (Work Plan Development): Boyce pointed out that the draft prepared by Martin had been distributed and asked for any additional comments, revisions or suggestions.

MOTION By Genelly: "Approve the Work Plan as drafted with any appropriate revisions or comments that might be provided by Commissioners and/or Human Resources management prior to submission to the Board of Supervisors for approval." Second by Rohde and carried unanimously.

Meeting Calendar for 2008: Rohde reminded the Commission of the previous discussions on changing regular meeting dates in March, May and December of 2008 to avoid conflicts with holidays. He pointed out that an item of new business would address

changing the meeting regular meeting date, and suggested that the Commission only vote on the March meeting date at this time, pending discussion of the new business item.

MOTION by Rohde: *Move to approve holding the March meeting on Monday, March 17th and table discussion of further changes to a later meeting.*” Second by Sparks and carried unanimously.

Human Trafficking: Martin reported that, although no definite plans are set yet, she is expecting that Michael Corey Davis, producer of two documentaries on human trafficking to participate in showings of each of his films with panel discussions to follow. She does not have details on the timing, format, or cost of the event but hopes that more details will be available for the Commission’s consideration at the February meeting.

VII. New Business:

Human Rights Awards Event: Boyce remarked that she thought this year’s event was a success and asked each Commissioner to give his/her feedback and suggestions for how to improve the event next year.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the event and the feasibility of holding the 5th Annual Awards in 2009, given the work involved. Suggestions for next year included eliminating assigned seating, increasing the ticket price, exploring the possibility of having videos of each recipient to highlight their work rather than the speeches, eliminating the keynote speaker to allow more time for videos, and that the planning committee give Commissioners specific assignments throughout the year to ensure that the work can be carried out. Martin reported that she has made a tentative reservation for the Furth Center on Saturday, January 17, 2009 and that a \$500.00 deposit is required to secure that reservation.

MOTION by Rohde: *“Approve paying \$500 deposit to reserve the Furth Center for the 2008 Human Rights Awards on Saturday, January 17, 2009.”* Second by Sparks and carried unanimously.

Confederate Flag Displays at Maria Carillo High: Martin explained that she had been contacted by Phyllis Rosenfield of Listening for a Change with concerns that students had been displaying the Confederate flag and there is at least one allegation of a noose being thrown at a black student. The students who displayed the flag contend that it is, for them, a symbol of their heritage and does not represent any bias. Rosenfield had explained that several people in the School’s community had contacted her, because they felt the School’s administration was not handling the situation properly and there was no sensitivity for those who are offended by the symbol.

Genelly explained that he had attended a meeting of the Santa Rosa District School Board to represent CHR and make a joint statement about the incidents. He reported that, as he understands it, the administration has made no attempt to foster dialogue on the issue. He also explained that students had held a protest on the matter. The black student has asked that no additional attention be drawn to his experiences for fear of retaliation. He explained that the item will be heard at the next Board meeting in February.

CAHRO Conference Debrief and Discussion: Villegas reported that he found the conference to be very beneficial. Sparks, Genelly, Boyce and Goldschmidt-Sheff all commented on the conference as a whole and the breakout sessions they attended. For the most part, everyone found the information useful and were glad for the opportunity to attend.

Challenge Day: Travis White spoke on behalf of Petaluma Circle of Change, a project under the Petaluma Healthy Community Consortium (HC²) and presented information and a video on Challenge Day. Challenge day is a program designed for schools that works “to demonstrate the possibility of love and connection through the celebration of diversity, truth and full expression.” In introducing the video, White explained that having attended a Challenge Day event in Healdsburg, he found it to be a transformational experience in which empathy and compassion are used to give all members of the school’s community self awareness and the tools for conflict resolution. The Petaluma Circle of Change project’s objective is to sponsor 10 Challenge Day programs in the Petaluma High Schools. The cost for each program is \$3,200 plus an additional \$2,000 per year/per school for ongoing support. He invited CHR to help this effort through financial sponsorships and/or volunteer opportunities for Commissioners.

Regular Meeting Day: Boyce explained that the Officers had asked that the Commission consider changing the date of its regular meeting to avoid frequent conflicts with holidays and travel schedules. This matter had been discussed and dismissed previously but most of the Commissioners for whom a change in meeting date posed a problem are no longer serving on the Commission. Martin reported that Jaillet had researched “open dates” in the Permit and Resource Management Hearing Room calendar and that the room is available on the 4th Tuesday and Thursday of most months. After some discussion the matter was tabled to allow Commissioners to consider how the change would affect their calendars.

VIII. Staff Report:

Meeting Schedules: Martin announced a new procedure for e-mail communications on scheduling meetings. Starting immediately, she asked all Commissioners to direct any messages on meetings to the Commission’s general e-mail address (chr@sonoma-county.org). This change will a) ensure that she and Jaillet have access to the information and b) eliminate problems that have occurred when one or the other of them is omitted from an “exchange” on setting a meeting.

Contact Information: Martin reported that she expects to have this project completed for distribution by the February meeting.

Correspondence: None.

Update on Staff Activities: Martin reported that she is primarily focused on finalizing the Work Plans. She also mentioned the fact that the office will be redecorated in the near future. She will send out additional information on this and how it will affect communications with the office once more details are known.

IX. Activity Reports:

Events: Covered under Old Business.

Strengthening the Commission: No report.

Communicating with the Public: No report.

Educating the Public: Sparks announced that visits are needed to all the high school campuses so that we can develop contacts for diversity clubs at each School. Our previous attempts to get this information by sending out a questionnaire or calling the administrative offices have been unsuccessful. So, this Spring we work on making personal visits. She asked Commissioners to help by visiting the schools in their communities/districts.

She has been in contact with the Windsor High School Diversity Club and will continue to explore ways that we can support them before the end of this academic year. She also would like to reestablish communications with Cloverdale's Diversity Club.

Developing Ties with Human Rights Organizations & Building Strategic Partnerships: None.

X. District Report / Commissioner Announcements:

Human Rights Day in Sonoma County: Sparks reported that she had appeared before the Board of Supervisors in December to thank them for proclaiming December 10th to be Human Rights Day in Sonoma County. This proclamation recognizes International Human Rights Day that honors the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Proclamation on Human Rights. Sparks noted that she was moved by the remarks Martin had prepared based on comments made by Eleanor Roosevelt, Chair of the U.N.'s Human Rights Commission that drafted the Universal Declaration.

Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Sonoma County: Rohde reported that he had appeared together with Rebecca Hollingsworth, Chair, Commission on the Status of Women to thank the Board for their proclamation recognizing the first Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Sonoma County (January 11, 2008). He also noted that the proclamation was also supported by the District Attorney as well as the County's Health Services, Human Services, Probation and Sheriff's Departments. He thanked Martin for coordinating the joint request to the Board.

Petaluma Public Access (PCA) Station: Genelly reported that the problems experienced by the administration of and the Hispanic contributors to PCA are resolving themselves through continued dialogue.

Upcoming Seminar in Petaluma (3/14/2008): Ashe reported that she had decided to hold a seminar because of the continued violence that threatens youth today. The roundtable question-and-answer session, titled "Working Together to Build a Better Tomorrow," will feature numerous community leaders, including Steve Hood (Chief, Petaluma Police Department) and Carl Wong (Superintendent, Sonoma County Office of Education). She invited everyone to attend and promised to get flyers out soon.

XI. Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Monday, February 25, 2008 at 5:30 PM.

XII. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 PM.