



COUNTY OF SONOMA  
**COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

*Commission on Human Rights*

*March 26, 2007*

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

***MINUTES***

**Commissioners Present:** Juanita Ashe, Abigail Barajas, Judy Boyce, Reece Foxen, Herb Genelly, Dalia Goldschmidt-Sheff, Sally Miller, Chris Rohde, Marie Sparks, Harry Troutt, Robert Villegas, David Wilson

**Commissioners Absent:** Catherine Andrade (Notified), Anne-Jeanne Rothchild (Not Notified)

**Community Members Present:** Luis Kong, 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 February 26, 2007 Minutes: The Minutes were reviewed and approved.

**III. Public Comment:** Luis Kong a 30-year resident of Sonoma County addressed the Commission on behalf of a coalition that works to counter the criminalization of illegal immigrants. The Coalition promulgates information on human rights for immigrants. One major aim has been to create a “space for dialogue” on these issues through house meetings and other forums. Their major initiative is to produce a pocket “referral guide” to increase awareness about rights and services. This will be produced in several languages so it can reach a number of the County’s ethnic communities.

**IV. Commission Update:**

Openings and Appointments: There is one opening in District 4. There will be two additional openings shortly. One in District 1 when Wilson’s term expires, and one in District 3, when Andrade’s resignation is finalized. Sparks read Andrade’s letter stating her intention to resign to due other commitments but her desire to remain involved with the Commission’s work and assist with the Education Workgroup.

**V. Supervisor Communication Update:** Sparks met with Supervisor Reilly, and they discussed a number of issues, including the possibility that Supervisors refer applications from those interested in serving on the Commission to the office for review prior to appointment.

## **VI. Old Business:**

Position Descriptions for Liaisons and Coordinators: Martin distributed the draft of several descriptions for review. She and Sparks will continue working on this project with the objective of having the descriptions finalized by the May meeting.

Strategic Planning Process: Boyce reported that the Human Resources Training Room was not available on any of the dates selected at the last Commission meeting. Martin announced that there was not a problem with holding the session at a location that is not part of the County's facilities. The group discussed alternative dates and formats briefly.

**Motion by Boyce:** *"Hold Commission's strategic planning session at Sparks' residence from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on Thursday, July 12, 2007."* Seconded by Goldschmidt-Sheff. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

## **VII. New Business:**

Slang Issues at Maria Carillo: Goldschmidt-Sheff expressed her concern about how the Commission can respond effectively to situations promptly, given the restrictions that the Brown Act imposes on CHR's meetings. Although she supports Commissioners writing in response to incidents, she asked whether there should/could be a more appropriate and formal way of responding in a timely manner. The group discussed this issue at some length. It was agreed that the Officers should consider the merits of developing a "generic" letter(s) that can be sent on behalf of the Commission as a whole. Beyond that, the group agreed that Commissioners are always able to work together on a response (e.g., letter or community meeting) without waiting for the full Commission to respond.

Foxen announced that she had sent a letter directly to Maria Carillo offering the Commission's support and services in handling diversity-based problems they may face in the wake of the recent publicity.

"Understanding Whiteness" Seminar Report and Proposed Exercise for Commission Meetings: Barajas, Boyce and Foxen attended this seminar sponsored by the YWCA on diversity with a focus of understanding the privileges that whites enjoy in our society. All three reported that they found the seminar to be enlightening and were impressed by the presenter and the exercises. Barajas shared copies of the seminar handouts with the Commissioners.

Barajas shared that she found seminar's exercises helped broadened her understanding of internal prejudices that erode our acceptance of diversity. She proposed that a brief exercise in diversity awareness be included in each Commission meeting. A lengthy discussion followed during which many points of view were shared. At the conclusion, the consensus was that since Commission meetings are public business meetings, they are not conducive to personal exercise.

Nominations and Elections: Rohde reminded Commissioners that it will soon be time to elect officers again. Nominations will be taken from the floor at the May meeting and elections will be held at the June meeting. He also announced his intention to nominate Boyce as Chair and Sparks as Officer-at-Large (assuming she decides not to ask for a reappointment when her term is up in January).

## **VIII. Staff Report:**

Reorganization: Matheny announced that the specifications for the EEO Manager position were approved by the Civil Service Commission, and recruiting for the position should begin in April.

