



COUNTY OF SONOMA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Commission on Human Rights

November 26, 2007

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

MINUTES

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

Commissioners Absent: Juanita Ashe (Notified), Marie Sparks (Notified)

Staff Present: Maggie Martin

I. Call to Order/Introductions: Boyce called to order at 5:33 PM.

II. Consent Items:

Approval of Agenda: The Agenda was approved.

Approval of October 22, 2007 Minutes: The Minutes were reviewed, edited and approved.

III. Public Comment:

Ai-Chu Wu of the Tzu Chi Foundation's Santa Rosa Service Center addressed the Commission. She presented information on the origins of the Foundation that is dedicated to "providing compassion and relief to assist" those in need. They offered to help the Commission with volunteer support and invited Commissioners to attend their "Spread the Seeds of Love Tea Party" on December 9, 2007.

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).

Goldschmidt-Sheff reported that she has been reappointed to another term.

V. Supervisor Communication Update:

- Boyce reported that she and Martin had met with Supervisors Kelley and Smith to review CHR's plans for the current fiscal year, notify them of the current recruitment efforts for new Commissioners and to ask for their support to ensure that appointees are aware of the time commitment expected of Commissioners under the new structure. Both were supportive of CHR's direction and pleased with the level of communication they are receiving on the Commission.
- Genelly reported that he and Martin had met with Supervisor Kerns in his Petaluma office. Kerns was positive and embraced CHR's exploration into new and more effective means for answering needs in the community. He also expressed his opinion that CHR might play a useful role in facilitating communications between the factions



from the recent community forums on law enforcement together so that they could enter into an open dialogue and, perhaps explore potential solutions.

- **Old Business:**

Strategic Planning (Work Plan Development):

- **Strengthening the Commission:** Goldschmidt-Sheff reported that the workgroup met to discuss recruiting plans and potential candidates for the Commission. She has also gone to meetings and posted flyers as an effort to increase interest in serving on the CHR.

The other facets of this broad effort are:

- ~ Work with Listening for a Change to coordinate a training session for Commissioners on the listening skills needed for oral history and how those can be used to find common ground between people from differing backgrounds. (See summary of presentation under “Educating the Public” bullet that follows.)
- ~ We have now met with four of the five Supervisors and received their support for CHR’s current direction and their understanding of the importance of ensuring that appointees are aware of what is involved in serving on the Commission.
- **Communicating with the Public:** Rohde reported that he, Genelly and Martin had met and adopted the following action steps for the group:
 - ~ Create a “virtual rolodex” for local media including contact information, their specific focus/concern, and the process by which CHR should provide them with information.
 - ~ Work in conjunction with other project areas (e.g., Educating the Public) to develop resources for educational presentations to the public on various topics. The current PowerPoint presentation that Commissioner Rothchild produced last year is a starting point, but the “library” of presentation resources should be expanded.
 - ~ Meet with the people responsible for the Commission’s website to explore how to enhance it. The objective of this effort will to explore the feasibility of making the site an interactive and powerful resource for information on human rights issues and local services.
 - ~ Explore feasibility of having Human Rights Awards Event videotaped. We could then have it (or portions of it) aired on public access stations and/or use clips from the event for other purposes (e.g., a streaming video for the booth).
- **Educating the Public:** Introduced Phyllis Rosenfield, Executive Director of Listening for a Change (LFC) to discuss how CHR and LFC might work together on various projects, including the educational programs for schools and the community-at-large. Rosenfield explained that LFC was begun as a project to record oral histories of holocaust survivors. In the process of that work, they found that the skills needed to listen and record personal histories broke down individuals’ “separateness” and led to a broader understanding of our common humanity and sense of shared community. Since its inception, LFC has developed programs for classrooms, business and the community at large.

With that in mind, she proposed the following projects:

- ~ Training session for members of CHR in which they teach the skills needed for recording oral histories. The formal session would be followed by

Commissioners going out to conduct interviews of people from varied backgrounds who had experienced a loss of rights. Finally, everyone would return to discuss share what they had learned in the process, including how such issues as ways to improve acceptance in our community.

- ~ Drawing on their current programs to develop a training session for students and advisors of high school diversity clubs. This model would follow the outline for the Commissioner training described above. However, it could be enhanced by having the interviews linked to their studies of various cultures and/or connecting the training to the service-learning component of their curriculum so that they can explore how their civic engagement can allow them to make a difference in the community.

The Commission discussed the proposal at length with Rosenfield. **MOTION By Goldschmidt-Sheff:** *“Approve training for Commission on Human Rights (and possibly to include representatives from the Commission on the Status of Women) on oral histories to be conducted by Listening for a Change in the Spring of 2008.”* Second by Genelly, and carried unanimously.

- **Developing Ties with Human Rights Organizations & Building Strategic Partnerships:** Villegas reported that he and Martin had met with both the Sheriff’s Department and District Attorney’s Office since the last Commission meeting. The highlights of each meeting were as follows:

- ~ Sheriff’s Department:

- Sheriff Cogbill was joined by Assistant Sheriffs Rich Sweeting and Linda Suvoy.
- Cogbill was supportive of the Commission and willing to devote resources to any educational/community outreach effort that the CHR develops on diversity and tolerance. However, they asked for an action-oriented approach rather than one where the group “meets just to meet.”
- Sgt. Dennis O’Leary will be appointed as the liaison between the Sheriff’s Department and CHR.
- The group suggested that CHR consider developing programs and/or informational pieces that can be used in the courts and/or the detention facilities.
- Cogbill was supportive of CHR encouraging members of community organizations to attend the citizens’ academy and assured us that they usually have openings in each class.

