

**Human Right Commission  
January 6, 2009 Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Mary Bixby, Randy Cole, Glenn Glasgow, Negar Jackson, Oona Paredes, Mark Thomas

**Members Excused:** Valeta Snell

**Staff Present:** Steve Hollis, Marie Glaze, Shawna Victor, Fred Boeckmann

- I. **Call to Order/Introductions:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Jackson introduced herself to the commission
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Thomas moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Glasgow and passed unanimously.
- III. **Approval of December 2, 2008 meeting minutes:** Thomas moved to approve the December 2, 2008 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Jackson and passed unanimously.
- IV. **Election of Officers:** Thomas recommended Cole for Chair. Paredes recommended Thomas for Vice-Chair. Thomas recommended Bixby for Secretary. There were no objections.

Paredes moved to elect Cole as Chair, Thomas as Vice-Chair and Bixby as Secretary. The motion was seconded by Glasgow and passed unanimously.

**V. Old Business**

- A. **Review of educational outreach efforts:** Regarding human rights education in the community, Hollis said he would like to have Glaze build relationships with businesses as the majority of the complaints filed are lodged against private businesses. Glaze could visit with businesses and organizations about local, state, and federal laws and focus on key areas.

Hollis said that he perceives a need for additional training for organizations and businesses relating to civil rights, beyond what the City could normally provide given limited resources. Bixby asked about financial support for this program. Hollis said he would like to see it run more like an enterprise in which the City functioned as a middle man of sorts by coordinating contracted trainers to offer a variety of training options related to civil rights.

Hollis said staff is still waiting to meet with state to discuss possible partnership for human rights education and training for the public. He would like to have someone from the state come to a meeting to discuss options.

There was also discussion about maintaining the annual "Let's Talk Columbia" event. Hollis said it may be possible to contract for the coordination of this event as well.

Bixby noted she likes the proactive approach with the proposed training but would also like to include reactive activities such as the alternate gathering when the National Socialist Movement marched in Columbia in 2007. Cole pointed out that the commission and staff has been and will continue to provide leadership as these types of situations arise.

Jackson asked if issues related to socioeconomic disparities could be included in any educational program as these cross many different categories such as race, gender, and religion.

Glasgow asked if the commission is redefining their mission statement. Hollis said he believes this would be getting back to the roots of this commission, taking a preventative approach. He would like to continue this discussion at next month's

meeting and would like to invite someone from the Missouri Commission on Human Rights to discuss future collaborations.

## VI. New Business

**Review of investigative process:** Hollis said staff has been reviewing the investigative process. Given the lack of consequences at the City's disposal after the Yellow Freight case, most cases are dually filed with the state and/or federal authorities. Therefore, City staff has functioned more as a navigator for citizens filing complaints with agencies such as Missouri Commission on Human Rights, HUD, and EEOC. Hollis said he feels this is an important role given the complexities of navigating the state and federal bureaucracies.

Because staff typically plays the role of navigator rather than investigator, Hollis said he and Glaze have been discussing why investigations are done locally. One of the primary reasons that the City continues to conduct investigations is because the state and federal governments do not include "sexual orientation" as a protected class. Also, Hollis believes that maintaining a local human rights ordinance after the Yellow Freight case was a conscious decision made by local leaders to demonstrate the City's commitment to the enforcement of human rights.

Another reason Hollis cited for conducting local investigations is that there have been concerns in the past about the due diligence provided to complaints at the state and federal level. However, Hollis pointed out that the staff and commission have typically accepted the rulings issued by the investigating state/federal agencies without further investigation at the local level. Hollis said this seems paradoxical and would like to consider further investigating complaints, if staff feels it is warranted, even if the state or federal agency has issued a no probable cause ruling.

Thomas said he likes being a local resource for citizens with questions. He would like to build a stronger relationship with the MCHR.

There was discussion of a Memorandum of Understanding with the MCHR. Boeckmann noted there was an informal MOU with the state but Council would not approve a formal MOU.

Bixby suggested reviewing the investigative forms to better accommodate varying literacy levels. In doing so, she suggested reviewing other agencies' complaint forms. Hollis noted the state and federal agencies utilize the City's form and that the forms were reviewed regularly but that they would certainly seek input regarding the

The staff will continue to review this issue and discuss it with the commission.

## VII. Staff Reports

- A. Community Services:** Hollis said the Columbia Values Diversity Celebration will be held on January 15. The commission is a sustaining sponsor again this year.

Bixby expressed concern about not having the homosexual community represented very well in past programs. Hollis said that the LGBT community has representation on the planning committee and pointed out that it is very difficult to represent homosexuality in a visual performance.

Hollis said the commission did not spend all of the Human Rights Enhancement funding. He suggested that the commission could consider issuing quarterly RFPs to make the money more accessible to programs and activities in the community. The commission will consider this and discuss further at the next meeting.

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

- C. Human Rights Specialist:** Glaze said the Human Rights Day event on December 10 was well attended.

- VIII. Public Comment:** There was no public comment.
- IX. Commissioner Comment:** Glasgow noted he believes the discrimination definition should also include “socioeconomic”.
- X. Closed Session to Discuss Pending Cases Pursuant to Section 610.021 (1) RSMo.:**  
Bixby moved to move to closed session to discuss pending cases pursuant to Section 610.021 (1) RSMo. The motion was seconded by Paredes and a roll call vote was taken. Bixby called the roll with the following vote: Bixby – Aye, Cole – Aye, Glasgow – Aye, Paredes – Aye, Jackson – Aye, Thomas – Aye.
- XI. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Steve Hollis, Manager  
Office of Community Services