

**Human Right Commission
May 6, 2008 Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Valeta Snell, Glenn Glasgow, Oona Paredes, Mark Thomas, Mary Bixby

Members Excused: Randy Cole, Marie Glaze

Staff Present: Steve Hollis, Shawna Victor, Nanette Ward

Others Present:

- I. **Call to Order/Introductions:** The meeting was called to order by Thomas at 7:00 p.m.
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Bixby made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Glasgow and passed unanimously.
- III. **Approval of April 1, 2008 Meeting Minutes:** Paredes made a motion to approve the April 1, 2008 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Bixby and passed unanimously.
- IV. **Old Business:** There was no old business at this time.
- V. **New Business:** There was no new business at this time.
- VI. **Staff Reports**

- A. **Community Services:** Hollis said he is working on the budget and social service funding proposals.

He presented the Council with the diversity award given by the National League of Cities. Glaze and Thomas were there from the commission, along with community circle volunteers and members of the Diversity Celebration committee.

Hollis said he is still receiving information regarding the Stop Trafficking conference. This was received well by the community and believes their efforts will continue locally. He has directed Ward to remain involved in the local task force.

- B. **Law Department:** No report at this time.

- C. **Human Rights staff:** Ward said Stop Traffic is transitioning to new students as current students are graduating. She believes this program will continue in the community also. There have been discussions about establishing a task force and an executive committee. Currently, the FBI is reviewing possible human trafficking issues in Columbia. This is a real issue in this community.

The CREST workshop on April 3 showed there is a good working relationship with the FBI.

Ward attended the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week in Jefferson City. She explore becoming involved in the Boone County re-entry program by utilizing the study circle model.

The Columbia Missourian and MU Journalism School's celebration during the fall will include discussions about working with the media on community issues and future changes based on citizen dialogues.

There will be a community circle tomorrow evening regarding the proposed “Civil Rights” initiative and affirmative action. There will be a “Jobs for Justice” representative there. Also, there will be a Teen Speak! at the Artisan on May 8. City councilperson Paul Sturtz will be there to field questions from the teens.

VII. Public Comment: There was no public comment.

VIII. Commissioner Comment: Paredes suggested the commission begin to look into the issue of gang violence in the community. She asked if there is a possibility to have the request for Human Rights Enhancement Program proposals be more targeted at programs that help with gang and youth violence prevention. She believes this issue needs to be addressed before it gets too out of hand.

Thomas said the Let’s Talk, Columbia! weekend came from youth violence that happened in the fall of 2007 and asked if there would be youth willing to discuss what they have heard and what is going on. Ward said youth are very aware of what is going on in the community and are willing to share.

Paredes said this would be a good topic for the June Teen Speak! but this is a delicate issue that has to be approached carefully. There is a program in Chicago that takes former gang members and trains them to be “interrupters” to prevent revenge violence and killings.

Hollis noted this issue is on the City’s radar.

Thomas agreed it would be a good idea to add wording to the RFP to emphasize youth violence prevention programs.

The commission will continue to discuss this item.

Paredes said she has heard that Ishmael Beah, author of “A Long Way Gone”, will be in Columbia in early 2009. Beah is a former child soldier in Sierra Leone who is the only surviving member of his family. His book is about those experiences. Paredes asked if the commission would be willing to consider giving funding for this appearance. Hollis suggested that the group bringing Beah to Columbia could apply for HRC funding this fall. If no funding is needed, the commission could offer to be a partner in the event.

Bixby said Roger Worthington has been named the Chief Diversity Officer for the University of Missouri-Columbia. The University received \$25,000 from the Ford Foundation for a “difficult dialogues” program. The University has been asked to reapply for the grant. If they are awarded the grant then they could receive \$100,000. Bixby said there should be more collaboration between the University and the City on this issue. Hollis and Ward stated that the City has reached out to the university over the years but has had little sustained interest from campus. The commission discussed possible contacts on campus about better collaboration between the University and the City.

IX. Closed Session to Discuss Pending Cases Pursuant to Section 610.021 (1) RSMo.:

Thomas made a motion to move to closed session to discuss pending cases pursuant to Section 610.021 (1) RSMo. The motion was seconded by Glasgow and a roll call vote was taken. Thomas called the roll with the following vote: Snell – Yes, Thomas – Yes, Paredes – Yes, Glasgow – Yes, Bixby – Yes.

X. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Hollis, Manager
Office of Community Services