



COUNTY OF SONOMA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Commission on Human Rights

September 25, 2006

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

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Catherine Andrade, Juanita Ashe, Abigail Barajas, Judy Boyce, Herb Genelly, Dalia Goldschmidt-Sheff, Sally Miller, Chris Rohde, Anne-Jeanne Rothchild, Marie Sparks

Commissioners Absent: Reece Foxen (Notified), David Wilson (Notified)

Community Members Present: Ramon Rodriguez, Vicki Mayster and Molly Goss (Catholic Charities), Davin Cardenas (Graton Day Labor Committee)

Staff Present: Dawn Matheny, Maggie Martin

I. Call to Order/Introductions: Sparks called to order at 5:35 PM.

II. Consent Items:

Approval of Agenda: The Agenda was approved.

Approval of August 28, 2006 Minutes: The Minutes were reviewed and approved.

III. Commission Update: None.

IV. Public Comment:

Ramon Rodriguez, a Santa Rosa resident, introduced himself and expressed his interest in working with and/or serving on the Commission.

Immigration and Day Labor Issues: Vickie Mayster, Molly Goss and Davin Cardenas all addressed the Commission as part of the informational presentation on immigration issues and the recent displays of “racial hatred” shown to day laborers in Fulton. Some highlights of the presentations were:

- Catholic Charities provides support for uniting families separated due to immigration restrictions/issues, by teaching English to immigrants, and by offering services to the victims of domestic violence.
- The immigration process is extremely lengthy and complex because:
 - Immigration legislation is extremely complex and often paradoxical.
 - Immigration policies limit the number of new residents and citizens in each administrative district. The number of illegal immigrants creates large backlogs.
 - The immigration approval process is lengthy resulting in additional delays.
- A major concern is that the increasingly negative language used by those demonstrating against the Day Laborers in Fulton will escalate into victimization, scapegoating and violence.

- The opposition to illegal immigrants is based primarily on misconceptions that they do not work hard, are only seeking residency to get welfare, and need only follow a simple process to gain legal status here.
- The “primary contradiction in this situation is in the economic system.”
- One viable means of support for the Day Labors is an organized hiring process/organization.
- Dialogue on the issue is the one avenue for all the parties concerned within a community to find common ground and work to resolve differences.
- The Commission should consider ways it could promote safe places and community forums in which everyone could feel comfortable and speak openly.

V. Old Business:

Nominations and Elections of Officers: Sparks reviewed the current slate of nominations: Sparks for Chair, Rohde and Miller for Vice-Chair, Rohde and Miller for Officer-at-Large. She then called for additional nominations from the floor. The nominations and elections for each position were conducted as follows:

- **Chair:** No additional nominations were made. Sparks turned asked Boyce to conduct the election. Motion by Miller: “*Elect Marie Sparks as Chair by acclamation.*” Seconded by Rohde. Motion carried unanimously. Boyce returned the gavel to Sparks.
- **Vice-Chair:** Miller removed her name as a nominee. No additional nominations were made. Motion by Boyce: “*Elect Rohde as Vice-Chair by acclamation.*” Seconded by Miller. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Officer-at-Large:** Miller removed her name as a nominee and nominated Boyce for the position. Boyce accepted. Motion by Miller: “*Elect Boyce as Officer-at-Large by acclamation.*” Seconded by Troutt. Motion carried unanimously.

Commission Structure (Coordinator, Liaison and Committee Chairs): Sparks reviewed the list of proposed appointed positions and explained that the chart only includes an abbreviated description of duties. Job descriptions for the appointed positions will be developed and presented. Motion by Boyce (later amended by Rohde): “*Approve the slate of nominations and appointed positions as revised.*” The Commission discussed the position titles and roles a length and agreed that revisions were appropriate.

Training for Commissioners: Sparks informed Commissioners that the ethics training held in Petaluma on September 20, 2006 was excellent. She reminded Commissioners who did not attend, that the session on October 12th (5:30 – 7:30 PM; at the Board of Supervisors Chambers) will satisfy the requirement for training. She also reminded those who attended the September training so give a copy of their orange certificate of completion to the Commission Office.

Race Equality Week Tabling Sign-Ups: Martin distributed the list/schedule for those who have signed up to table at the Race Equality Week Festival (Sunday, October 15, 2006). She asked that people sign up for the empty “slots” and asked if someone would be willing to deliver and set-up the booth.

