



COUNTY OF SONOMA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Commission on Human Rights

April 23, 2007

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

Minutes

Commissioners Present: Juanita Ashe, Judy Boyce, Reece Foxen, Sally Miller, Chris Rohde, Anne-Jeanne Rothchild, Harry Troutt, Robert Villegas

Commissioners Absent: Abigail Barajas (Notified), Herb Genelly (Notified), Dalia Goldschmidt-Sheff (Notified), Marie Sparks (Notified)

Community Members Present: Luis Kong, Mei Nakano, Kitten Troutt

Staff Present: Dawn Matheny, Maggie Martin

I. Call to Order/Introductions: Rohde called the meeting to order at 5:40 PM.

II. Consent Items:

Approval of Agenda: The Agenda was approved.

Approval of March 26, 2007 Minutes: The Minutes were reviewed and approved.

III. Public Comment: None.

IV. Commission Update:

Openings and Appointments: There are openings in Districts 1, 3 and 4. Barajas', Miller's and Rothchild's terms expire in June. Rohde reminded these Commissioners to contact their appointing Supervisor to express interest in being reappointed.

V. Supervisor Communication Update: None.

Old Business: None.

VI. New Business:

Committee on Immigrant Rights for Sonoma County: Luis Kong explained that the Committee was formed to counter efforts to criminalize illegal immigrants and individuals and non-profits who support these individuals. Their activities have included vigils, marches, voter registrations initiatives and open dialogues held at "house meetings." They are concerned with the separation of families due to detention and deportment.

Recently, they have undertaken producing and publishing a brochure explaining immigrants' rights so that these individuals know how to respond to law enforcement. They plan to begin with a version of the brochure in Spanish and then extend that to reach immigrants of other ethnicities.

Kong asked for the Commission's "support" for the brochure. After a discussion, it was clarified that the Commission cannot assist with funding, but could consider endorsing

and/or assisting with distribution. A number of aspects of this issue were discussed; including the accuracy of the draft brochure presented to the Commission, the importance of organizations networking with law enforcement and the possibility of having a Commissioner act as a Liaison to learn more about the Committee. The group also discussed the fact that County Counsel would have to review and approve the brochure before the Commission could endorse it. It was concluded that further consideration of the Committee's request would be taken up by the Officers to develop recommendations for the Commission's further consideration.

Kong invited Commissioners to attend the Committee's meetings. These are held at 7:00 PM on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month. He also invited Commissioners to join the March for Immigrant Rights on May 1st at Julliard Park.

Mei Nakano, officer of the Japanese American League of Sonoma County and former Commissioner on CHR, spoke briefly about how important it is for everyone to be aware of their constitutional rights. As a case in point, she reminded everyone that the Japanese sent to internment camps in World War II either were not aware or were afraid to assert their legal rights.

VII. Staff Report:

Reorganization: Matheny announced that the EEO Manager recruitment is under way. Interviews for are scheduled for May 24th and 25th.

She also announced that the Conference room located inside the office will be converted to the EEO Manager's office. Maggie will move to her office so that small meetings can be held there.

Governing Ordinance Approval Process: Martin reported that the Agenda Item for the Ordinance did not go to the Board as scheduled. Therefore, the Board is scheduled to hear the matter at its May 1st meeting.

Mileage Reimbursement Program (RSVP): Martin reminded Commissioners that the Volunteer Center sponsors a program that reimburses seniors for the mileage they incur when volunteering. With Dawn's retirement, she will assume responsibility for administering the program. Given the increasing pressure for documentation and program audits, she asked that Commissioners also provide her with a list of their activities associated with the requested reimbursements.

She also reminded Commissioners that if they volunteer for more than one organization, they can submit separate reimbursement requests through each organization. She offered to help Commissioners get the necessary forms and information to take advantage of this program.

Correspondence: Matheny reported that she has been contacted by the National Association for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) about their initiative for introducing a mental health response team. This comes after the recent incident in Sebastopol in which a youth allegedly suffering from mental illness was killed by officers when responding to a life-threatening emergency. They would like ask for the Commission's support of this effort and plan to attend the May meeting.

Update on Staff Activities: Matheny explained that she has been primarily focused on drafting the Report that the Commission on the Status of Women and tying up the other loose ends before her retirement in early May.

VIII. Activity Reports:

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

- Sponsorship letters are scheduled to be mailed out on May 2nd, and Commissioners are invited to help get the mailing out.
- Our partners from Listening for a Change and the Volunteer Center are working on getting a keynote speaker.
- Nomination forms have been updated and are ready to be sent out in August.

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 27th. The session will be held at the Sonoma County Office of Education. Gail Vann (volunteer on the Education Committee) will be there to help with the logistics.
- Casa Grande High School will conduct leadership training for 75 – 100 students on May 24th and 25th. Reece will be participating in that program.
- Healdsburg Middle School would like to have diversity training for the entire school. They have asked for this to be done either this year or next.
- Foxen and Gail Vann 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: Rothchild reported that Ann Zimmer (a volunteer with the PR and Marketing workgroup) is reviewing the PowerPoint presentation. Rothchild expects to have her feedback soon.

Community Action Committees (CACs): Boyce reported that she and Sparks have been working on a letter to community organizations and places of worship to introduce the Commission and offer our services for programs and presentations.

Community Events:

Cinco de Mayo: Villegas reported that the Festival now has raised \$39,500 in sponsorships, with 44 booths (20 food vendors). The parade now has a focus on kids, so the Commission will not be asked to participate. He feels that the event has been very well organized and has good support from law enforcement. He noted that they have over 85 volunteers from the community to help that evening.

He shared copies of the posters and flyers developed to publicize the event and asked Commissioners to help post them throughout the County.

Martin shared the sign up sheet for "shifts" at the booth.

Gay Pride Festival: Foxen reported that she has a contact who is involved with planning this year's festival. She will forward that information to the office.

Race Equality Week: Troutt reported that he attended the last planning meeting. Dawn Silvara of the YWCA and Rev. Coffee have been named co-chairs for the event. They expect 1,200 – 1,000 people to attend the event at the Finley Center. Committees will be formed in May and assignments made in June.

Community Response: No report.

Criminal Justice: Miller reported that she has not been able to work with her counterparts in other departments because they have been focused on two recent officer-involved shootings. She pointed out the importance of community organizations asking for law enforcement's assistance in prevention and their hesitation to do so because of a presumed opposition. She sees the Commission and the Criminal Justice group as possible as an important bridge to the community.

Current Events & Press Response: None.

District Report / Commissioner Announcements:

Troutt reported that Community Baptist Church will hold "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" at 4:30 PM on Thursday, May 17th.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held on Monday, May 21, 2007 at 5:30 PM.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 PM.