



COUNTY OF SONOMA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Commission on Human Rights

February 25, 2008

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

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Juanita Ashe, Judy Boyce, Dalia Goldschmidt-Sheff, Chris Rohde,
Robert Villegas

Commissioners Absent: Marie Sparks (Notified)

Staff Present: Maggie Martin

I. Call to Order/Introductions: Boyce called to order at 5:36 PM

II. Consent Items:

Approval of Agenda: The Agenda was approved.

Approval of November 26, 2007 Minutes: The Minutes were approved.

Approval of January 28, 2008 Minutes: The Minutes were approved.

III. Public Comment:

Herb Genelly, whose term representing the 2nd District on the Commission expired in January 2008, addressed the Commission. He expressed his appreciation to his fellow Commissioners for how much they contributed to his enjoyment of his tenure on the CHR. After some deliberation, he decided not to ask for reappointment because of other demands on his time, including his growing commitments to other organizations in the Petaluma area. However, he offered to help CHR on projects if needed in the future.

IV. Commission Update:

Swearing in of New Commissioner (if appropriate): None.

Openings and Appointments: Rohde announced that there are nine openings in Districts 1 (2 openings), 2 (1 opening), 3 (3 openings), 4 (2 openings) and 5 (1 opening).

Boyce announced that she is aware of 3 – 4 candidates interested in serving on CHR.

V. Supervisor Communication Update:

Villegas reported that he had plans to attend a farewell reception for Supervisor Riley at Rivers End in Jenner.

VI. Old Business:

Strategic Planning (Work Plan Development): Martin reported that she hopes to have the Work Plans ready for presentation to the Board of Supervisors in late March or early April.

Meeting Calendar for 2008:

- Regular Meeting Date: Rohde opened the discussion of moving the regular Commission meeting to another date to avoid the numerous conflicts with holidays that Monday meetings present. The group discussed schedules, and Martin confirmed her understanding that the Hearing Room facility was available on the 4th Thursday of each month. MOTION by Rohde: *Move to approve change the regular meeting schedule for the Commission to the fourth Thursday of each month and to approve the resulting changes to the Commission's Bylaws.* Second by Sheff and carried unanimously.
- Meeting Calendar for 2008: Rohde then opened the discussion on the meeting schedule for 2008. Martin pointed out that the original proposal for rescheduling the March meeting from Monday the 24th (fourth Monday) had been to hold the meeting on March 31st rather than the March 17th, as approved by the Commission. She asked the Commission to reconsider that action, given issues with the availability of the Hearing Room. MOTION By Rohde: *“Move to reschedule the Commission's March meeting to March 31, 2008.”* Second by Villegas and carried unanimously.

Martin pointed out that holding regular CHR meetings on the fourth Thursday would create conflicts with the Thanksgiving holiday in November and the Christmas Holiday in December. After some discussion, Rohde proposed to hold the November meeting on Thursday the 30th and the December meeting on December 18th. Martin said that staff would confirm the availability of the Hearing Room on those dates.

Human Trafficking: Martin reported that an Event Planning Group was forming to be chaired by Christina Brenner of the Commission on the Status of Women. Ann-Jeanne Rothchild (formerly of CHR) and Janice Sexton of the Soroptimists (potential event sponsor) would serve on the group. The group will hold its first meeting at 10:00 am on Monday, March 3rd at the Commission Office. Martin asked for volunteers from CHR, and Villegas offered to attend the first meeting. Rohde also offered to attend the planning meetings whenever his schedule permits.

Confederate Flag Displays at Maria Carrillo High: Martin reported on the Santa Rosa City School Board meeting she attended earlier in the month. She noted that the Board's discussion of the matter, although interesting and informative, was limited to a question and answer session between members of the Board and their legal counsel. The dialogue focused on the legal precedent for interpreting symbols as hate signs and/or threats versus expressions of free speech.

The counsel also responded to a question on the Board's (and therefore School administration's) responsibility for investigating the alleged incident of a noose being thrown at a black student. He did assert that every effort had to be made to investigate the matter through verifications by independent witnesses, even without the student's participation. Unfortunately, the Board did not engage in discussion as to whether this was being carried out or what the findings had been.

Martin said that she had conferred with Phyllis Rosenfield (Executive Director of Listening for a Change) about the meeting and possible action. Ms. Rosenfield will follow up with her contacts on campus and let us know whether any further offer to help with training is appropriate. They also discussed the merits of CHR engaging in a review of the various School Board policies responding to hate incidents and consider a longer-term initiative to work with Boards and Schools' administrations on the matter.

Villegas asked how other school district had justified banning displays of the Confederate flag given the legal background expressed at the meeting. He offered to contact other District Offices to explore the matter further and report to CHR.

Challenge Day: Boyce explained that CHR is not in the position to pledge financial support for sponsoring the project. She volunteered to work with staff to draft a letter explaining this to the Petaluma Circle of Change (segment of Petaluma's Healthy Community Consortium that is working to bring Challenge Day to the local schools). The letter asking that they keep CHR informed of their progress and expressing CHR's willingness to help promote the project and, possibly, to volunteer for the campus events.

VII. New Business:

Commission Group Exercise: Further discussion postponed until additional Commissioners are appointed to CHR.

Heritage Day in Cloverdale: Boyce on May 15th an event will be held to promote networking between the various segments of the Cloverdale community with a goal of strengthening connections with the Hispanic and Native American segments. She volunteered to represent CHR as well as the Cloverdale Performing Arts Center at the event. She will keep the Commission apprised as plans for the event develop.

VIII. Staff Report:

Formal Introduction of Taryn Lewis: Martin shared Lewis' apologies for not being able to attend the meeting.

Contact Information: Tabled until additional Commissioners are appointed.

Correspondence: None.

Update on Staff Activities:

- Referral Guide: Martin distributed the draft "Pocket Referral Guides" that Nadine Jaillet had drafted for each Commission. She asked Commissioners to review the drafts and share any suggestions for revisions with her via e-mail.
- Budget Preparation: Martin explained that the annual budget planning process is underway. At this point, there are no plans to reduce the Commission's program funds.

IX. Activity Reports:

Events: No report.

Strengthening the Commission: No report.

Communicating with the Public: Rohde reported on a meeting he had with representatives of the Community Media Center in Santa Rosa. He explained there are a number of ways that CHR can work with the Center to publicize CHR's activities and events as well as to post opportunities for volunteer and Commissioner positions. There are also opportunities for CHR to sponsor airing of videos from our library, which could expand our educational efforts.

Educating the Public: Martin reported that she and Sparks are scheduled to meet with Phyllis Rosenfield about contracting with Listening for a Change for both the development of educational programs for the schools and for a training program for Commissioners on the listening skills required for oral history.

Developing Ties with Human Rights Organizations & Building Strategic Partnerships: None.

X. District Report / Commissioner Announcements:

Petaluma Public Access (PCA) Station: Martin reported that she was not aware of any updates on this topic.

Upcoming Seminar in Petaluma (3/14/2008): Ashe announced that she has organized a community educational event, and recognized the generous support she had received from Carl Wong, Superintendent of the Sonoma County Office of Education and Steve Hood, Chief of the Petaluma Police Department. The even will feature a panel of seven community leaders to discuss a broad range of issues related to education, family and community with a focus on how to ensure the safety of the youth in our community. She distributed flyers and invited all Commissioners to attend.

XI. Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Monday, March 31, 2008 at 5:30 PM.

XII. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 PM.