- ~ District Attorney’s Office:

- Passalacqua was supportive of the Commission and the initiatives discussed, including those mentioned above under the Sheriff’s Department highlights.
- They recommended that CHR find ways to reestablish community based support/response on issues of diversity and hate crimes, given the fact that the CAC models did not work in most areas.
- Passalacqua suggested that CHR contact the Art Quest program at Santa Rosa High School to explore sponsoring a photo essay contest/project. (He suggested this after we commented on the photographs displayed in the office corridor by Art Quest students.)

- **Work Plan:** Martin explained that she will be drafting a formal Work Plan that will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for approval. Boyce asked that CHR consider authorizing a work group to help with the drafting/review/development process. A draft will be brought to CHR for formal approval before presentation to the Board. **MOTION By Villegas:** *“Move that the Officers assist staff on finalizing a Work Plan for presentation to the Board of Supervisors.”* Second by Goldschmidt-Sheff. Carried unanimously.

VI. **New Business:**

Meeting Calendar for 2008: Boyce informed Commissioners that, in 2008, there will be three possible problems with the Commission meeting at its regular time on the fourth Monday of the month. They are:

Monday, March 24, 2008 – Monday after the Easter weekend.

Monday, May 26, 2008 – Memorial Day holiday

Monday, December 22, 2008 – Hanukkah & Christmas Week

To avoid these problems Boyce proposed that CHR meetings for these months be scheduled as follows:

Monday, March 31, 2008.

Monday, May 19, 2008

Monday, December 15, 2008

The group decided to table formal approval of this proposal until the December meeting so that Commissioners could consult their calendars and schedules at home.

Human Rights Day in Sonoma County: Boyce reported that CHR will petition the Board of Supervisors to proclaim December 10th as Human Rights Day in Sonoma County at its meeting on Tuesday, December 4th. She invited all the Commissioners to attend.

CAHRO Conference & Membership: Villegas reminded Commissioners that the CAHRO Conference will be held in Sacramento on Sunday, January 6, 2008 through the morning of Tuesday, January 9, 2008 and directed their attention to the conference announcement that Martin had sent via e-mail. He asked CHR to consider approving the renewal of its membership in this organization and to sponsor any Commissioners who wish to attend by paying conference fee. Martin explained that she can use a County pool car to drive Commissioners to and from the conference. She will either go on Sunday and return on Monday or simply go for the day on Monday, depending on when the most Commissioners plan to travel.

MOTION By Rohde: *“Move to renew CHR membership in CAHRO and to cover the fees for any Commissioners who wish to attend.”* Second by Villegas and carried unanimously.

Human Trafficking: Rohde asked Martin to report on the two aspects of this item.

- Martin explained that the first national Human Trafficking Awareness Day will be held on January 11, 2008. The Commission on the Status of Women and several County Departments (District Attorney, Health Services, Human Services, Probation and the Sheriff’s Departments) will be co-sponsoring a request that the Board of Supervisors issue a proclamation to recognize this day in Sonoma County.
- Martin reported that Supervisor Brown has been in contact with Michael Cory Davis, the producer of the documentary “Cargo: Innocence Lost” that deals with human trafficking in the United States. Although the arrangements are not finalized yet, she

understands that Davis will come to Sonoma County for a public showing of the film. He may also appear at one or more public events (e.g., forums) and/or conduct training sessions for those working in fields where they may encounter victims. Martin explained that she should have an update by the January meeting.

VII. Staff Report:

Reorganization: Martin announced that Taryn Lewis has accepted the position of interim EEO Division Manager and will officially begin working in the Division shortly. Lewis has been with Sonoma County for a number of years. She was the former EEO Investigator before leaving that position to take on responsibilities in the Recruiting Division. Martin explained that Lewis will be an asset to the unit, as she is very familiar both with the County and a number of laws related to human rights work. She assured Commissioners that they would have the opportunity to meet Lewis once she began she has officially begun her position.

Contact Information: Martin thanked those Commissioners who had responded to her request for “expanded” contact information. She is still waiting to hear from a few people and expects to have this project completed for distribution by the January meeting.

Attendance Report: Martin distributed the Attendance Report.

Correspondence: None.

Update on Staff Activities: Martin reported that the Commission on the Status of Women has also been busy developing their strategic plan. She also expects activity to pick up for the Human Rights Awards Event.

VIII. Activity Reports:

Events: Martin reported in Sparks’ absence.

- Sponsorships are down from last year. Martin has been in touch with Rothchild who will be following up those past sponsors who have not yet contributed.
- The Selection Panel will meet during the first week in December to name this year’s honorees. Although the number of nominations were a bit lower this year, the caliber of the nominations is quite impressive.

Community Response: No report.

IX. District Report / Commissioner Announcements:

Maria Carillo High Speaker: Rohde reported that Marie Carillo High School had contacted the office to request a speaker for in January on a Tuesday and/or Thursday morning. He will coordinate CHR’s response. Martin suggested that he contact former Commissioner Foxen if he is unable to find another speaker.

December Meeting: Goldschmidt-Sheff announced that she will not be able to attend the December Commission meeting.

Education Recommendation: Goldschmidt-Sheff shared that the Bouverie Preserve targets their educational programs to 3rd and 4th grade youth. At those ages, youth are able to understand complex issues and develop life-long attitudes/opinions.

X. Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Monday, December 17, 2007 at 5:30 PM.

XI. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 PM.