

**Human Right Commission  
February 3, 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.
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Cole asked to amend the agenda to discuss the utilization of Human Rights Enhancement Funds after approval of the agenda. There was no objection to this request. Thomas moved to approve the agenda as amended by Cole. The motion was seconded by Jackson and passed unanimously.
- III. **Utilizing Additional Human Rights Enhancement Funds:** Cole said there is approximately \$2,000 remaining in the Human Rights Enhancement fund. He believes it is important to utilize all of the funds since there are needs in the community.

Bixby asked if there were any restriction on the funds. Cole said not really but they must meet the guidelines. At the last meeting, the commission had mentioned youth and poverty issues. Recently, there has been discussion about youth issues in the community. Thomas stated that he believed it would be valuable to have the commission have a discussion and make a decision so a targeted RFP could be issued. In doing so, Thomas stated he had e-mailed staff to see if there was a list of all organizations in town that interact with youth and poverty issues.

Cole submitted a series of questions he created for the commission to use as a guideline for discussion purposes. The commission should be clear on the targeted issue and the purpose and goals of the RFP. For example, the target audience could be groups that deal with low-income youth or an educational program for more affluent citizen to teach them about youth and poverty issues.

Bixby noted in the visioning report youth issues were prominent. She also suggested having meeting besides the normal monthly meeting to discuss issues like this and what the purpose of this commission is.

Jackson asked what vision was for this money: to educate youth on what topic? Cole said his question was whether to provide services for youth in poverty or to educate the community on this topic.

Jackson said she personally believes many youth run into issues because they are not taught core values such as honesty, justice and humility. She wondered if there is a program that teaches youth these values and provides youth an opportunity to discuss what is going on in their life.

Bixby said she agrees but disagrees with Jackson. She believes it is a good idea but not a good place to make a positive change for youth in the community.

Jackson said she believes that talking with her own son about issues has made a difference. She knows this could be a positive change for a few children and teens but knows it will not affect everyone.

Bixby suggested collaborating with an existing organization, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

Thomas understands Jackson's suggestion of building core values and making it an experience that is empowering to those who attend the program. He believes there are existing programs in the community, but can only think of one, Spirit Riders program. Their focus is on young girls.

Jackson said she is a Baha'i and there is a series of books outlining stories from different parts of the world and religions that are used for teaching values. She asked if Spirit Riders was Christian based. Thomas he did not know for sure but knows it is a youth empowerment program.

Jackson said there is a program in Chicago that utilizes a similar book series.

Bixby asked about a youth membership to the ARC. Jackson said that would be a good possibility because the youth would have a place to go and would be able to put their energy into sports.

Thomas agreed to have some type of brainstorming meeting outside of the regularly scheduled meetings. He restated his concern regarding poverty being the root cause of many youth issues is key to other issues as well.

Cole said he has a difficult time relating poverty to human rights issues. Bixby said one purpose of this commission is to educate the community.

Jackson said every human has a right to a certain standard of living.

Bixby said she believes this commission has an obligation to deal with under-represented groups as defined by law. The commission would have to find a way to connect that with the poverty and youth issue.

Jackson said poverty does not discriminate.

Hollis said the commission should review the functions, powers and duties as set by City Council and the human relations ordinance again and believes poverty would be a stretch for this commission.

Cole said the discussion is back to square one and the commission should continue to think about what they would like to do with the funds.

Bixby asked if there has been a precedent to do a "by invitation" RFP, asking a group to write a RFP because the commission is interested in a program a certain organization provides. Hollis said a targeted RFP can be written but it cannot be offered to only one organization. Boeckmann said there may be more than one group that provides similar services so they should have the opportunity to submit a proposal as well.

Bixby said a targeted RFP would have to be done because the commission does not have that much money. Hollis said another RFP could be done but there is little funding for advertising. He noted the commission could move to a quarterly funding process to make the money more accessible to organizations in the community.

He is reluctant in doing a RFP for poverty as there is a commission already chartered with handling poverty issues. Addressing discrimination is expressly described in the ordinance as the purpose this commission. Hollis suggested the commission consider issuing an RFP for teaching youth about tolerance in existing programs or teaching parents how to talk to their kids about discrimination.

Bixby said The Southern Poverty Law Center is a good organization that might have outreach programs. Also, Rethinking Schools is another good organization.

