



COUNTY OF SONOMA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Commission on Human Rights

February 26, 2007

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

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Juanita Ashe, Judy Boyce, Reece Foxen, Dalia Goldschmidt-Sheff, Sally Miller, Chris Rohde, Anne-Jeanne Rothchild, Marie Sparks, Harry Troutt, Robert Villegas, David Wilson

Commissioners Absent: Catherine Andrade (Notified), Abigail Barajas (Notified), Herb Genelly (Notified)

Community Members Present: Chris Benton, Kitten Troutt

Staff Present: Dawn Matheny, Maggie Martin

I. Call to Order/Introductions: Sparks called to order at 5:40 PM.

II. Consent Items:

Approval of Agenda: The Agenda was approved.

Approval of January 22, 2007 Minutes: The Minutes were reviewed, revised and approved.

III. Public Comment: Chris Benton, a resident of Santa Rosa, spoke to the Commission about The Citizens Commission on Human Rights. This organization is dedicated to raising awareness about human rights violations against the mentally ill. He left information packets for the Commissioners to review.

IV. Commission Update:

Update on Openings and Appointments: One opening remains in the 4th District. Matheny reported that there is now a waiting list of individuals interested in serving on the Commission from districts in which there is no vacancy. Troutt reported that Supervisor Reilly has reinstated him for another term.

V. Supervisor Communication Update:

Rothchild reported that she had copied Supervisor Brown on her e-mail about her response to the recent article in the Press Democrat about “slang” at Maria Carillo High School.

Sparks will be contacting Supervisor Reilly to set up a meeting.

VI. Old Business:

Position Descriptions for Liaisons and Coordinators: Sparks reiterated her request for written comments, ideas and suggestions for the descriptions of appointed positions on the Commission. She asked that all input be submitted to staff by February 28th.

VII. New Business:

Strategic Planning: Matheny explained that the Commission should schedule a strategic planning session during the summer. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that a) staff should research issues surrounding having the meeting at Sparks' home, b) research alternative meeting locations, and c) reserve space for the dates of July 12th, July 14th, July 19th and/or July 21st.

Matheny also informed the Commission that she is available to return as "extra-help" to lead the Commission's session. A brief discussion ensued, and it was agreed that staff will work with the Officers on developing the session's format.

VIII. Staff Report:

Bylaw/Ordinance Approval Process: Matheny announced that the revised governing Ordinance has been referred to Theresa Cunningham of the County Counsel's office. At this point, it appears that the Ordinance will be presented to the Board for approval at its April 10th meeting. Staff will share the draft with the Officers once County Counsel has approved it.

Correspondence: None.

Update on Staff Activities: Matheny reported that \$2,500 of additional program funds for Commissioner travel and training expenses has been incorporated into the Human Resources departmental budget rather than being submitted to the Board for approval as a program improvement.

Matheny also reminded the Commissioners that she will be out on Fridays. She has also been called for jury duty on the week of March 5th through the 9th.

Matheny explained that Commissioners are welcome to use our conference room for meetings. She asked that they schedule the room through Nadine, because the room is used frequently by the Volunteer and Intern Programs as well as by the Commission on the Status of Women.

IX. Activity Reports:

Ad Hoc Events Committee: Rothchild reported that the group had begun planning the next Coffee Awards event. The date has been moved to January 12, 2008, because of a) the difficulty with having an event during the holiday season, b) challenges experienced in getting youth award nominations submitted in early September and c) the opportunity to join in (and contribute to) the community's celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday. The sponsorship and nomination materials are being updated and should be available by the next Commission meeting.

Based on our experiences last year, Rothchild let Commissioners know that they will be asked to consider helping solicit sponsorships and/or publicize the youth award at local schools before the end of this school year. She also let them know to expect that they will be assigned to help before and after the event with set and/or clean-up duties.

Martin explained that she was circulating a sign up sheet. The sheet is designed to allow Commissioners to sign up for a number of the Commission's current "campaigns." The form includes not only the sponsorship and youth award outreach efforts for the event but also the Education Workgroup's Diversity Club outreach for schools and the Community Action Committee's outreach to organizations and clubs in the County.

Education: Foxen reported that Windsor is still having difficulties finding a time for the parent and student training components of the Hate Free Campus project. She will continue to work with them to get the arrangements finalized.

Foxen also explained that she and Gail Vann, a volunteer with the Workgroup, have meetings set up with Elsie Allen, Montgomery and Santa Rosa High Schools to discuss the Hate Free Campus project. She hopes to identify one or more of them as a potential candidate for the program in the future.

Foxen also explained that she is contacting schools throughout the County to develop a contact list for diversity clubs on campus. She hopes to identify the faculty/staff advisor and/or the groups' student leadership as a starting point to develop further programs that can support these on-campus activities.

Public Relations & Marketing: Rothchild explained that she is working on revisions to the PowerPoint presentation shown at the previous meeting and the script for a presentation. She expects to have these completed before the next meeting and will e-mail these to the Commissioners once they are available.

Community Action Committees (CACs): Sparks reported Teresa Giusto is working in the office on a temporary basis to complete the data entry of contact information for local non-profit and service organizations. Once this is completed, staff will be working on a mailing to these groups offering to make a presentation on human rights and the Commission at one of their meetings. She asked Commissioners to consider signing up to help follow-up, coordinate and make presentations.

Community Events:

- **Cinco de Mayo:** Villegas has contacted Sheriff Cogbill and asked if he could represent CHR and help with the planning committee's work. He will be attending the next meeting on March 5th, and expects to receive copies of the records of previous meetings soon.

Martin reported that the office has received the form for reserving a tabling space at the event. She will get the reservation made, including payment of the fee. She will share copies with Villegas.

Community Response: Matheny reported for Genelly on three issues:

- **“Slang” Issues from Maria Carillo High:** A lengthy discussion of the recent article in the Press Democrat took place with Commissioners expressing their concern over the “sensationalism” of the coverage.
- **Southern Poverty Law Center Reporting on Petaluma Incident:** Genelly noticed that the Southern Poverty Law Center had reported on the incident that occurred in Petaluma without noting the outcome determining that it was not hate-related. He has written a letter asking that the outcome be noted.
- **Pyramid of Hate Discussion:** Genelly spoke to someone who had picked up a copy of the Pyramid of Hate poster at last year's Race Equality Week and had misunderstood it. He had a lengthy discussion in which he went over the Pyramid in detail.

Criminal Justice: Miller reported the group has not been meeting recently. She did note that in reading the Anti-Defamation League's bulletins, several hate groups are active and meeting regularly in the Bay Area. However, she has not seen any indication of that taking place in Sonoma County.

Current Events & Press Response: Goldschmidt-Sheff reported that, aside from the press coverage of the “Maria Carillo slang issue” she has also noted the possibility of a hate incident having occurred in Boyes Hot Springs recently involving alleged “profiling” by law enforcement officials.

X. District Report / Commissioner Announcements:

- Plenary Conference in Los Angeles: Foxen reported that the training was great although not what she had expected. The sessions stressed the importance of building bridges of trust to all groups – even those associated with hate activities, because trust forms the basis for understanding, common ground, and the opportunity for dialogue.
- Wilson announced that he does not plan to ask to be reappointed at the end of his term in April. He has other commitments that preclude his being able to participate in the Commission’s activities.
- Sparks reported that Sgt. Dave Anderson is retiring from the Sheriff’s Department. He has worked in the Guerneville Substation for quite a while and always supported the Commission and the West County CAC’s activities and goals. The Rotary is sponsoring a retirement party for him, and Sparks plans to attend. She plans to thank him for his work supporting diversity awareness and acceptance.

XI. Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held on Monday, March 26, 2007 at 5:30 PM.

XII. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 PM.