

**Human Right Commission
December 2, 2008 Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Mary Bixby, Randy Cole, Glenn Glasgow, Valeta Snell, Mark Thomas

Members Excused: Oona Paredes

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

Others Present: Paul Weatherford, Mizzou Human Rights Commission; Tyree Byndom, David Finke

- I. **Call to Order/Introductions:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Cole. Weatherford introduced himself to the commission.
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Thomas made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Bixby and passed unanimously.
- III. **Approval of November 4, 2008 meeting minutes:** Glasgow made a motion to approve the November 4, 2008 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Snell and passed unanimously.
- IV. **Guest speaker – Paul Weatherford, Treasurer, Mizzou Human Rights Commission:** Weatherford said MSA passed a bill that allows Mizzou Human Rights Commission (MUHRC) to partner with the Department of Student Activities. They will conduct events next semester. If these events go well, they will look to get approval to become a permanent organization.

MUHRC is an umbrella organization for other human rights organizations on campus. MUHRC sponsors two human rights issues per year, one international and one domestic. STAND, Students Taking Action Now Darfur and Stop Traffic are the two sponsored organizations for this year. If each of these organizations conducts an event that is attended by 100 people, and those 100 people tell five people about the issue, then the word will spread. But there are 30,000 students on campus and 500 students knowing about an issue is not enough. The world is becoming more interdependent. MUHRC believes that every student should be educated on human rights issues.

Bixby asked what organizations are under the “umbrella”? Weatherford said this year their focus is on STAND and Stop Trafficking. They would like to be involved with an environmental group. Any human rights group on campus will fall under the umbrella and they will work with them to host events.

Bixby asked if they are involved with Mizzou’s diversity activities. Weatherford said they are looking to partner with the Chancellor’s Diversity Initiative. Dr. Jim Scott has invited MUHRC to speak at the Council for International Issues. They also are looking at working with international groups, such as the African Student Association and Asian Student Association.

Hollis said this commission does have a small amount of funds each year that are allocated to groups that are promoting human rights issues. There have been groups on campus that have received funding, such as Stop Trafficking.

Thomas noted the commission is also discussing possible new community outreach programs such as human rights training for businesses and other groups. The commission would be interested in partnering with MUHRC on possible outreach programs.

Weatherford asked what the commission does. Hollis noted the main task of this commission is ordinance driven and involves the investigation of complaints of discrimination in Columbia. Also, the commission monitors human rights issues in the community and attempts to raise awareness about those issues. Examples of this involvement are the Citizen Review Board, the incident at the Columbia Mall a few years ago, and the alternate event when the National Socialist Movement marched downtown.

Weatherford said the main goal of MUHRC is to educate and raise awareness of issues for students and faculty.

Cole asked if their focus is on international or local issues. Weatherford said mainly international issues but they do work with local issues.

Bixby asked why their focus is mainly on international issues. Weatherford said international issues seem to get more attention. It is easier to get students interested in issues such as the genocide in Darfur than in local issues. Having the international focus is also like a stepping stone to raising awareness of other issues.

Bixby said there is an issue of heterosexism on campus and nationally that should be considered by MUHRC. Hollis said if there are issues like this the commission is aware of in the community, they will communicate with MUHRC to help raise awareness on campus.

Cole thanked Weatherford for coming to the meeting and sharing what MUHRC is doing.

- V. Election of Commission Chair:** Hollis said this can be done now or wait until the March meeting. New commissioner terms will begin March 1.

Snell said she would not be opposed to waiting until March.

Thomas said he would like to have elections in January. He did not know this was going to be on the agenda and would like additional time to consider nominations.

Bixby noted she would like to see Thomas as chair. Thomas said he would consider if no one else wanted to be chair.

The commission agreed to hold the election at their January meeting.

VI. Old Business

- A. Review of educational outreach efforts:** Hollis requested this item be tabled as staff has not had a chance to speak with the Missouri Commission on Human Rights about a possible collaboration. Glaze noted the staff will probably not be able to meet with the state commission until late January as MCHR will be holding their 50th anniversary conference in mid-January.

- VII. New Business:** There was no new business at this time.

VIII. Staff Reports

- A. Community Services:** Hollis noted Glaze has been hired as the new Human Rights Specialist. They have been working on complaints and sorting through policies, procedures and forms.

Hollis noted the Columbia Housing Authority is dealing with a bedbugs issue. Environmental Health Inspectors and Social Services staff have been involved as this a public health issue. Also there have been a few calls from CHA clients concerned about CHA staff limiting the amount of possessions they can keep in their apartment. One complaint has been referred to HUD.

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

- C. Human Rights Specialist:** Glaze said there will be a celebration on December 10, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. at the Health Department to honor the 60th anniversary of the Human Rights Declaration being signed by the United Nations. Mayor Hindman will read a proclamation. There will be a short video about the declaration and comments from staff regarding local human rights services. Refreshments will be provided.

- IX. Public Comment:** Byndom discussed his involvement with the Study Circles program. He was involved in the planning stages of the program and participated as a facilitator throughout the years of the program. He, other facilitators and participants would like the commission to consider continuing the program as it has been very beneficial for the

community.

Cole thanked Byndom for his comments and noted the commission is in the process of evaluating the Study Circles program and other possible programs for continued community education.

Finke said he would like the commission to continue to make the community aware of human rights issues and build on existing resources, such as the volunteer facilitators, for future community education programs. The commission also should consider enhancing the visibility of this commission and their work, such as web access for those who might want to file a complaint.

Hollis said staff has been focusing on investigative side of their work but he plans to remain in communication with the volunteer facilitators as the commission and staff review the City's human rights educational programming.

- X. Commissioner Comment:** Snell asked if the commission could be involved in the hiring process for future hires. Hollis said he was not opposed to this but thought it might be difficult to do as it posed some challenges around confidentiality and the role of commission vs. staff.

There was discussion among the commissioners about the study circles program issue that was previously discussed with Byndom and Finke.

- XI. 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 Snell and a roll call vote was taken. Thomas called the roll with the following vote: Bixby – Aye, Cole – Aye, Glasgow – Aye, Snell – Aye, Thomas – Aye.

- XII. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Hollis, Manager

Office of Community Services