Jackson asked if there are any programs at MU, something along the lines of a "Center for Tolerance". Hollis said there may be subdivisions that provide those services at MU. He also stated that he believes there are plenty of other organizations in town which could provide this type of service. Hollis shared that the commission previously had a good youth outreach program with Columbia Public Schools through the multicultural coordinator. But, unfortunately, that position was eliminated and that partnership has been lost.

Jackson suggested partnering with existing programs or facilities like the ARC. Hollis said the commission can issue a targeted RFP to have someone teach multiculturalism and

tolerance to youth.

Thomas asked if there was a consensus in reaching youth to teach them tolerance. The commission agreed.

Hollis suggested the commission be creative in doing so. For example, he suggested partnering with programs like Parks and Rec to educate coaches in youth leagues on using tolerance skills. Hollis also noted there is a program at Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA) called Circles Program. This program takes someone who is low income and surrounds them with people who are middle and upper income. This changes the peer group of all participants, along with exposing them to different cultures and backgrounds.

Cole asked if there is a timeline for spending the funds. Hollis said a contract will need to be in place before September 30, 2009.

Hollis asked if the commission would like to have Marie Hunter, Office of Cultural Affairs, come to a meeting to discuss Cultural Affairs Commission's quarterly RFP process. The quarterly funding process could work for this commission because there are small organizations that would be interested in submitting proposals but might have difficulty planning for programming over a year in advance. This change could make the funds to be more accessible to these types of organizations.

Cole said the commission could take a little more time to think about how they would like to target the funds. Bixby would like the commission to think about a possible retreat to discuss topics like this.

Glasgow suggested having someone in the high schools for students to talk to. Bixby said the University previously had a program like this, where retired professors would sit at the library just to be there to listen and talk to students. Hollis said the schools have counselors and crisis counselors.

Staff and commission will review their calendars to see when another meeting could be held.

**IV. Approval of January 6, 2009 meeting minutes:** Thomas moved to approve the January 6, 2009 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Bixby and passed unanimously.

**V. Old Business**

**A. Review of educational outreach efforts:** Glaze said she had scheduled a meeting with the state but that meeting was rescheduled for February 16 so she will have more information at the March meeting.

**VI. New Business**

**A. Review of investigative process:** Hollis said staff will have a meeting with Rose Wibbenmeyer, City Prosecutor, and Boeckmann to discuss a few items. One of which will be what would happen if a sexual orientation case would make it all the way to the prosecutor. The other is the city's course of action regarding investigations after the state or the federal agencies have found no probable cause. Hollis said the commission has traditionally accepted those finding and closed the cases. He wonders if some of these cases don't warrant further investigation as the EEOC and State seem to be understaffed and overwhelmed.

Hollis said he and Glaze have created an electronic, web-based database in order to manage the investigations. This will help staff keep track of the status of each case and will keep track of inquiries.

Glaze said this would help with situations such as the gentleman who made an initial inquiry in December 2007. He made contact with Glaze again and she sent him a complaint packet. After a meeting, she realized that his case could not be filed because the last incident passed the statute of limitations.

- B. **FY2009 Work Plan for Council:** Cole received a new work plan from Council. The commission completed a similar plan of work for council for FY08. This will be an item the commission will discuss and finalize at their March meeting. Hollis noted the work plan is due back to Council by March 31.

**VII. Staff Reports**

- A. **Community Services:** Hollis said the majority of the FY09 HREP contracts have been returned.

Hollis noted Pridefest has previously submitted an application for HREP funds but did not for this year. The Health Department has a booth at Pridefest regarding HIV/STD. Human rights staff will be able share the booth with other the Health Department program at no cost to OCS. Pridefest usually occurs in June of each year.

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

- C. **Human Rights Specialist:** Glaze said there will soon be a Human Rights newsletter. The newsletter will be sent out via webmail and will be a bi-monthly newsletter. The newsletter will contain announcements about upcoming events regarding human rights issues. She would like the first few months to include information about each of the commissioners so the community can learn about them and what this commission does.

Glaze noted she attended the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference for the Missouri Commission on Human Rights.

- VIII. **Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

- IX. **Commissioner Comment:** There were no commissioner comments.

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

- XI. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Hollis, Manager

Office of Community Services