Bylaw/Ordinance Approval Process: Martin reported that the revisions to the Ordinance governing CHR should go to the Board for approval on April 24<sup>th</sup> and then for final approval on May 1<sup>st</sup>. She also explained that in reviewing the material to be submitted, an error in definition of a Quorum stated in the version of the Bylaws, previously approved by the Board, was discovered. Therefore, the Item will also ask for an approval of the revised definition of that term.

Attendance: Martin distributed the attendance report. Sparks noted that several Commissioners have missed the maximum allowable number of meeting (3) in this fiscal year. She asked that Commissioners be aware of their attendance.

Correspondence: Matheny reported that she had received a phone message from May McConnell, of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) asking that the Commission support the development of a resource card on human rights. Given the presentation earlier in the meeting, she expects to have more details about the type of support requested in the near future.

Update on Staff Activities: Matheny explained that she has been primarily focused on drafting the Report that the Commission on the Status of Women has been working on during this biennium.

## **IX. Activity Reports:**

Ad Hoc Events Committee: Sparks reported the following highlights of the Committee's activities:

- The event will include a pasta/salad bar dinner.
- The Committee is working on outreach to advisors of diversity clubs at local high schools to publicize the Youth Award in hopes of increasing the nominations in this category.
- Rothchild and Sparks have been working with Martin on finalizing the sponsorship mailing pieces, and the mailing should begin by mid-April.
- Our partners are working to identify a keynote speaker, preferably someone from the Hispanic community.

Education: Foxen reported the following:

- The student training session of the Windsor Hate Free Campus Project at Windsor High has been scheduled for Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. The session will be held as the Sonoma County Office of Education and Highfeather will provide lunch. Jason Higashi has agreed to attend and is interested in fostering training opportunities at Windsor Middle School.
- Healdsburg Middle School has expressed an interest in diversity training for all 500 students.
- Foxen and Gail Vann (volunteer on the Education Committee) have visited Santa Rosa Montgomery High Schools to discuss the Hate Free Campus Project. Thus far, it seems as though Santa Rosa High may be a candidate for the program in the 2007-8 academic year.

Public Relations & Marketing: No report.

Community Action Committees (CACs): Sparks reported Teresa Giusto has completed data entry of contact information for local non-profit and service organizations. She will

be working with staff to complete a mailing designed to raise awareness about CHR and its activities among these organizations.

Community Events:

- **Cinco de Mayo:** Villegas attended the planning meeting on March 5<sup>th</sup> and was impressed by the comprehensiveness of the plans for this event. Thus far \$27,500 in sponsorships have been raised.

He also learned that there is an opportunity for CHR to sponsor a float in the parade. He is willing to drive his convertible and asked which Commissioners might be interested in participating. He will find out what, if any, additional costs there is associate with participating in the parade.

Martin reported that problems she had encountered with registering CHR as a vendor to exhibit have been resolved. The organizers have assured her that a table has been reserved. She expects to have the registration finalized and the fee paid within a couple of weeks.

- **Gay Pride Festival:** Barajas has not heard from the event sponsors. Foxen offered to contact the organizers of last year's event and ask who is responsible for organizing this year's Festival.
- **Race Equality Week:** Barajas attended the last planning meeting. At this point, the City does not have the staff to support the event planning process. Therefore, Community Baptist Church has taken over handling some of the logistics.

Community Response: Genelly reported that he has been attending the Healthy Community Consortium (HC<sup>2</sup>) of Petaluma planning meetings. Thus far, their major concern have related to alcohol mitigation in the downtown area.

Criminal Justice: Miller reported that Larry Scofus has retired from the District Attorney's office. With the loss of this supporter of the Criminal Justice network, she is working to arrange a meeting with District Attorney Stephan Passalacqua, Sheriff Bill Cogbill, Santa Rosa Police Chief Ed Flint to discuss the network and explore possible activities.

Current Events & Press Response: Goldschmidt-Sheff reported that she has written a letter to the editor of the Press Democrat in response to the recent hate incident involving hateful graffiti being painted on local schools, churches and synagogues. She hopes it will be published shortly.

**X. District Report / Commissioner Announcements:**

- Sparks reported that she will be presenting a certificate of appreciation to Sgt. Anderson of the Sheriff's Department for his work supporting diversity awareness/acceptance in the West County area.
- Goldschmidt-Sheff announced that Congregation Shomrei Torah will hold commemorations of the Holocaust on April 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Miller reported that a bill is before the California Assembly that will strengthen charges brought against those who commit crimes against the homeless by adding a hate-crime enhancement.

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

**XII. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 PM.