VI. New Business:

Petaluma Community Response: Genelly reported that he had been involved with a recent alleged hate crime in Petaluma. After investigating, the Petaluma Police Department learned that the youth in question had fabricated a story about being assaulted by a group

of Caucasian youths to cover up for having been drinking (he is a minor) and injured himself. Genelly commented that he was impressed by the seriousness with which the community took the situation and the fact that the neighborhood had launched a “grass roots” effort to display posters against hate.

Given the fact that no hate-motivated incident had actually taken place, Genelly did not feel that there would be support for a “community event.” Miller suggested that instead of hosting a community forum, the Commission could consider recognizing the Petaluma Police and the citizens for their prompt and effective response to the alleged crime, perhaps in front of the Petaluma City Council. This idea received general support from many present, and Genelly agreed to work on plans for a recognition.

Coffee Sponsorship Follow-Up Calls: Rothchild reported that sponsorships are down from last year. The office had sent letters to all those who sponsored the event previously and several have not responded or decreased their level of support.

Martin reported that approximately 175 letters soliciting sponsorships had been mailed to local businesses that had not supported the Coffee Awards in previous years. She asked Commissioners to volunteer for making follow-up calls to those businesses in hopes of increasing sponsorship. Genelly, Rohde and Troutt volunteered to assist.

VII. Staff Report:

Commission Meeting Agenda Process: Matheny reminded Commissioners that anyone can ask for an item to be added to the Commission meeting Agenda. However, given the requirements for posting the public notice for the meeting, agenda items need to be given to the Commission office 10 business days before the meeting.

Other Matters:

- Matheny reminded Commissioners that with a reduced staff, the Commission Office has closed during business hours, particularly between 12:30 and 1:00 PM. She urged Commissioners to call the office before stopping by.
- Matheny explained that the office’s conference room is available for Commissioners to use for meetings of their workgroups. With the new structure, these will not always be “regular” meeting times. Staff will send out notices to workgroup members at the request of Commissioners involved. Commissioners are welcome to schedule/reserve our conference room by contacting the office.
- Matheny suggested that the new structure may result more “business” being conducted at the Commission-level rather than on the committee-level. Therefore, Commission meetings may run longer than in the past.

VIII. Activity Reports:

Education: In Foxen’s absence, Matheny reported that the Hate Free Campaign is under way at Windsor High School. Foxen has been working with the school’s administration to set the schedule for the student and parent training modules of the program.

Events: Rothchild reported that plans are moving along for this year’s Awards Event. Nominations are due by Friday, September 29th, and this year’s recipients will be named by November 1st. Assemblymember Mark Leno has confirmed that he will deliver the keynote address. We plan to have tickets for sale by November. Admission for Adults will be \$10.00 in advance and \$15.00 at the door; youth tickets (up to age 18) will be \$5.00.

Public Relations & Marketing:

- *Current Committee Projects:* Rothchild reported that, now the speech templates have been distributed to all Commissioners, she is working on the Power Point presentation for Commissioners to use when making a presentation on the Commission in the community.
- *Race Equality Week:* Ashe reported that she will be making a presentation to the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, October 10, 2006 (8:30 AM) in support of a Gold Resolution declaring October 7 – 15 to be Race Equality Week in Sonoma County.
Plans for the Festival are going forward. The planning committee expects a great turnout for the Festival on Sunday, October 15th. The event will be held at the Findlay Center from Noon to 6:00 PM.

VIII. District Report / Commissioner Announcements:

Holocaust Commemoration. Goldschmidt-Sheff reported that she volunteered to help with and represented the Commission at the event. She thanked the Commission for sponsoring her attendance. She explained that the event was held to honor both the survivors of the Holocaust and expanded to recognize those who either were evacuated or went into hiding from the Nazis.

Hate Crime Training for Law Enforcement Professionals: Miller reported that she has been working with the California Department of Justice and the FBI's local bureau on coordinating a training session expressly for law enforcement professionals. The training is being sponsored by the Commission in conjunction with the District Attorney and Sheriff. So far, officers from Sonoma, Napa and Marin counties have registered.

IX. Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held on Monday, October 23, 2006 at 5:30 PM.

X. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM.